

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WHIPTON BARTON MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113093

Headteacher: Mr C J Odgers

Reporting inspector: Mr Peter Kerr

23583

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2003

Inspection number: 247299

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed primary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 8 to 12

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hill Lane  
Exeter  
Devon

Postcode: EX1 3JP

Telephone number: 01392 466072

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Hazel Alford

Date of previous inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> October 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23583	P Kerr	Registered inspector	Mathematics	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9388	A Mundy	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?
10391	V du Plergny	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
21904	D R Gale	Team inspector	Art and design Geography	
22831	C G Lewis	Team inspector	Science Design and technology History Music Educational inclusion	
26292	H Y Mundy	Team inspector	English Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This smaller than average middle school caters for 301 pupils aged eight to 12 in a relatively deprived area of Exeter. There are more boys than girls in most year groups. Nearly all the pupils are of white British ethnic background and all speak English as their first language, but many of them come into the school with very poor skills in spoken and written English and well below average attainment overall. One third of the pupils claim free school meals, which is an above average proportion. Nearly half the pupils have special educational needs, many behavioural as well as learning, which is a well above average proportion. The school is involved in a number of national and local initiatives including: Sure Start; Joint Agency Initiative; Partnership with Police and the Initiative in Christian Education. It employs the services of a Social Development Inclusion Worker and Pastoral Care Co-ordinator. The inspection took place at a very difficult time for the school. It was very near the end of the summer term and the week before the bi-annual production, with five teachers absent on maternity leave and many other teachers relatively new to their posts. In addition, the school was trying to come to terms with the sudden and tragic death of a member of the teaching staff that occurred shortly before the inspection. The school is also due to change from middle to junior status in two years' time.

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

Although standards in English remain well below average, the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching is good and the pupils are now making good progress in lessons overall. Standards are below average in mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 and Year 7, but this represents satisfactory achievement from a very low starting point in Year 4. The school is well led and managed and provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- A very good range of learning opportunities is provided, including an excellent range of activities outside of school hours.
- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good.
- The school provides a good standard of care overall and especially for pupils who have special educational needs.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT), Music and physical education is very good.
- The school is well led and managed and has very good community links.

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

- Standards in English.
- The attitudes to learning of a minority of pupils, mostly in the older age groups.

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

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

Good improvements have been made since the last inspection in October 1997. Good improvements have been made to assessment procedures, the monitoring of curriculum planning and pupils' progress and personal development and acts of collective worship now comply with legal requirements. Satisfactory improvements have been made in raising reading standards, though they are still very low. The quality of teaching has improved and standards are higher in ICT and are rising in mathematics and science. Standards are still low in English, and this limits the pupils' achievements in some other subjects. Good improvements have been made in provision for ICT. The school achieved the Devon 'School Improvement Award in 2000.

## 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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	E	E	E
mathematics	E	E	E	D
science	C	D	D	C

**Key**

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

The trend in the school's results was similar to the national trend from 1998 to 2002, but this disguises important differences between subjects. Standards have been rising at a quicker rate than nationally in mathematics and science but have fallen further behind in English. The provisional 2003 results showed a continuation of this trend. The mathematics result improved from well below average to below average and the science results stayed at the 2002 levels, but the English results slipped back a little further. Since 1998, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school has fallen considerably, especially in English. Overall, therefore, the standards the pupils attain by the end of Year 6 represents satisfactory achievement.

The school's results fell just short of its targets in mathematics in 2002 and 2003 and considerably short of the English target. The pupils' poor literacy skills impede their learning in some other subjects. They achieve well in ICT, music, geography and physical education and satisfactorily in all other subjects. Standards remain well below average in English and below average in mathematics and science at the end of Year 7, despite current good progress. This is partly because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group, but also because of uneven progress in the past. Pupils achieve well in French to reach average expected standards at the end of Year 7.

Pupils with talent achieve well in music and sports because of the range of opportunities available. The few pupils identified as having especially high ability in other subjects make good progress because of the special provision that is made. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially within the small groups they work in outside the classroom, which boosts their self-esteem.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils like school. Many higher attaining pupils have very good attitudes that facilitate learning, but the negative attitudes of a minority of mainly older, lower attaining pupils make teaching difficult in some lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils behave well around the school, but teachers sometimes have to work hard to maintain acceptable standards of behaviour in class. Some pupils persist in unpleasant name-calling. There were 20 exclusions during the previous school year, 19 temporary and one permanent.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy good relationships and older pupils play an active role in looking after younger pupils.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Similar to the national average. Pupils are punctual for school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 4– 6	Year 7
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 is good overall, enabling the majority of pupils to make good progress, but many of the teachers are relatively new to their posts, so their good teaching has not yet had time to have its full impact on standards. The negative attitudes of a minority of pupils, mostly in the upper part of the school, affect progress in some lessons.

Teaching is satisfactory in English. Lessons cater well for those pupils with average attainment or better. Pupils with poor literacy skills, including those with special educational needs, learn well in small groups outside the classroom, where the activities they engage in boost their self-confidence and basic skills. The needs of lower attaining pupils are not so consistently taken into account in lesson planning overall. Teaching is good in mathematics, and pupils learn to use their numeracy skills well to support their learning in other subjects. Teaching is good in all other subjects except history, where it is satisfactory. Teachers work hard to interest and engage the pupils. They give good clear introductions to lessons and generally provide a range of relevant activities supported by adequate resources in most subjects. There are good examples of marking being used well to show pupils how to improve, but this is not a consistent feature of teaching throughout the school. Pupils with academic gifts receive special provision and are given good opportunities to apply their talents. The enthusiastic specialist teaching of ICT and music is very good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good, with an excellent range of activities out of school. The main area for improvement is in the effectiveness of the school's strategies for teaching literacy skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Very good support for pupils with statements of need and for other pupils in small groups, especially to boost self-esteem and life-skills. Pupils have good quality individual educational programmes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Good for spiritual, moral and social development and satisfactory for cultural development. Pupils have time for reflection, are taught good moral values and encouraged to be socially responsible. The school contributes satisfactorily towards preparing the pupils for life in a multicultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils receive very good individual care from teachers and other adults who know them very well. The school keeps a good track of pupils' personal development and academic progress and makes satisfactory use of assessment to inform planning. Child Protection procedures are good.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. Parents have positive views of the school, which provides good quality information, including reports on pupils' progress. Parental support for their children's learning is satisfactory overall, though some give much more support than others do.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. A recent period of rapid staff changes, which has made it difficult to implement policies consistently across the school, has been managed well and a good team spirit preserved. A close partnership between staff, parents and governors creates a positive school ethos for the benefit of all the pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors ensure that the school fulfils all statutory requirements. They have a good understanding of the school and play an active role in shaping policy and holding the school to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Good procedures are in place to track pupils' progress and to evaluate and improve teaching. School improvement planning is based on good quality information about pupils' progress.
The strategic use of resources	Good. As much of the school's budget as possible is spent each year on current educational priorities and the governors apply good principles of best value to spending decisions. Resources are adequate and staffing levels and accommodation are good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school is well managed and approachable</li><li>• Teaching is good, expectations for effort are high and the children make good progress.</li><li>• The children like school and behave well.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of homework.</li></ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views and judges the amount of homework given to be adequate.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school's intake of pupils has changed considerably over the six years since the last inspection. It now includes a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including many with significant behavioural as well as learning needs. This has a negative impact on the school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 and on overall standards at the end of Year 7. Therefore, despite the pupils making good progress over their time at the school, standards at the end of Year 6 and Year 7 are still below average in most subjects and well below average in English. The pupils are not catching up quickly enough to achieve as well as they should by this stage. This is why their levels of achievement are judged satisfactory rather than good.

2. The school's results in the national tests in English have been well below average since 1999. The provisional 2003 results reflect the inspection judgements that standards remain well below average. Standards are significantly lower in writing than at the last inspection. Despite satisfactory teaching overall, with some good teaching, the pupils do not learn fast enough to make up lost ground. Their results are well below average compared to pupils who had similar results to them in Year 2 in 1999. Standards in the basic skills of literacy remain well below average through to the end of Year 7; this represents unsatisfactory achievement. Many low attaining pupils have entrenched negative attitudes to English, especially writing.

3. In mathematics, the pupils are making good progress throughout the school and standards are rising, though they remain below average at the end of Year 6 and Year 7. Although the test results have been improving since 1999, they remained well below the national average until 2003 when they rose to below average. Taking into account their low starting points, the pupils make good progress and achieve well. These latest results indicate that pupils in this school make better than average progress compared to pupils with similar starting points in Year 3 in other schools.

4. The proportion of pupils attaining above average standards is well below the national figure in both English and mathematics, and has been so over recent years. The school recognises the need to provide all the potentially higher attaining pupils with suitably challenging activities from an early stage so that they can achieve the standards they are capable of by the end of Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in English and mathematics, but the low standards many of them achieve depress the overall test results.

5. Standards in science have been higher than in English and mathematics since 2000 and were in line with similar schools in 2002, though still below the national average. The 2003 results are at a similar level, representing satisfactory achievement overall by the end of Year 6. Following recent improvements to provision and teaching, pupils are achieving well lower down the school.

