

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **AMBLE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Amble-by-the-Sea, Morpeth, NE65 0ND.

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122349

Headteacher: John Butler

Reporting inspector: Michael Miller  
17556

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249233

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
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	South Avenue Amble-by-Sea Morpeth Northumberland
Postcode:	NE65 0ND
Telephone number:	01665 710217
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Robert Arckless
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17556	Michael Miller	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology Religious education	What sort of school is it? The pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development. School improvement and effectiveness.
9974	Daljrit Singh	Lay inspector	Educational inclusion Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development. Attendance. The pupils' and students' personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils and students? Educational guidance and assessment. How well does the school work in partnership with parents? The school's accommodation and resources for learning.
30046	Ross Parker	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	How high are standards? How well are the pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed? The efficiency of the school.
3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	English History	
30576	Peter Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27503	Marie Foulds	Team inspector	Science	
16348	Jo Nicol	Team inspector	Art and design	
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
27082	Geoffrey Henshall	Team inspector	Modern languages	
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music Citizenship	
1475	Val Lynch	Team inspector	Physical education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Amble Middle School is a community middle (deemed secondary) school for pupils aged nine to 13 years. It is about the same size as most other middle schools. There are 384 pupils on roll, 193 boys and 191 girls. The school is about the same size as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is currently over-subscribed, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The majority of pupils who attend the school live locally in Amble and a number of surrounding villages, the largest of which is Warkworth. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 5 is average. Almost all the pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of pupils from other ethnic groups is low. There are currently no pupils at the school whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English. Employment in the area is declining as a result of closure of mines and 2003 fishing quotas. The school takes its pupils from a mixed range of social backgrounds within the local area. At nearly 16 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is above average. Some 17 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is below average. At nearly 2.5 per cent, the proportion of pupils having full statements of special educational need is average. The school is part of a local partnership scheme for raising aspirations in schools.

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

Amble Middle School is an effective school. Overall, standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 8. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' enthusiasm for school, and their interest and involvement in its activities, are very good. The leadership and management of the school are good. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The good quality of teaching and learning throughout all year groups.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning in lessons.
- The good attendance of pupils due to their interest and enthusiasm for school.
- The good management of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- The very good provision and opportunities provided for pupils in music.
- The appropriateness of the headteacher's priorities for development and the school's very good commitment to improvement.

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

- The implementation of a more rigorous system for the monitoring of learning and teaching.
- The development of a whole school approach to assessment, target setting and the use of performance data.
- The full implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, particularly the information and communication technology and science strands.
- The unsatisfactory quality of educational provision for pupils in resistant materials and graphics.

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

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

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Since then, there has been good improvement on the key issues from the previous report. Teachers have had access to a satisfactory programme of professional development and the overall quality of teaching is now good. However, the level of challenge for higher attainers, through the identification of gifted or talented pupils, requires development. The school now provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Spending priorities relating to the provision of learning resources have now been properly established.

## 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	C	C	B	A
Mathematics	C	D	C	C
Science	B	C	C	C

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

When all three subjects (English, mathematics and science) are taken into account, results for the national tests of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were average overall when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with similar schools and when taking into account the pupils' prior attainment in the national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Year 4, the 2002 test results were also average. These results represent satisfactory progress overall for pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, there were some differences between the separate subjects. Standards in English were well above average compared to similar schools, and above average when compared with the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 4. Standards in mathematics were average compared with similar schools, but below average based on prior attainment. Results in science were average on all comparisons. On the basis of these national tests, pupils' progress from the end of Year 4 to Year 6 was therefore good in English, satisfactory in science, but unsatisfactory in mathematics.

In the current Year 6, standards are above average in English, science, citizenship, food and textiles, history, music and physical education. They are average in mathematics, art and design, geography and information and communication technology (ICT). They are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and below average in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics, and in religious education. However, it is satisfactory in mathematics and geography, and good in English, science, ICT, food and textiles, art, music, physical education and in citizenship.