6. The good improvements that have been made to provision and teaching in ICT since the last inspection have resulted in very good progress in many aspects of the subject and to rising standards and good achievement. Pupils in Year 6 and Year 7 now attain standards typical for their age and above average standards in some aspects such as control technology in Year 6. Pupils do not yet, however, make full use of computers to support their learning in the classroom, especially in English.

7. Standards are in line with expectations in music, physical education and religious education at the end of Years 6 and 7, and below expectations in art and design, design and technology and history. In geography, standards are in line with expectations at the end of Year 6, but below expectations at the end of Year 7. Pupils' achievements in music are boosted by very enthusiastic and knowledgeable specialist teaching and by the many opportunities provided for pupils to learn to play musical instruments. Opportunities for participation in sport and other physical activities are also good, enabling the pupils who are capable of it to excel. Pupils achieve well in spoken French, speaking with a very good accent due to the very good examples supplied by the teachers, but do not speak in well-formed sentences and do not write as well as they speak.

8. The school identifies pupils who are gifted and talented and provides them with appropriate extra challenge. None of this was observed directly during the inspection, but the school's planning and records show that suitable provision is made for these pupils to make appropriate progress.

9. The school analyses its test data carefully and as a result has identified some gender variations in attainment – with boys doing better than girls in some year groups. As a result - and this is a clear indication of the school's ongoing determination to provide equality of opportunity for all its pupils - the school has reviewed its curriculum and teaching methods in an attempt to improve the attainment of identified groups of both passive girls and disaffected boys. One of the main strategies adopted – teaching pupils in separate gender sets for English and mathematics – is having a positive effect, particularly on girls, who are becoming more actively involved in lessons.

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

10. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils are usually very keen to learn, and this facilitates progress, especially when pupils are taught in groups according to their prior attainment. In many classes, small numbers of lower-attaining pupils are not motivated to learn. During the inspection, their unsatisfactory attitudes sometimes restricted the learning of other pupils. However, ninety-five per cent of the small number of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire confirmed that their children like school. The inspection evidence confirms this view.

11. Most pupils come to school enthusiastically. They enjoy lessons, informal activities and a wide variety of clubs. When motivated by good teaching they listen attentively, and readily answer questions, although limited verbal skills often affect the quality of their responses. They are less inclined to listen to each other some pupils attempt to distract others when not directly involved in a lesson. In all year groups, examples were seen of good attitudes and of pupils working independently, without adult supervision. This was the case for example in a good Year 4 science lesson where pairs of pupils carefully dissected flowers, segregated the component parts and made brief notes of their findings. In lessons where attitudes were unsatisfactory or poor, some pupils argued with their teachers, or pursued their own conversations. Skilful teaching usually secures satisfactory learning in such lessons, but the teachers have to work very hard to achieve this. For example, during the inspection, in a Year 7 history lesson, the learning objectives were achieved despite interruptions from a number of argumentative boys and apathetic responses from a significant number of girls.

12. Behaviour is good around the school and grounds, where senior staff lead the supervisors at morning break and lunchtime. In lessons, behaviour is satisfactory overall. When behaviour is good in lessons, pupils' progress is good because, lessons move ahead at good pace. Most pupils are thoughtful and mutually respectful. Occasional incidents of

conflict or bullying between pupils are managed promptly and sensitively. However, some pupils suffer persistent name-calling despite the provision of 'abuse-free' zones and the very helpful work done by peer mentors. Considering the high level of behavioural needs, relatively few pupils are excluded from school. In the last school year, incidents of unacceptable behaviour preceded nineteen fixed period exclusions and one permanent exclusion.

13. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils participate fully in assemblies. They are reverential, and follow the examples of the staff when praying and singing. During the inspection, in an assembly led by a church-based theatre group, all pupils watched the performance attentively, and a small number volunteered to rearrange jumbled letters to reveal human qualities, including forgiveness and sacrifice, which they demonstrated an understanding of. Most pupils are generous of spirit, fund-raising enthusiastically for local and national charities.

14. In all year groups, boys and girls work amicably together when engaged in practical activities such as music, dance and sport. In practical music lessons, for example, they are lively and motivated. They have a good appreciation of some aspects of western culture, and a satisfactory understanding of other faiths and cultures.

15. Most pupils understand and apply concepts of right and wrong. They accept a variety of responsibilities in their classrooms and as elected members of the school council. Year 7 pupils are appointed monitors for a range of duties, including lunchtime reception in the school office, and supervision of the computer room. In Year 6, pupils trained as peer group mentors visit the adjacent first school and are allocated as 'buddies' to Year 3 pupils transferring to middle school. All year groups are interested in caring for the environment, and help to remove litter from the school's extensive grounds.

16. Most pupils understand the importance of self-discipline, and they know that actions have consequences. They are friendly and respectful to their peers and teachers. When working in small or large groups they usually co-operate happily, exchanging ideas and sharing materials.

17. Attendance is close to the national average. Regular attendance has a positive effect upon pupils' attainment and progress. Most pupils arrive punctually at school and settle quickly to work. Registration periods are efficient, and lessons begin promptly.

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

18. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The negative attitudes of a minority of pupils hinder progress in some lessons, especially in Years 6 and 7, but also on occasions in the other year groups. The fact that the inspection took place towards the end of the summer term exacerbated this problem. Many of the teachers are relatively new to their posts, so the good learning seen in many lessons has not yet had time to translate into higher standards.

19. The teaching of English is satisfactory, with some good and a small proportion of very good teaching, but pupils do not achieve as well as they should, especially in Years 6 and 7. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly according to the National Literacy Strategy. They relate well to the pupils, give clear introductions and use a sound range of methods to engage the pupils' interest. The main areas for improvement in teaching are in planning for the lower attaining pupils, consistency in the use of marking to show pupils how to improve their work, expectations for presentation and the encouragement of the use of literacy skills in other subjects. Many pupils, especially those with low attainment, have negative attitudes to writing despite the teachers' best efforts to interest them. Good examples were observed of

teachers using drama, role-play and other practical, stimulating means of encouraging and supporting spoken English as a prelude to writing, for example in personal, social and health education lessons. This successful strategy is not used as widely as it could be.

20. Mathematics is taught well. Most pupils prefer mathematics to English, and therefore have a more positive attitude to learning, enabling lessons to be productive. Teachers cater well for pupils of all abilities in their planning except, on occasions, for the most able, who are sometimes not challenged enough. The co-ordinators have already identified the need to cater for potentially high attaining pupils as a priority in their action plan. The basic skills of numeracy are taught well, and pupils are encouraged and enabled to use and improve them through their work in other subjects.

21. Sufficient time was spent in 65 lessons to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning. In seven of these, very good learning was secured by lively, enthusiastic teaching that captured the pupils' interest and kept them working throughout the lesson. They were mostly in ICT and music, but one English lesson and two mathematics lessons also reached this standard. Specialist ICT lessons are very effective because of the excellent use of a wide range of modern equipment, including interactive whiteboards, to keep lessons moving at a rapid pace and maintain the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Questioning is particularly effective in these lessons because the teacher gives pupils plenty of time to fully articulate their answers and picks up and corrects any misunderstandings that may arise at an early stage. Specialist music teaching is also very good because lessons are lively, interesting and challenging, and the teacher uses her excellent knowledge of the subject to adjust the lessons to the pupils' emerging needs.

22. The main strengths in teaching in good lessons are a brisk pace, particularly to introductions, good classroom management and relationships with pupils and perceptive interventions to support pupils of all abilities with their tasks. In some lessons, teachers show exceptional patience and perseverance in the face of apathy from a significant minority of pupils, some of whom do their best to distract others. Despite the teachers' best efforts, the pace of learning is reduced in these lessons because of these distractions. Teachers are also very effective at supporting slower learning pupils in most subjects. They have a generally good knowledge of all the subjects of the National Curriculum, and use good questioning techniques to fully involve as many pupils as possible in lessons.

23. Lesson plans are detailed and clearly build on past learning. Most lessons make use of a good range of resources to add visual interest and engage the pupils actively. On occasions, such methods are under-utilised. When this happens and pupils have to sit and listen to the teacher for too long, they quickly become distracted and the pace of learning slows.

24. In some lessons, teachers make good use of discussions and presentations to improve the pupils' proficiency in spoken English. This was observed, for example, in science lessons, where pupils were encouraged to explain their thinking fully to the rest of the class. On some occasions, however, teachers cut pupils off halfway through a response, sometimes finishing the sentence themselves or moving on to another idea or answer too quickly. Similarly, written contributions are not valued and used as much as they could be in some subjects to help improve the pupils' writing skills. For example, pupils often do not explain fully in writing how they have solved a problem in mathematics or carried out an experiment in science, and what they have learned from the exercise.

25. Good examples were seen during the inspection, for example in art and design and ICT, of teachers challenging pupils to think and explain how they could improve their work during lessons. However, marking is not used consistently enough to point to specific improvements, and expectations for presentation are sometimes not high enough. Computer skills are taught well in ICT lessons, and pupils have opportunities to practise and apply them during lunch-time sessions, but little use was made of computers in classrooms during the inspection, and the pupils' work-samples show limited evidence of routine use of ICT.

26. The school makes good use of visitors to enrich the pupils' learning whenever it can. During the inspection, visiting clergy engaged the pupils' interest and enthusiasm well in a series of lessons on the similarities and differences between Christian denominations, securing very effective learning. Teachers make good links between subjects on occasions that consolidate the pupils' learning. For example, a Muslim prayer mat, introduced as a visual aid in religious education lessons, was used to teach the pupils about use of mathematical symmetry in Islamic designs.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall, and very good for individuals and small groups withdrawn from classes by experienced and well qualified learning support assistants. Learning support assistants successfully lead small groups of pupils, developing literacy and numeracy skills. Information about the pupils' progress circulates efficiently between the special educational needs coordinator, class teachers and learning support assistants.

28. The school works very hard to give all its pupils equal access to the full curriculum. It succeeds in keeping some pupils within school who could quite easily be excluded from education altogether. Good teaching in life-skills classes helps some very vulnerable pupils to manage their problems more effectively and begin to learn how to integrate successfully into social and learning groups.

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

29. The school provides pupils with a very good range of learning opportunities through the wide scope of the curriculum inside and outside lesson times. It has twice achieved the Schools Curriculum award. Sufficient time is allocated to each subject of the National Curriculum and the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education are met. Senior managers and curriculum co-ordinators understand the nature of their pupils' backgrounds well and are committed to increasing the breadth of pupils' experiences and extending their horizons. Planning of the curriculum, which required improvement at the time of the last inspection, is now good. Clear schemes of work provide pupils with an interesting and relevant range of experience in most subjects. The recent departures of curriculum managers in the core areas of English and mathematics have been managed satisfactorily, with some readjustments in English still to be made to ensure a better quality of learning across different aspects of literacy. Good strategies for the teaching of numeracy have led to improvement in standards in mathematics. Provision for ICT is very good. Pupils use their skills well to support their learning in some subjects, for example geography and music, but not routinely in most subjects.

30. The extent of extra-curricular activities in all forms is excellent. Trips, residential visits, visitors, clubs, sports matches and musical productions provide extensive opportunities for pupils of all ages to participate in a rich range of activity beyond the classroom. Provision for pupils to study French from Year 6 contributes to them acquiring a good accent and the school is planning to reintroduce the annual trip to France to help the pupils to put their learning in a more meaningful practical context.

31. The school ensures that all pupils have equality of access to all activities. There is a detailed and clear policy for equal opportunities in place and staff are very well aware of the need to ensure all pupils are fully included in all aspects of the school's life. Good overall provision is made for pupils with special educational needs. A very good range of initiatives to improve the pupils' self-esteem is provided. This includes a Life Skills course, which is one of the many ways in which the school seeks successfully to retain pupils who might otherwise be at risk of exclusion. Clear, relevant targets in individual education plans include literacy and numeracy skills and the pupils' progress is regularly reviewed.

32. Personal, social and health education is now well integrated into the curriculum with the provision of lessons in every year group. These sessions are a very great help in providing opportunities for pupils to talk about their feelings and concerns, simultaneously enhancing opportunities for speaking and listening. Many visitors and speakers come to lessons, assemblies and other events, testifying to the very good links which the school enjoys with the local community. These include speakers about careers, which is particularly helpful and relevant for older pupils. Good links with the on-site First School and cross-city agreements aimed at maintaining a consistent curriculum for transition into the High Schools ensure continuity in pupils' learning.

33. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, as it was at the time of the previous inspection.

34. Provision for spiritual development is good. Assemblies and religious education lessons help pupils to gain personal insights, and to understand the feelings of others. In small 'inclusion groups', pupils with special educational needs learn the importance of trust and confidentiality. In assemblies, all pupils listen attentively to recorded or performed music, selected to establish an atmosphere of calm and stillness. A good relationship is established with a local church, and the vicar is a frequent visitor, warmly welcomed by all pupils and staff. In lessons, teachers often lead pupils to reflect on observations of the natural world. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson during the inspection, pupils were fascinated by how a beautiful flower was formed by a few apparently simple components.

35. Provision for moral development is good. Members of staff are good role models, and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions, and to make reasoned choices. Pupils in Year 7 are given a good range of responsibilities throughout the school. The development of self-discipline is guided by a whole-school approach and by specific classroom rules agreed by year groups. In the 'life skills' groups, learning support assistants skilfully lead discussions on moral issues.

36. Provision for social development is good. Year groups are encouraged to mix amicably in the playgrounds and, at lunchtime in the dining hall, boys and girls sometimes choose to sit together. Older pupils are encouraged to be sympathetic to the needs and fears of pupils joining Year 4 and in lessons, pupils are expected to work together, exchanging ideas and sharing equipment. Class discussions are successful in engaging pupils of all attainments in speaking thoughtfully and listening carefully. Each class elects two school council members, and the council discusses topics proposed by pupils or staff. The council is known to have influence upon decisions affecting the school community. The school has

plans to extend the school council format down to class level. In all classes, pupils have responsibilities for tidiness and taking care of resources. They consistently raise money for local and national charities.

37. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils visit local museums and many places of interest, including an activity centre on Dartmoor. Western culture is explored in performance and music. The cultural heritages of Jews, Hindus and Muslims are discussed in religious education lessons. Although the school has some contact with a synagogue, no other links are maintained with ethnic minority groups at home or abroad. This limits the school's contribution to the pupils' appreciation of the richness of cultural diversity within society at large.

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

38. The school continues to provide a safe and caring environment that enables the pupils to participate as fully as they can in all the educational opportunities on offer. Good procedures are in place for child protection and pupils' welfare. The headteacher is the person responsible, and a senior teacher is also qualified and has recently attended training in child protection. At regular meetings, the headteacher verifies that class teachers and other adults fully understand and implement the school's procedures. Parents have not yet been formally requested to approve their children's use of the Internet at school, although a letter and pro-forma are in draft.

39. The school ensures the safety of pupils on site, and during off-site visits. Good health and safety practice is supplemented by regular risk assessments of the site and of specific activities. Frequent fire alarm practices ensure that the complex building can quickly be evacuated.

40. All staff are sensitive to the welfare needs of pupils and enough of them are suitably qualified in first-aid. Good supervision ensures pupils' safety in the playgrounds at break times and lunchtimes. Midday assistants are conscientious and attentive, and are interested in pupils' activities.

41. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good, and have improved since the previous inspection. Pupils receive very good individual care from teachers and other adults who know them very well. A simple, effective system in each class records the behaviour of pupils with special educational needs and those at risk of exclusion. Pupils' achievements and successes are not systematically recorded to help teachers new to the school to quickly get to know all pupils in a class. The school's teaching assistants are skilled in curriculum and social support, and they often develop excellent relationships with disaffected pupils. Pupils of all ethnic groups and of all attainments are included fully in activities.

42. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational needs, is good. The special educational needs policy is a coherent working document, complying with current requirements. Detailed records indicate good assessments of pupils' special needs. Consistent procedures ensure that pupils receive a suitable level of support and come off the special educational needs register when progress allows.

43. A very good induction system settles pupils quickly into Year 4. Most pupils joining other year groups adapt easily to the school's routines. Good procedures in Year 7 prepare pupils for transfer to high school.

44. The school's discipline policy outlines good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Due to rapid staff changes, its implementation is currently inconsistent. Most pupils conform to the agreed year-group rules displayed in classrooms. Those who do not conform are not always dealt with in accordance to the policy. For example, sometimes teachers remind pupils not to call out in class then subsequently accept shouted answers to questions. Teachers also have to work very hard to secure good progress for the rest of the class in the face of persistent disruptive or negative attitudes on the part a minority of pupils. A simple, effective system of merit awards acknowledges pupils' good behaviour, good work and effort, which are positively celebrated in the school's entrance displays. Outstanding achievement is acknowledged at weekly celebration assemblies.

45. A good anti-bullying policy provides pupils, parents and staff with clear definitions of bullying and detailed procedures for action. Parents and pupils have few concerns about bullying; they know that reported incidents are promptly addressed by discussion and reconciliation. Although incidents of physical bullying are rare, some pupils intimidate others with repetitions of hurtful names. Although perpetrators may be counselled individually, and the serious effects of verbal abuse are discussed during circle time, pupils interviewed during the inspection thought that some persistent offenders are not adequately controlled.

46. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good, and contribute to satisfactory levels of attendance in each year group. The school meticulously contacts families over unexplained absence, and rigorously records incidents of unauthorised absence.

47. In response to a key issue of the previous inspection, the school has improved its procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress, which are now good. National tests are supplemented with further standardised tests and other teacher assessments in each year group, and this information is used to check on the progress being made by each pupil in English and mathematics. In addition, useful and informative systems have been implemented to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding in other subjects, and identify strengths and weaknesses in their learning and how well they are achieving.