There were no formal teacher assessments in Years 7 and 8, but the pupils appear to be on course for reaching national standards at the end of Year 9. Standards in the current Year 8 are above average in English, food and textiles, music and physical education. They are average in mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, French, geography, history, and ICT. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, but below average in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics. However, it is satisfactory in English, science, ICT, religious education, geography, history, physical education and in citizenship. Achievement is good in mathematics, food and textiles, modern languages, art and in music.

Standards for pupils with learning difficulties are below average by Year 8 but in line with their ability. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall. Achievement of gifted or talented pupils is currently unsatisfactory. There are currently no pupils at the school for whom English is not, or believed not to be, their mother tongue. Standards in literacy and numeracy are in line with national expectation. The school is now devising appropriate overall targets for improvement.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. This is because the school creates a very warm and friendly environment for its pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and there are very few concerns about bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show good respect for each other's values and beliefs; which leads to an ethos of trust and pupils view the school with maturity and pride.
Attendance	Good. Consistently good levels of attendance are maintained and encouraged.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 - 8
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 5 and 6 teaching and learning were good or better in four-fifths of the lessons seen. The highest proportion of very good teaching, almost half of lessons, was seen in these years. Examples of some excellent teaching and learning were seen in mathematics and music lessons. In Years 7 and 8 teaching and learning were good or better in over two-thirds of lessons. In Years 5 and 6, teaching and learning are very good in music and physical education. They are good overall and sometimes very good in English, mathematics and in science. They are good in art and design, citizenship, food and textiles, and history. They are satisfactory and sometimes good in geography and ICT. However, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in resistant materials and religious education. In Years 7 and 8, teaching and learning are very good in music and physical education. They are good overall and sometimes very good in English and mathematics. They are good in science, art and design, citizenship, food and textiles and in French. They are satisfactory and sometimes good in geography. They are satisfactory overall in history, ICT and religious education, but unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs are good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. Provision is good or better in science and in music, but unsatisfactory in design and technology (resistant materials and graphics). There are good links with partner schools, which ensure progression for pupils. The implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, and the monitoring of its effectiveness, has not yet been completed. Extra-curricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. However, there is scope for further development in subject based individual education plans, and in identifying and spreading good practice.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There has been good improvement on this key issue from the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development, are now satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils' moral and social education are good. The improvements are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, the school is not yet monitoring the success of its provision in these areas.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. The school provides good quality care for its pupils, and has sound arrangements for child protection.
The school's procedures for assessment	Satisfactory overall, despite no coherent whole school approach to target setting and analysing data. Most individual departments use assessment effectively, but there is a lack of uniformity aimed at improving standards.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. However, improvements are required to pupils' reports to provide sharper, professional comments on progress and information as to how pupils can improve.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives clear direction to the school and delegates increasing responsibility to his staff. However, the school does not have sufficiently systematic line management arrangements which enable formal, rather than informal, feedback to the headteacher from staff with delegated responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Soundly. Governors give good support to the headteacher and staff. They actively seek up-to-date information about their areas of responsibility.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Evaluation is detailed, but not systematic as it has been reactive or based on personal assessment rather than the methodical collection and analysis of evidence.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's resources, including grants and other funding, are used well to support pupils' learning. The principles of best value are well applied.
The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources.	Satisfactory overall. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. New teachers are given good support. The school's accommodation is satisfactory for the teaching of the National Curriculum. Resources are mostly adequate to support learning, but there are insufficient computers to enable all subjects to make their proper contribution to the pupils' learning of and from ICT