48. An effective system tracks selected pupils, helping the school to build a firm picture of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and learning. The recently introduced 'Progress Books' to assist the assessment of pupils' progress in writing is a useful initiative, but teachers' assessments are not yet consistent and accurate. Although teachers record their own assessment information in an informal way, in most subjects teachers seldom suggest improvements or further tasks when marking pupils' work, and few correct pupils' writing in other subjects sufficiently.

49. The overall use the school makes of its assessment procedures and its monitoring systems is satisfactory overall, with some good features. Information is carefully analysed at a strategic level so that the school can predict the likely performance in national tests and can set targets. It is also used to identify any weaknesses in provision and to improve curriculum planning. Pupils' achievements are tracked from their entry into the school so that a picture is gained of individual progress. The early identification of pupils whose performance is giving cause for concern enables the school to ensure that appropriate support is made available. The result of formal assessment is also carefully used to inform the setting of groups for English and mathematics, and for tackling issues of gender differences. Within these specific groups, teachers provide work to match pupils' attainment levels and aptitude, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.

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

50. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning overall. Some parents who provide additional help for their children at home confidently ask teachers for advice on general or particular issues related to their children's work.

51. Parents have favourable opinions of the school. Positive views at the pre-inspection meeting were confirmed by most responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Nineteen per cent of parents who responded were not happy with the amount of homework set. The inspection found that the provision of homework is generally consistent across year groups and is satisfactory overall.

52. The school has good links with parents, and the inspection confirms good relationships and good two-way communication. Several parents help regularly in classrooms, providing valuable help to groups of pupils and to individuals. The school regularly enquires if parents have skills or interests to broaden the curriculum. Each year, the combined first and middle school parents' association organises social events to raise money for school projects. The association has recently funded the purchases of security cameras and a public address system. Good co-operation is established between the parents' group and the governing body, and some families are active on both committees.

53. The quality of information for parents is good. Teachers provide some curriculum overviews each term, and the school's regular newsletters are informative about events and important dates. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, 2002, include much useful information, and fulfil legal requirements.

54. Parents are invited to discuss their children's progress and participate in target setting at three formal consultation evenings each year. Annual written reports to parents are of satisfactory quality, showing in some detail what pupils know and can do in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but not always demonstrating how attainment may be improved. The current report format provides inadequate space for teachers to write fully about subjects other than English, mathematics and science.

55. Parents are well informed of the school's routines and expectations when their children join Year 4. Parents of pupils in Year 7 are well informed about transfer to high school. Parents have good involvement in all stages of special educational needs. They have good access to class teachers and to the special educational needs co-ordinator. A Joint Agency Team key worker provides good support for families at home.

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

56. The good qualities of leadership and management of the school reported by the last inspection have been maintained. The staffing situation over the past two years caused difficulties in consistently implementing many of the school's policies. Raising standards in literacy has been particularly difficult. Recently established co-ordinators are now doing a good job in this and many subjects, however, and have put useful action plans in hand to improve standards. The positive ethos in the school reflects its commitment to equality of opportunity expressed in its aims and objectives and carried out in its curriculum and organisation. All involved are concerned with building a community where everyone is made to feel welcome and where staff, governors and parents work well together for the benefit of the children.

57. The headteacher and recently promoted deputy have successfully steered the school through a recent turbulent period. Staff turnover and absences have been high, with senior managers, including the English and mathematics co-ordinators, leaving for promotion and an unusually high number of teachers taking maternity leave at the same time. It has been impossible to fully implement the school's good procedures for the successful induction of new staff in such circumstances. The inspection took place two weeks before the end of the summer term, the week following a Year 7 residential visit and the week prior to the school's biannual performance. It also followed shortly after the traumatic sudden death of one of the teachers. Considering these factors, the school functioned remarkably well under the pressure of such close scrutiny. This is a tribute to the team spirit among the whole school staff.

58. The headteacher provides a strong lead in ensuring that the school fulfils its aim of providing an inclusive, caring ethos in which pupils from some very disadvantaged backgrounds feel safe, secure and valued. All members of staff support the spirit of this endeavour well, enabling the school to continue accommodating some pupils who would be very likely to be excluded from education altogether were it not for the level of support they receive. Parents are very aware and supportive of this aspect of the school's provision.

59. The head and deputy form an effective team. The recently appointed co-ordinators for English and mathematics have quickly established themselves as effective leaders and managers of their subjects. They provide good ideas on how to improve provision and raise standards. Some of these, such as the initiative on guided reading, have already had a positive impact on attitudes and standards. The leadership and management of ICT and music are particularly effective, as the co-coordinators are gifted specialist teachers as well as very good leaders and managers. Many other subject co-ordinators are new to their roles because of the recent staff turbulence, so the impact of their leadership and management has yet to be felt.

60. Good procedures are in place for all aspects of management of the school, but current circumstances militate against the effectiveness of many of them. With so many temporary and newly appointed teachers, the priority has been getting to know the pupils and managing them effectively. Many policy guidelines, for example on marking and discipline, have been difficult to implement consistently, and the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching have of necessity been put largely on hold. A simplified training and induction package was developed by the school to see the staff through this period of transition. Staff development is therefore satisfactory. The teachers' expressed needs for more training to refresh their ideas in some subject areas are taken fully into account in future plans. Appraisal and performance management procedures fulfil statutory requirements and the school achieved Investors in People status in 2001.

61. Information is carefully analysed at a strategic level so that the school can predict the likely performance in national tests and can set targets. It is also used to identify any weaknesses in provision so that it can inform aspects of curriculum planning. For example, senior management identified the need to raise standards in literacy and has taken measures to do so, such as arranging for teaching in separate gender sets. The school has also recognised the problem of disaffection among the older pupils.

62. Provision for special educational needs is very well managed by a co-ordinator in the five weekly sessions allocated for this very demanding task. He leads a large, enthusiastic team, including a temporary co-ordinator for Years 4 and 5, and an inclusion worker from the Children's Fund. The special educational needs governor works full time in the school as a learning support assistant. She has good oversight of provision generally, and has specific responsibility for developing a confidence boosting programme with passive girls in Year 5.

63. In seeking to evaluate its success, the school keeps detailed records of pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science and compares this with local and national performance. This has enabled it to identify a decline in standards in literacy that it is proving difficult to arrest. Senior managers are working closely with the local education authority to identify examples of excellence in this field that could serve as sources of inspiration.

64. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and ensure that all the policies that the school needs are in place, including one on racial equality. They set performance targets for the headteacher and work closely with him to set the agenda for school improvement. The school improvement plan sets appropriate educational priorities, and these are supported well through good financial planning and management. The governors keep a close eye on the school's work through personal visits and through feedback from subject co-ordinators and other key staff. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and fulfil their role in shaping its direction well. Together with the headteacher, they ensure that as much as possible of the school's income is spent on the pupils each year. The governors have a good understanding of the principles of best value. They continually re-assess the school's priorities, consult widely over proposed improvements, keep a close eye on the school's performance compared with other similar schools and ensure that major contracts are put out to competitive tender.

65. The school administrator is very efficient, providing the headteacher and governors with any information they require, releasing them to devote their energies to managerial and educational tasks. The office assistant and receptionist, who took over from the permanent post-holder on a temporary basis some time ago has learned the job quickly and performs key routine administrative tasks well. The school has acted on all the recommendations of the latest auditor's report. Good use is made of new technology for administration, both for pupils' records and for finance. Very good specialist teaching ensures good progress in pupils' computer skills, especially in Year 5 and Year 6, but computers are not fully utilised to support pupils' learning in classrooms.

66. A satisfactory level of well-qualified and very effective support is available to ensure all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Teachers and classroom assistants work very well together. As part of the government's "Sure Start Funding Initiative" the school has a Social Inclusion Development Officer who has an office within the school. In partnership with two trained learning support assistants, she makes a very good contribution to equality of opportunity. Pupils with severe emotional or behavioural problems receive a modified curriculum, for example, and are provided with a good range of interesting activities both within the school day, after school and during school holidays, aimed at improving their self-esteem and emphasising "life skills". The staffing levels available for pupils with special educational needs when they work within the classroom are not always sufficient to meet the high level of demand for individual support.

67. Overall staffing levels are good, especially the number of learning support assistants available to conduct small groups sessions outside the classroom. The school offers good accommodation overall. Classrooms are spacious and the hall large enough to accommodate the whole school. There are numerous small rooms to facilitate the range of small group activities that the school offers and the extensive grounds offer very good opportunities for sport and recreation. The site manager keeps the building and grounds in very good condition and makes a very good contribution to the smooth running of the school. There are sufficient resources to support learning in all subjects except for English, where there are insufficient suitable materials and equipment to support the lower attaining pupils' progress in some lessons, and inadequate library provision. Imminent plans are in hand, however, to build a new library facility. Resources for music are good.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68. In order to raise standards further and enable pupils to achieve as well as they can in all subjects, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in spoken and written English by:
  - Providing more regular structured sessions to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills within English lessons and at other times;
  - Adapting the National Literacy Strategy more effectively to meet the needs pupils with lower levels of prior attainment through interesting activities that are supported with sufficient suitable resources;
  - Ensuring that writing skills are developed other lessons as well as English as a matter of policy and that teachers' marking is more closely focused on improving writing skills;
  - Giving writing a higher profile around the school so that pupils see that good writing is valued and have plenty of models of well-presented writing to emulate.