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents returned 142 questionnaires. This was 37 per cent of those sent out. Fourteen parents attended the pre-inspection meeting for parents.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has high expectations of its pupils and their children like school.</li> <li>Teaching is good and helps their children to make good progress.</li> <li>Behaviour is good and the school helps its pupils to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>The school is well led and managed</li> <li>Parents feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems.</li> <li>Their children get the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information they receive about their children's progress.</li> <li>The ways in which the school works with parents.</li> <li>The range of activities offered outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. They also agree that the information in reports to parents requires improvement. The school makes satisfactory efforts to work in partnership with parents. Communication between school and parents through the pupils' planners is inconsistent. This is because there is some uncertainty on the part of parents, and some teachers, as to the purpose of these planners. For its size, the school offers its pupils a good range of extra-curricular activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. When pupils start at the school in Year 5, their overall standards are average in English, mathematics and science. Inspectors find that the overall standards for pupils currently in Year 8 are average and their achievement satisfactory. However, for pupils currently in Year 6, standards are above average and their achievement is good.
2. No targets were set in 2000 for pupils at the end of Year 6, or Year 8. However, senior managers are now working with the local education authority to devise appropriate targets based on an analysis of the pupils' prior attainment. Until recently, the school has not made effective enough use of performance data on its pupils on entry in Year 5, in order to analyse fully the progress they make by Year 8. Consequently, there has been no firm assessment of the pupils' full level of achievement over their four years at the school. Nevertheless, senior managers are now beginning to develop an effective understanding of the importance of target setting in helping to raise standards and achievement.

#### **Standards and achievements in Years 5 and 6**

3. Results for the national tests of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were average overall for all three, core<sup>1</sup> subjects when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with similar schools<sup>2</sup>, and taking into account the pupils' prior attainment in the national tests and teacher assessments at the end of Year 4, standards were also average. However, when subjects are looked at separately, standards in English were well above average compared to similar schools, and above average compared with the pupils' prior attainment. Standards in mathematics were average compared with similar schools but below average based on prior attainment. Standards in science were average on all measures. Overall, these results represent satisfactory progress for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in mathematics and science and good progress in English.
4. Since the previous inspection, the school's trend for improvement has been in line with the national trend for pupils by Year 6. However, the trend for the last three years has been above that seen nationally. The trend for improvement in English has exceeded that seen nationally. In mathematics, standards have risen to be in line with the national average. The science results improved significantly and sharply in 2000, and have since settled to be similar to the national trend. These improvements are largely explained by the consistent emphasis, on the part of all teachers, on raising standards within these three core subjects.
5. In English, in 2002, the percentage of Year 6 pupils gaining the expected Level 4 and above was average and those gaining Level 5<sup>3</sup> and above in national tests was above average. When average points scores<sup>4</sup> are taken into account the results were still above the national average. Although well above average when compared with similar schools, results were above average when based on the pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 4. This represents good progress, particularly for the more able pupils.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Curriculum core subjects are: English, mathematics and science.

<sup>2</sup> Results are also compared not only nationally but with those obtained by students in similar schools; this includes those with a similar uptake of free school meals.

<sup>3</sup> By the end of Year 6, pupils are expected to reach at least National Curriculum Level 4 in English, mathematics and science national tests. Level 5 and above are referred to as higher levels. In 2002, the national percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 and above (with Level 5 and above shown in brackets) was 75 (29) per cent in English, 73 (28) in mathematics, and 86 (38) in science.

<sup>4</sup> Average points scores are also calculated for Year 6 tests. Level 4 is worth 27 points. A pupil achieving Level 4 in all three subjects would therefore have an average points score of 27.0.

6. Mathematics results overall were the lowest of the National Curriculum core subjects. In mathematics in 2002, results were below the national average for the pupils' attaining at Level 4 or above. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 or above was average. Overall, performance was average based on the pupils' points score and when compared with similar schools. However, on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment in Year 4 results were below average. This was because a small number of pupils who were predicted to reach the nationally expected Level 4 did not do so. Consequently, results were below average for pupils gaining Level 4 in the mathematics tests, although an average percentage gained the higher Level 5. These results show that the more able pupils make satisfactory progress, but a small number of average attainers did not.
7. Results in national tests in science, in 2002, were average for pupils gaining the expected Level 4 or above and the higher Level 5 and above. They were also average when compared with all schools nationally and on the basis of the pupils' average points score. Most pupils make good progress in science during their first two years at the school.
8. Standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection show that levels of attainment for pupils in Year 6 are above average in English, science, citizenship, food and textiles, history, music and physical education. They are average in mathematics, art and design, geography and information and communication technology (ICT). They are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and below average in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics, and in religious education. However, it is satisfactory in mathematics and geography, and good in English, science, ICT, food and textiles, art, music, physical education and in citizenship.

### **Standards and achievements in Years 7 and 8**

9. There were no teacher formal assessments in Years 7 and 8 in 2002. However, the school is now adopting, and intending to undertake, the optional tests and teacher assessments for pupils in Year 8. Assessment procedures to provide the essential data, which can be used to track progress, set targets and to raise standards are currently undeveloped. Most departments do not yet keep moderated portfolios of pupils' work to be used by teachers in order to provide examples of the standards required at each National Curriculum level and to help them monitor the accuracy of their assessments.
10. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that levels of attainment for pupils by Year 8 are above average in English, food and textiles, music and in physical education. They are average in mathematics, science, art and design, citizenship, French, geography, history, and ICT. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, but below average in resistant materials and graphics. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics. However, it is satisfactory in English, science, ICT, religious education, geography, history, physical education and in citizenship. Achievement is good in mathematics, food and textiles, modern languages, art and in music.

### **Standards and achievements of pupils with special educational needs**

11. Standards for pupils with learning difficulties are below average by Year 8 but in line with their ability. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well overall. Teachers know the pupils well, and consequently have a clear understanding of their overall needs as stated in the pupils' individual education plans. Support staff know them very well. All staff work effectively throughout lessons to ensure that pupils understand the work and are concentrating fully. As a result, the pupils stay in touch with the main ideas in each

lesson. During the inspection pupils with behaviour difficulties were seen achieving well in a range of subjects such as physical education, mathematics, music and religious education, and making quality contributions within English lessons. Pupils gain confidence from answering questions within lessons. They are also well supported in the use of different ways of recording their understanding. For example, in an English lesson, one boy could re-tell the whole plot of 'Tom Sawyer', using his own brief diagrams and drawings as notes. This method proved more effective than his written script. Individual education plans are detailed, but describe only general needs. Teachers are not consistently adapting the targets to reflect the demands in different subjects. Consequently, pupils' achievement in different subjects is not yet sufficiently well monitored.

### **Standards and achievements of pupils who are gifted or talented**

12. Provision for gifted or talented pupils is currently unsatisfactory. The school has not formally identified pupils with particular gifts or talents in specific subjects. No member of the staff has been nominated to co-ordinate the provision to ensure that these pupils make appropriate progress. Some subjects such as physical education and music have a good record in supporting pupils in public performances or as representatives in sporting or other events. However, the provision in lessons is not sufficiently adapted to make sure that higher attaining or achieving pupils are always able to deploy their higher level skills, or to develop their understanding to its full potential.

### **Provision for pupils with English as an additional language.**

13. There are currently no pupils at the school for whom English is not, or believed not to be, their mother tongue. Consequently, no additional support is required for any pupils having English as an additional language. The school has appropriate contingency plans to properly support any such pupil who may be admitted.

### **Standards in literacy and numeracy**

14. Standards in literacy are average overall. However, in subjects other than English pupils' standards of literacy are not yet being sufficiently well evaluated. Consequently, although pupils' work shows an overall improvement in the standards of spelling, writing and listening by Years 7 and 8, there is no effective system for finding out how much of this is due to the National Literacy Strategy. Standards of numeracy are in line with national expectation. Good opportunities are taken in science, for example, to plot graphs recording how loud various alarm clocks were. In art, scale and use of proportion are used effectively in the pupils' work. In physical education, the importance of choosing the correct weight of a discus to match the size of each individual pupil is stressed. However, measuring skills are underdeveloped in design and technology and there is little evidence of the use of numeracy in other subjects other than through basic bar charts and simple mental calculations.

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

15. Pupils display a very good attitude to learning, and this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Throughout the inspection, most pupils achieved good behaviour and constructive relationships in most lessons. These positive characteristics support the manner in which pupils serve and value their school and community.
16. Most pupils' are confident, disciplined, and motivated learners. In most lessons and subjects, pupils concentrate well and the less able persevere to complete tasks. Pupils co-operate well and work effectively in small groups exchanging information and ideas.