(Paragraphs: 1, 2, 4, 20, 25, 30, 63, 69-74, 79, 86, 87, 92, 93, 96, 106, 110)
  
- (2) Improve pupils' attitudes further and reduce the impact of these attitudes on learning by:
  - Continuing and strengthening current measures to raise pupils' self-esteem;
  - Reviewing the school's discipline policy and ensuring that it is consistently implemented.

(Paragraphs: 12, 23, 77, 89, 92, 107, 124)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	39	19	0	0	0
Percentage	0	12	59	29	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	301
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	95

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	141

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	6.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.3

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
	2002	35	31	66

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	28	32
	Girls	15	16	25
	Total	36	44	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 (60)	67 (55)	86 (85)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	28	30
	Girls	17	17	23
	Total	42	45	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (60)	68 (62)	80 (81)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	296	19	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

*The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7
Average class size	27.4

#### **Education support staff: Y4 – Y7**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	299

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2002/2003
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	£
Total income	867 156
Total expenditure	845 402
Expenditure per pupil	2 790
Balance brought forward from previous year	13 153
Balance carried forward to next year	21 754

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
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	301
Number of questionnaires returned	63

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	51	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	48	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	60	6	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	56	11	8	6
The teaching is good.	49	48	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	49	11	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	22	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	29	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	43	41	13	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	62	35	3	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	40	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	44	11	1	3

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

### **ENGLISH**

69. At the previous inspection, standards in English were judged to be below average at the end of Year 6 and Year 7. This inspection judged them to be well below average. However, there is a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in both year groups than there was at the last inspection. The inspection found that these particular pupils make good progress, especially when they are taught in small groups outside the classroom, but their relatively poor performance in the tests contributes significantly to the school's overall low results. Another factor is that very few pupils attain the higher Level 5 in reading and writing, which indicates that more could be done to challenge potentially high attaining pupils. The school recognizes these problems and has put an action plan in place that has begun to improve the situation.

70. Girls' standards in reading and writing improved between 2002 and 2003, reflecting the efforts the school has made to boost girls' self-esteem and achievements. Boys' standards fell slightly in reading, and significantly in writing. Results in English have been consistently well below average in each of the past four years when compared to all schools nationally. However, most pupils taking national tests at Year 6 in 2003 were at least two years behind national standards in English on their entry to the school at the start of Year 4. They have therefore made satisfactory progress from this very low starting point to achieve these test results.

71. At the end of Year 6, standards in speaking and listening are well below average. A significant number of pupils, mostly boys, tend not to listen fully to their teachers or to each other. In Year 6 gender groups ('gender groups' refers to groups made up entirely of either boys or girls) for English, girls are learning to listen carefully and speak confidently. In boys' gender groups, listening is often unsatisfactory. Many boys are impelled to speak while being spoken to, and to shout answers when asked to raise their hands in response to questions. In Year 7, where all groups are mixed-gender, boys of average attainment sometimes respond loudly and aggressively to questions, while many girls are passive. Formal speaking opportunities are offered to pupils in assemblies and whole-school drama productions, and some lessons include periods for discussion, debate or role-play. These activities make a very positive contribution to increasing the pupils' confidence and to the development of their oral skills.

72. Reading standards in Year 6 and Year 7 are well below average. However, during the inspection, pupils in a low attaining Year 6 group fluently read aloud from a selected text that was matched to their reading ability. They answered factual questions about the text, demonstrating that they had understood what they had read. Other pupils in Year 6 read confidently from their story-books, often with expression and enthusiasm, but had difficulty in identifying or discussing the author's point of view. In Year 7, pupils with above average attainment understand how key words change the mood in printed text. Pupils of all attainments, including those with special educational needs, benefit greatly from the school's emphasis on guided reading. A limited ability to use books to find out information restricts pupils' independent work in all subjects.

73. From their entry point into the school the pupils make satisfactory progress in writing. Despite this, standards of writing in Year 6 are still well below average. Poor literacy skills inhibit learning for many pupils in most other subjects. A few higher attaining pupils in years 6 and 7 write confidently at length, and use some advanced vocabulary, for example 'infiltrate' and 'veered'. Pupils of average attainment do not use paragraphs or correct punctuation.

They often spell common words, such as the days of the week incorrectly, and copy inaccurately. Pupils of below average attainment and those with special educational needs often write incomplete sentence. They lack the vocabulary to make their writing more mature and interesting.

74. Standards of reading in Year 4 are in line with expectations and improving. During the inspection, in a very good lesson, high attaining pupils confidently interpreted the author's meaning in a complex text. Reading standards in Year 5 are below those expected for pupils of this age. Pupils of average attainment have inadequate skills to read words that are new to them. They can name fewer authors than pupils of similar attainment in Year 4. Standards of writing are well below average in Years 4 and 5. In Year 4, pupils of average attainment misspell many simple words. Sentences written by low attaining pupils in Year 5 include many spelling errors and are often difficult to decipher. Many pupils in all year groups find writing difficult and try to avoid it.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching was satisfactory overall during the inspection. It was very good in one of the fourteen lessons seen, good in four and satisfactory in nine. No teaching was unsatisfactory. Teachers use the National Literacy Strategy well to plan lessons that meet the needs of most pupils. Pupils of average and higher attainment are catered for effectively, but lessons in some year groups do not always take fully into account the gaps in knowledge and understanding of the lowest attaining pupils. This leads to insecure learning in some cases. Some worksheets are interesting and challenging, but others are poorly printed, and the content is sometimes mundane or confusing. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of pupils' National Curriculum attainment levels, and use this to set individual learning targets set for them. These are appropriate in many cases, but are sometimes too complex. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Some provides useful pointers for improvement, but sometimes teachers' comments are too long, and not specific enough to help pupils improve their work. Expectations for presentation are also inconsistent. Some untidy and incorrect work is accepted as satisfactory, and work is sometimes praised indiscriminately.

76. In all year groups, pupils' learning in lower attaining groups is often inhibited by negative attitudes. For example, during the inspection, in a satisfactory Year 5 lesson, many pupils were not fully engaged, despite the best efforts of the teacher. However, attitudes are often very good in the highest attaining groups, where pupils respond readily to their teachers, and lessons move ahead at good pace.

77. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 do some of their work on computers, such as typing and printing stories and setting out a play-script format, but ICT is generally underused in English. During the inspection, classroom computers were not used in English lessons.

78. Good examples were observed of teachers making use of the pupils' knowledge and understanding of English in other subjects. For example, their skills at persuasive writing are brought to bear in geography lessons and pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking clearly in some good science lessons. On the other hand, the limited literacy skills of the lower attaining pupils restrict their progress in some other subjects. For example, they have difficulty in writing summaries of their science experiments or writing down their own thoughts in religious education lessons.

79. Resources in classrooms are satisfactory overall, but not always appropriate for low attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs. For example, few reading games are available, and some overhead projector transparencies are not visually attractive enough to engage the pupils' attention.

80. The management of English is good. The recently appointed coordinator for Years 4 to 6 has already put measures in place that have begun to raise standards. For example, she has successfully promoted guided reading, and has improved the quality of teaching by working closely with teachers in their classrooms. She is well supported by the coordinator for Year 7, who is implementing the National Literacy Strategy for pupils at all levels of attainment in this year group. The coordinators are fully aware of the school's long-term weaknesses in English and have outline plans for overcoming deficiencies in writing.

## **MATHEMATICS**

81. Standards at the end of Year 6 were broadly in line with the national average at the last inspection in 1997. There was a sudden steep rise in the national average results between 1998 and 1999 that the school's results did not match, creating a gap. Since then, the school's test results have been rising at a slightly faster rate than nationally, but have nevertheless remained well below average until 2002. The provisional 2003 results reflect recent improvements in provision, including the grouping of pupils by ability and teaching boys and girls separately in some year groups, which have increased the pupils' rate of learning overall. They are higher than in 2002 and on a par with similar schools, but still below the 2002 national average.

82. The inspection confirms that standards are below average at the end of Year 6, but improving. Higher attaining pupils are very confident with most aspects of mathematics, particularly shape. They estimate and measure angles with a good degree of accuracy, for example, and calculate the sum of the interior angles of a polygon. Solving challenging shape problems as quickly as they can on the screen has considerably sharpened their perception and accuracy. Average attaining pupils have a good understanding of percentages, calculating, for example, 49.5 per cent of 340. The pupils are now making good progress in lessons and their current levels of attainment represent satisfactory achievement considering their starting points in Year 4.

83. Standards at the end of Year 7 are below expectations overall. This is despite current good progress and the above average attainment shown by pupils in the highest attaining group. These pupils use a wide range of knowledge and skills to solve problems, for example, finding factors of one million in order to 'crack a code'. As a result of some very good teaching seen during the inspection, they demonstrated a good understanding of the process of a mathematical investigation, putting their own ideas forward and listening carefully to others. Standards in the middle and lower ability groups are much lower than this. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress, but continuing to attain well below average standards. The school's data shows that the pupils achieve well overall compared to other schools in the local education authority area.