These positive characteristics were evident in a Year 7 physical education lesson and a significant number of other lessons. In formal and informal interviews, pupils speak proudly of their school and appreciated the efforts of most teachers and support staff. Pupils with special educational needs also share the positive attitudes, which are evident throughout the school. However, in some lessons a small number of pupils are not keen to learn. They take longer to settle down and frequently interrupt learning and teaching. For example, pupils reported that this significant minority is more likely to display immaturity when teaching is unimaginative and lacks rigour.

17. Standards of behaviour are good in most lessons and around the school. Despite the congestion in some narrow, long corridors and stairways, the school functions as an orderly community. Many pupils demonstrate a pride in their school and its traditions. Pupils are friendly, polite, courteous, and most talk confidently and informatively to adults, both inside and outside of the classroom. Many younger pupils welcome the opportunity to please teachers and visitors. There were no visible signs of bullying or other types of anti-social behaviour. However, a very small minority of pupils reported concerns about bullying and litter, which affect learning and set ineffective examples for younger pupils. Nevertheless, most pupils are adamant that bullying and racism are appropriately dealt with on most occasions. During the last school year, there were 16 incidents of fixed period exclusions involving 14 boys and two girls. All these pupils were from white British ethnic backgrounds. The number of fixed period exclusions is lower than those found in middle schools of similar size. There were no permanent exclusions. Exclusions have fallen significantly and the school continues to promote a sensitive and caring policy towards exclusion and successfully sustains its high levels of discipline.
18. Relationships between most pupils and staff are good. They are particularly constructive and purposeful in lessons and during extra curricular activities. Most teachers and particularly members of the senior management team set positive examples of discipline. This fosters good relationships between pupils and staff. This has a positive effect on pupils' learning and their social and individual development. These good working relationships also reflect the improvements in the school's approach to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development since the previous inspection. The trust and respect between staff and pupils supports the manner in which pupils serve their school and community. For example, a number of pupils are provided with opportunities to serve the school community as prefects. Other pupils throughout the school serve on the school council and represent their school community in sports tournaments and drama productions, which further enhance pupils' confidence and self-esteem. All these productive relationships effectively support pupils' personal development and enable them to value their school and the wider community.
19. The attendance of most pupils is good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Records show that attendance rates are better than similar schools in the local authority area. Attendance in the current academic year is good. This is principally due to rigorous investigation of all absences by the school, with support from the education welfare officer. This ensures unauthorised absences remain below the national average. These procedures, complemented by the work of staff, and a system of rewards valued by most pupils, help to ensure that pupils enjoy coming to school. Registers are taken at prescribed times and all pupils are accounted for. Whilst most parents support the school's work by sending their children to school regularly and on time, a significant minority of parents take holidays during term time and this drastically affects achievement and the personal development of pupils. The school is aware that it needs to raise the attendance levels of a small minority of pupils further.

## **The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs**

20. Pupils with special educational needs demonstrate positive attitudes, even when their needs relate to their behaviour. The overall atmosphere in lessons provides a good influence on them, because pupils are well behaved and concentrate on their work. Teachers take care to include these pupils in all aspects of the lesson. Staff watch carefully to ensure pupils are coping, and work very effectively with learning support assistants to ensure that pupils achieve well. In some lessons, where there is no additional support, teachers give more time to those with special educational needs than to other pupils in the class, but this does not have any negative effect on the overall learning. When pupils bring particular behaviour difficulties to the school there is appropriate scope for brief withdrawal from lessons, or for even longer-term individual support by outside agencies. Such support helps them to settle down and get back to their learning, and minimises any distraction to other pupils.