84. In Year 7, girls achieve considerably less well than boys do. A similar pattern applies to Year 6, but not to all year groups. The school has recognised that girls can lose motivation in mathematics and underachieve, and is experimenting with single-sex teaching groups. This is having a beneficial effect on the progress of the girls involved, who tend to participate more actively in single gender sets without slowing down learning for boys. Overall standards are held back in most year groups by the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in mathematics. However, another factor is the achievement of the more able pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving the advanced level 5 at the end of Year 6 is below average, although steadily improving. The co-ordinators recognise the need to aim at higher levels of attainment for more able pupils at an earlier stage in the school so as to continue increasing the proportion of pupils attaining Level 5 by the end of Year 6.

85. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching was good in three-quarters of the lessons seen during the inspection, with examples of very good teaching in Year 4 and Year 7. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, and most use a good range of equipment and materials to support pupils' learning. Some teachers make very good use of their own observations of pupils' responses to amend their methods in order to secure more active learning. For example, teachers in Year 4 found that girls responded well to visual stimuli, whereas boys found learning easier through hands on activities and therefore incorporated more of these ingredients into lessons. In some lessons, however, teachers do not fully utilise the full range of methods and resources at their disposal to make learning active and enjoyable. For example, some teacher on occasions do too much talking from the front, presenting their own solutions and explanations, and not enough moving around the class helping pupils to clarify their own thinking or getting the pupils to explain things to one another and the class. This limits the contribution mathematics lessons make to the pupils' speaking and listening skills. On the other hand, some teachers are very good at this, challenging the pupils to fully explain exactly how they think a problem can be solved and giving them plenty of time and support to do so. The introductions to lessons are generally strong, with teachers recapping on previous learning well and giving clear explanations of what is to be learned next. Activities are planned to cater for differing levels of attainment in each group, even in groups that are already selected on attainment. The tasks are well matched to the pupils' needs in most cases, although higher attaining pupils are sometimes not challenged sufficiently, for example by being asked to try and explain why a pattern emerges in a series of numbers rather than just work out the pattern.

86. There are good examples, of pupils responding well to consistent expectations and good marking with well laid out work that makes it clear to the reader what the problem was and how it has been solved. In these cases, the pupils' written English skills are also used and improved. In some of the work samples, the pupils' work is not set out clearly enough to show what has been done and is not marked in a way that shows the pupils how to improve. Teachers working with the very low attaining pupils, most of whom have special educational needs, secure good progress through systematic teaching, high expectations for behaviour and effort and great deal of patience and perseverance. The pupils have many barriers to learning, including ingrained bad habits of distracting others, low attention spans and a history of failure that has lowered their self-esteem. Teachers and teaching assistants do a very good job of boosting their self-esteem within the context of setting realistic but demanding challenges for them.

87. One of the two subject leaders has only very recently been appointed. They have, however formed an effective partnership and developed a clear agenda for improvement. The school therefore has a good capacity to further improve standards in mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

88. Attainment in science by the end of Year 6 is just below national expectations for the subject; this judgement is confirmed by the provisional results from the 2003 National Curriculum tests. Attainment by the end of Year 7 is similarly below national expectations. When considering these judgements it is important to recognise the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in both Year 6 and the Year 7 and pupils' very low level of literacy skills. The poor oral and written English of some pupils limit their progress in science. Another major factor reducing the pupils' achievements is the poor attitudes to work demonstrated by a minority of older pupils. Although most pupils are now making good progress due to recent significant improvements to the curriculum, particularly the greater emphasis on learning through scientific enquiry, these changes have not been in place for sufficient time to fully overcome the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Taking all these factors into account, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall.

89. Pupils in Year 6 know that when planning an investigation, they need to decide what evidence is needed and consider what equipment and materials to use. They understand that they should change one factor only in order to measure its effect and they make sensible predictions of what this effect may be. However, because their knowledge base is weak, their ability to anticipate what might happen is often limited. The pupils struggle to retain newly learned knowledge partly because of their limited vocabulary. For example, in conversation, many Year 5 pupils show uncertainty about the wider scientific vocabulary associated with the topic on day and night they have recently studied. Although they could identify a number of animals that come out at night, none could supply the term “nocturnal”. Similarly, only a few days after a lesson on how plants and animals adapt to their surroundings, Year 7, pupils could not remember the term ‘adaptation’.

90. The recent improvements in provision are having a more noticeable effect on standards lower down the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 demonstrated typical knowledge and skills for their age when planning an experiment to find out what conditions seeds need to germinate. With support, they considered some of the basic questions of scientific enquiry such as ‘What do we want to find out?’ and ‘What can we change?’ The specific questions they raised, such as: ‘Will a bean survive in shallow water?’ and ‘Will a bean grow in a glass of water?’ reflect a good understanding of what plants might need in order to thrive. They understand the importance of collecting data to answer questions and give simple explanations for changes in living things.

91. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It ranged from satisfactory to good in the lessons seen during the inspection. Teachers give clear explanations and are confident in their subject knowledge. They plan lessons well, with clear links to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. Pupils are given good opportunities to extend their speaking and listening skills in some lessons by being challenged and supported to fully explain their thinking to the class, and some teachers have high expectations for pupils to write neat and accurate explanations in their books. The use of science to support literacy is not planned systematically throughout the school, however, which is a weakness. Pupils use their mathematics skills well, for example by drawing tables and graphs to illustrate their results. Teachers have suitably high expectations of pupils’ work and behaviour and provide appropriate work and support for the range of abilities within their classes. Pupils with special educational needs are supported appropriately in science lessons to make good progress. However, in a number of lessons, the quality of learning was noticeably lower than the quality of teaching. This is because teachers have to work very hard to manage behaviour and to motivate pupils, particularly in the upper school at this time of the year. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, despite an interesting, well-planned and well-resourced practical activity – attempting to pick up various types of food with a range of tweezers and tools to represent birds’ beaks – a significant proportion of pupils quickly lost interest and motivation. They did not pay sufficient attention to the task or the teacher and required regular and repeated admonishment during the lesson. As a result, they learned little and could not explain clearly what features that a bird’s beak would have to have to catch and hold a live fish. The work in the pupils’ books, however, shows that this phenomenon was not having such an impact on learning earlier on in the year, which was good overall.

92. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator is well-qualified for the role and, in a relatively short period, has revised the government-recommended scheme of work to more fully suit the requirements of the pupils, organised in-service training for teachers and put in place a whole-school assessment system.

## ART AND DESIGN

93. At the time of the previous inspection, standards in art and design were judged to be above expectations at the end of both Year 6 and Year 7. No lessons were seen in Year 6 in this inspection, so judgements are based on discussions with pupils, their sketch books and previous work. The attainment of pupils in Years 6 and 7 is below what is expected nationally. However, many of them started from a low base of skills and experience, so these standards reflect satisfactory achievement overall. Attractive displays of three-dimensional work completed by pupils involved in the 'Inclusion Club' show good achievement. The many pupils with special educational needs are well supported within the classroom, especially when they need specific help, and achieve in line with their ability. There are examples of good progress within lessons in Year 5, with a good combination of skills and creativity being taught.

94. Discussions with pupils in Years 6 show that they enjoy art lessons. They have a secure knowledge of the skills needed for their drawings, paintings and other forms of art and design. They know for example that different types of pencils can be used to create different effects in observational drawings, and explain how brushes are used in different ways when painting. The more able pupils talk knowledgeably about the style of artists such as Van Gogh and Picasso and begin to convey their appreciation of these. However, this sound knowledge is not always transferred well enough to their work, which is frequently immature in style. The work in their sketchbooks does not reflect a systematic development of skills, particularly drawing. Only a minority of pupils produce the closely observed and carefully reproduced images that are expected from pupils of this age; many pieces lack the use of tone, colour and depth to represent form. Examples of previous work by past pupils are of a satisfactory quality, and show a comprehensive range of experiences, but current paintings of landscapes, for example, are below the standard expected for the age group. In Year 7 pupils' study of different architecture has resulted in pictures which are of sound quality. They were observed planning a "memory box" and although they showed imaginative ideas, their planning and drawings showed a below average spread of attainment. They are reluctant to contribute when discussing the work of different artists. A number of pupils in Years 6 and 7 are not yet fully confident in reflecting on their work and then identifying how it might be improved.

95. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The planning and teaching for the Year 5 work on sculptures was carefully structured to enable the pupils to observe, consider ideas, create their own ideas and use the necessary skills. This resulted in motivated pupils who applied themselves thoughtfully and willingly to their tasks, and many pupils show attainment that is in line with expectations in this area. Good teaching in another lesson also maintained a lively pace, with careful questioning and examples to draw out pupils' ideas, although the learning of pupils was only satisfactory because of their somewhat disaffected attitudes. Topics are carefully structured from the planning stage to the finished product, although the key skills are not always clearly identified and developed and therefore some of the pupils' work is haphazard and lacks precision. Expectations for presentation in sketchbooks are not consistent, resulting in work that is often untidy. The quality of teachers' marking is variable; where it is good, it provides realistic comments on how pupils can improve their work, but opportunities to improve pupils' writing, for example in explaining plans for designs, are not always taken. Many art and design activities make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to work together and cooperate. They are given good opportunities to consider and recognise the work of many different artists. Although there are examples of art work based on what pupils know of other cultures, this aspect is less strong. The good teaching seen during the inspection is ensuring good learning now, but has not been in place long enough to secure good achievement.

96. The co-ordinator has worked to ensure that weaknesses from the previous inspection have been tackled. There is now a clearer distinction between art and design and design and

technology. There are also better opportunities for three-dimensional work within the subject. Attractive images and designs have been created through the use of ICT, and resources in this area have improved. There are good procedures for the assessment of pupils, but the results of these are not yet used sufficiently to raise standards. The school makes positive use of artists in residence and competitions to help pupils' appreciation of art. The after school art club provides a further good source of experiences for the pupils.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

97. No design and technology lessons were observed during the inspection. The evidence used for judgements includes a survey of the limited samples of work on display throughout the school, design work in some pupils' sketch-books, and discussions with teachers and pupils. This indicates that the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 and Year 7 is below expectations, largely due to insufficient time being given the development of key skills in the subject in the past.

98. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were continuing a project on the "Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch". In groups, pupils had already made a model 'lighthouse on rocks with a cottage on cliffs' out of boxes and papier-mâché and they were attempting to design a mechanism to carry the lighthouse keeper's lunch across the water from the cottage to the lighthouse. Pupils' design and making skills in the brief activity observed were below those expected by the end of Year 6. Attainment in Year 7 is similarly below expectations, although the skills of a number of pupils have been improved significantly by the weekly afternoon design and technology activity led by an enthusiastic member of the staff of the local DIY store and the Social Inclusion Development Worker. During the year, Year 7 pupils have designed their "ideal" home, made a Roman catapult with a frame, a throwing arm and a torsion spring and made moving vehicles, showing rapid improvement in their skills.

99. The co-ordinator is well-qualified for the role but has only recently joined the school and been given responsibility for the subject and, although she has a good idea of the improvements and developments to be made in the subject, has not yet had time to make any significant changes.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

100. Standards in geography at the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations, reflecting good achievement. This reflects the findings of the previous report. No judgement was made in the previous report on standards at the end of Year 7. Discussions with pupils during this inspection show that standards are below expectations in geography but pupils' achievements are satisfactory because of their low starting point.

101. The work in pupils' books in Years 6 and 7 shows that there has been comprehensive coverage of geography topics. In discussions with pupils of Year 6, they show that they have an interest in geography and have retained a broad band of knowledge. They can confidently identify features on a world map and have reasonable map-reading skills. They give well informed opinions on what they have learned about the world, particularly in relation to their topic on France and previous work on the Rainforests. Pupils in Year 7 are not so interested or clear about what they have learned and show some confusion, for example, of the differences between cities, countries and continents. Only the more able pupils gave accurate descriptions of their work on weather and climates, while others could recall very little. The knowledge and understanding gained by pupils in Years 4 and 5, shows that they are developing good geographical skills. Year 5 pupils are making good attempts to use their knowledge of a village in India as a basis of a debate and discussion on the wider environmental issues of land development. Pupils in Year 4 use the vocabulary of geography

well to describe what they know about rivers, but for many pupils the lack of a wide vocabulary hampers their progress; this was particularly noticeable in Year 7.

102. Overall teaching and learning are good. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the need to incorporate the development of skills into their planning together with the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. In the lessons seen in Years 4 and 5 the strategies that teachers used to help to develop pupils' understanding were good and ensured that the majority maintain their interest and involvement. Occasionally the tasks pupils undertake are not well matched to their ability and this leads to some confusion among pupils about what they are learning. Most lessons proceed at a good pace so that maximum use is made of time. In the better lessons, positive links are made with both the speaking and listening and writing aspects of literacy. For example in one lesson, the teacher referred to what the pupils knew about persuasive writing to help them with their ideas for discussion and in other Year 5 lessons, good opportunities were provided for pupils to present their ideas orally. Pupils with special educational needs are given sufficient support in lessons to achieve as well as their peers relative to their prior attainment. ICT is satisfactorily used for research purposes. There are good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own environment through the comprehensive and worthwhile study of their own locality and ways in which it could be improved.

103. The co-ordinator is well placed to lead the subject. She has the necessary expertise and enthusiasm and provides very good leadership. She has monitored teachers' planning and aspects of pupils' work and has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. There is now a scheme of work, which is carefully used to guide planning. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. There are good procedures for assessment and the use of this information is now beginning to have a positive impact on progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. They are encouraged to consider important issues and learn to work together co-operatively, sharing ideas and respecting the views of others.

## **HISTORY**

104. Attainment is below expectations at the end of Year 6 and Year 7. However, the pupils make satisfactory progress overall from a generally low level of understanding on entry to the school. They are supported well in developing the key skills of historical enquiry as they learn about major events in selected periods of world and local history using a range of resources. Their attainment at the end of Years 6 and 7 therefore represents satisfactory achievement.

105. Pupils in Year 6 have a below average understanding of the concept of 'primary' and 'secondary' sources of evidence. For example, they are not sure whether photographs or the writing about them is the most direct piece of evidence. In one of the lessons observed, the pupils' low literacy skills limited their ability to formulate questions or clues for the pupil who was in a 'hot seat', to answer questions about the way of life, beliefs and achievements of the Ancient Greeks. In Year 7, pupils are beginning, with help, to link and select information from a variety of sources and are starting to organise their work with an appropriate use of historical terms. However, their work is also hampered significantly by their poor literacy skills, particularly their ability to use reference books effectively. For example, pupils looking for information on 'castles' were flicking through the reference book from page to page without looking in the index.

106. The quality of teaching is good. It was good in all the lessons observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They give clear presentations and use questioning well. However, the quality of learning was only satisfactory in the lessons seen, despite the good teaching. Teachers need to be very skilled at behaviour management to make any progress

in many lessons because of the poor attitudes of a minority of pupils, especially in Year 6 and Year 7.

107. The school's scheme of work supports teachers' planning well. A new co-ordinator took over the role in the beginning of the school year but had been on maternity leave for most of the current school year. As a consequence, although in-service training has been arranged, limited progress has been made in developing the subject. There is a satisfactory range of resources to support learning, however, and a good range of visits motivates the pupils and extends their learning experiences.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

108. By the end of Years 6 and 7, pupils' attainment in most aspects of ICT is typical for their age, representing good achievement. In Year 6, standards are above average in the programming and control aspect of the curriculum. For example, they have created programmes to make lighthouses lights flash and foghorns blast in sequences. This is because they experience very good teaching of these elements by a specialist.

109. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in ICT throughout the school, and are reaching at least expected standards now in some year groups. Progress is particularly good in Years 5 and 6 because this is where the very good specialist teaching takes place. Other year groups also do well because of good quality of teaching. Pupils in Year 4, for example, create their own branching databases using many different ideas such as fruit, sports, food and animals and devise sensible questions to divide these into categories. Standards in Year 5 are above average. The pupils create web-pages about their own biographies, inserting digital photographs, and most of the higher attaining pupils develop hyperlinks to other information. Pupils' difficulties with literacy are evident in some areas of ICT work, for example, weak spelling, although pupils correct this well using spell-checks. Their typing is also relatively slow because many do not know where letters are located on the keyboard.

110. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and the specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6 is very good. This leads to pupils gaining good levels of confidence and expertise with computers, other equipment and software. They also develop interest and eagerness which creates a "can do" approach. In Year 4, for example, pupils learned the ideas needed to enable them to create categories in their databases quickly and effectively. In Year 5, pupils' learning about how to import images into a web-page and manipulate them was very good because the teacher explained techniques quickly and effectively. The teacher also allowed pupils a good length of time to produce their own work. Pupils in Year 6 developed a good understanding of how to produce flowcharts because of the clarity of the teacher's exposition using the electronic whiteboard. This enabled the pupils to see what to do, while the teacher's probing questions ensured that they understood why things worked as they did. Able pupils are stretched well in lessons such as this. For example, they developed several additional, interacting sequences of events in the lighthouse, making the internal lights come on and off according to outside light levels. Year 7 pupils have had less time to catch up than other year groups; their learning over time is therefore satisfactory. They have twice weekly access the ICT suite at lunchtimes, but say that they seldom if ever use computers in the classroom. Most of the pupils are positive about the subject and use these opportunities well to extend their skills.

111. The subject is now very well managed and standards have risen significantly since the last report. Hardware and software provision has also improved. Pupils' ICT lessons are often very well linked to other subjects of the curriculum, although pupils do not yet use the computers in classrooms to the fullest extent. This is the next area to be strengthened.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French

112. Two French lessons were seen during the course of the inspection. The standards of attainment in these were well above average in pronunciation, but below average in the very small amount of written work seen and in pupils' understanding of written French, and generally below average in the understanding of how to link phrases together to form coherent sentences. A summary of these factors indicates that pupils attain more or less in line with national expectations by the end of Year 7. In this they are significantly helped by the provision of French for pupils in Year 6, which means that they have a little longer to accustom themselves to basic vocabulary, even though the majority of pupils still find it difficult to speak in complete sentences. Older pupils understand some vocabulary relating to the weather, and respond to the readings on pictures of thermometers by saying: 'il fait chaud' or 'il fait froid'. Almost all the pupils in this group know the sound of the words for foggy, windy, icy, and they can read the text accompanying 'weather maps' of France, so that they are able to determine to which map the text refers. The pupils in Year 6, who of course do not have to study French, nevertheless thoroughly enjoy their lessons and they recite with enthusiasm and accuracy the days of the week and months of the year from memory. They have already assembled a very good spoken vocabulary of businesses one might find in a town, and leisure activities which they may like to undertake, so they play a card and word matching game to reinforce this knowledge.

113. Pupils achieve well in both years. Pupils usually come into the school with almost no knowledge of France or the French language, and many pupils find speaking and listening both quite difficult. However, they are interested in their lessons, they enjoy them, and they rapidly learn to listen very carefully and repeat the excellent pronunciations which they hear. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good. The characteristics of the good teaching are the clear format of the lessons, the brisk pace, the excellent pronunciation by the teachers and the use of far more French than English in lessons so that the pupils have to listen continuously and carefully. As a result the pupils respond in a positive way. They love to hear the language spoken beautifully, and try their best to imitate even very difficult words – for an English tongue – such as 'brouillard'. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the individual support given in lessons.

114. The curriculum for French is broad enough to suit the pupils, and the school gives strong attention to the communication aspect of the language. For the last two years the school, in common with all others in the City, has been following a new scheme. The emphasis on the crucial element of spoken communication and relatively low demand for writing suits the pupils' needs. This scheme has the added benefit of having assessment built in at the end of each section. This is very useful, as it deals effectively with the lack of assessment mentioned in the last report. The subject makes a strong contribution to the personal development of the pupils – not only in their knowledge of a different country and its habits and customs – but also by giving pupils of all abilities self-confidence and the knack of listening and speaking actively and positively.

115. There are exciting developments in the pipeline for French to positively reinforce the pupils' achievements. Links with a school in France and a reinstatement of the residential trips have both been proposed. A factor currently working against pupils' achievement is that there are long gaps between lessons.

## **MUSIC**

116. Three music lessons were observed during the inspection, and pupils' singing was listened to in school assemblies. Based on this evidence, pupils' attainment in music is typical for their age by the end of Year 6 and Year 7. Given their low level of attainment on entry, this constitutes good progress through the school and good achievement, due almost entirely to the very good quality of teaching by the very enthusiastic music co-ordinator who teaches most classes. She has very good subject knowledge, organises the school choir, which performs around the locality, and plans and rehearses the bi-annual musical productions. An unusually high proportion of pupils have weekly music tuition from a range of visiting peripatetic music teachers and pupils' enthusiasm for the subject can be gauged by the 50 or so volunteers attending an after-school rehearsal for the end of year production of "The Wiz".

117. Year 6 pupils maintain their own part with an appropriate awareness of how the different parts fit together while singing by ear and from notations. They play tuned and un-tuned instruments with appropriate control and rhythmical accuracy. A selected group of more able Year 7 pupils demonstrated above-average skills in using computers and other equipment to support their learning in music. For example, they imported melodies from the keyboard and composed melodies using 'samples'. They also use the interactive whiteboard to translate music played on the keyboard into notation, lengthening and shortening notes by 'dragging' icons directly on the screen.

118. Pupils make good progress in Years 4 and 5. In Year 4, pupils compose and perform music, for example to describe a scene, at an appropriate level for their age, with control of their instruments and an awareness of pitch and dynamics. Year 5 pupils improve their performance of a song from India, recognising and exploring the ways sounds can be combined and used expressively. Most are singing in tune and are, with very skilled support, combining several layers of sound with an awareness of the combined effect.

119. The quality of teaching in music lessons is very good throughout the school due to the very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm and very good classroom management skills of the music teacher. Frequent changes are made to the activities to maintain and encourage pupils' interest and motivation a great deal of ground is covered in the weekly lesson with each class. The quality of pupils' learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good and was good overall in response to very good teaching. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the music lessons seen were good overall. Pupils enjoy their music lessons and most respond very well to their teacher's instructions. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported to make good progress in music lessons and more able pupils are suitably challenged. Resources for the subject are good and are very well utilised.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

120. Pupils reach standards typical for their age at the end of Year 6, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. This represents good achievement. No lessons were seen in Year 7, but pupils benefit from specialist teaching that should at least maintain the standards attained in Year 6. The school's records indicate that two thirds of pupils in Year 6 are competent swimmers.

121. During the inspection, similar athletics lessons were seen in Years 4, 5 and 6, where pupils were developing skills related to running, jumping and throwing events. Most pupils in Year 6 have good techniques for over-arm throwing. They demonstrated good actions in preparation for javelin throwing, and discussed some finer points of running and long jumping. Good progress was made in Year 4, where pupils practised static jumps, and long-jumps into a sandpit. They explained clearly how good head and foot positions contribute to distance. In Year 5, the pupils improved static jumping techniques through mutual coaching and evaluation. Higher attaining pupils positioned their arms and heads, and leaned forward to achieve maximum distance.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It was good in two lessons seen, and satisfactory in one. In all the lessons seen, the pupils were encouraged to evaluate and improve their work. In the good lessons, the teachers had very good subject knowledge, and continually coached and demonstrated to improve pupils' attainment. In the lessons seen, the teachers did not clarify for pupils the importance of consistent starting points for running, jumping and throwing. Consequently, measured 'improvements' in performance were inaccurate because successive attempts were launched from random points. Physical education is well integrated with other curriculum subjects. Pupils use numeracy skills to measure jumps and throws, and study video tapes of their techniques and performances. Teachers give support to individuals according to their existing levels of attainment, so that all the pupils make good progress. The pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory but, in each lesson seen, a few pupils were not fully engaged. Sometimes, the pupils' behaviour becomes unacceptable. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, the teacher had to intervene to stop a potentially serious argument about shared equipment.

123. The subject is well led and managed. The recently appointed co-ordinator is very enthusiastic, and has introduced systems for self-assessment and group-assessment. He has a very good overview of the subject, and is beginning to appraise standards in all year groups. Pupils of all attainments in all year groups support a wide range of extra curricular activities. These include gymnastics, athletics and tag-rugby. The involvement of local sports professionals and the school's links with Exeter Arena ensure that those pupils who show aptitude and talent have opportunities to excel by joining clubs outside school. Resources for physical education are good, and the school field is in fine condition.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

124. Pupils' attainment matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education at the end of Year 6 and Year 7, as it did at the time of the previous inspection. The pupils' knowledge is sound, but the standard of their written work is below average because of their underlying weaknesses in literacy. Even though their vocabulary and eloquence in speaking are limited, pupils can express ideas sufficiently to show that they have understood key ideas reasonably well. Their progress is often good in individual lessons and their achievements over time are satisfactory.

125. The school provides well for the teaching of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in religious education. Good links with some religious places and individuals help pupils to relate their

learning to real life. This is particularly so with local Christian organisations and churches. Two visitors from the local Anglican church, for example, were helping pupils in Year 4 to understand and discuss the differences and similarities between Methodist and Anglican artefacts and forms of worship. A recent visit to Buckfast Abbey has been similarly useful for pupils in Year 6. They have interviewed people there and learned a lot from their visit. The format and content of assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme also help pupils to develop their understanding of the subject. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, can link together ideas about "Peace" with spiritual notions they have explored in personal, health and social education lessons and in assemblies. Useful outside contributions to assemblies, for example from Christian groups, further help pupils to understand and express some of the spiritual elements of their development.

126. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers enjoy the ways in which the agreed syllabus enables them to explore concepts across a range of religions, for instance the idea of how art and design helps people to worship. They focus well on contrasts between different religions' beliefs and practices, emphasising similarities as appropriate, and getting pupils to understand why things are similar or different. In one Year 6 lesson, for example, the teacher very sensitively explored the ideas of differences between Islamic and Christian art, especially as these are to be found in places of worship. Most pupils could therefore understand why Islamic art is composed mainly of pattern. The use of an Islamic prayer-mat was also very helpful here in pupils' good learning of where such pattern can be found. It also helped to develop the lesson into an understanding of Moslem prayer practice and the ideas of the importance of cleanliness in the place of prayer. In another Year 6 lesson, where the teacher's own knowledge was less secure, the lesson was less well prepared and no prayer-mat was used. The teaching did not therefore have such a good impact. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to use ICT for research, and give support to pupils with special educational needs so that they make similar progress to their peers relative to their prior attainment.

127. The subject is well managed and resources are being improved to provide a richer range of artefacts to help pupils' learning. Assessment and subject monitoring have developed in sensible, manageable ways which staff find useful in identifying strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. The co-ordinator is trying to develop a greater variety of links, for example with Mosques, which would further help pupils to understand the range of practice in different religions in Britain.