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

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. However, teaching was unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons (8 per cent), mainly in the resistant materials and graphics areas of design and technology. In Years 5 and 6 teaching and learning were good or better in four-fifths of the lessons seen, and the highest proportion of very good teaching, almost half of lessons seen was in these year groups. Examples of some excellent teaching and learning were seen in mathematics and music. In Years 7 and 8 teaching and learning were good or better in over two-thirds of lessons seen.
22. In Years 5 and 6, teaching and learning are very good in citizenship, music and in physical education. They are good overall and sometimes very good in English, mathematics and in science. They are good in art and design, food and textiles, and history. They are satisfactory and sometimes good in geography and information and communication technology (ICT). However, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in resistant materials, graphics and in religious education.
23. In Years 7 and 8, teaching and learning are very good in music and in physical education. They are good overall and sometimes very good in English and mathematics. They are good in science, art and design, citizenship, food and textiles and in French. They are satisfactory and sometimes good in geography. They are satisfactory overall in history, ICT and religious education, but unsatisfactory in resistant materials and graphics.
24. At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was judged to be sound overall. It is now substantially good. The previous report identified key issues for improvement related to teaching. These included:-
- providing sufficient challenge for all pupils in lessons;
  - improving the range and scope of monitoring in order to identify and build upon the best teaching, and to take action against the small amount of unsatisfactory teaching;
  - and: establishing a programme of professional development of teachers linked to individual and school need.
25. There is still insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. This is because the school has not yet identified pupils with particular gifts or talents. Teachers are not consistently planning opportunities to enable the more able pupils to progress to higher levels than the majority of the class. This is identified as an issue in English, mathematics, science, resistant materials and graphics, history, ICT, and in physical education. However, the needs of higher attaining pupils are being met in art, food and textiles, French, and in music.

26. The headteacher, who came into post after the previous inspection, has given a high priority to the monitoring of teaching. He has taken effective action against unsatisfactory teaching, identified and promoted good practice, and initiated an effective programme of staff development. Such staff development has been mainly aimed at a sequence of national initiatives over the last three years, but has clearly contributed to raising standards. A whole school policy for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been published recently. The school intends that, when this policy is systematically implemented, it will address the areas for development relating to monitoring at middle management level which are identified in English, French, religious education, physical education, geography, history and ICT.
27. A range of important key strengths characterises the good or better teaching throughout Years 5 to 8. These are to be seen across a broad range of subjects and contribute significantly to the support of the pupils' learning. They reflect well the improvements being made and the response of the best teachers to the key issues on teaching raised in the previous inspection report. They include, for example:-
- Detailed and careful preparation and planning of lessons, leading to clear explanations and the sharing of lesson objectives with the pupils.
  - A good pace of learning throughout the lesson, supported by a range of different activities, and rapid transitions from one activity to another.
  - Very effective use of questioning, to draw out knowledge, and to help pupils to develop their understanding.
  - Good management of pupils so that they spend the maximum time learning in every lesson.
  - The use of a range of different and appropriate methods, which maintains pupils' interest throughout the lesson.
  - Positive working relationships between teachers and pupils, and between pupils themselves, leading to high levels of collaboration within lessons

### **The teaching of pupils with special educational needs**

28. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers have clear and detailed individual education plans to ensure that they understand pupils' needs. They take good care to ensure that all pupils are included in lesson activities. They check carefully to see that pupils with special educational needs know what they have to do and watch closely to make sure that they are concentrating. However, teachers do not always adapt the work sufficiently to meet the needs of individual pupils. They do not always adapt the targets on the individual educational plans to reflect the demands in different subjects. Nevertheless, teachers do collaborate effectively with learning support assistants, all of whom make a good contribution to pupils' learning. These support staff work effectively, not only with the individuals they are deployed to support, but also with other pupils with less severe needs. They ensure that the pupils are properly equipped, and help them to concentrate on the work. Learning support staff maintain constant, subtle conversations to ensure that developing ideas are understood by the pupils. They remind pupils of what has been learned previously, and give them confidence to offer answers and contributions to discussions. All of this brings distinct benefits for pupils' confidence, self-esteem, and their learning overall.

### **The teaching of literacy and numeracy**

29. The school has made satisfactory progress in implementing the National Literacy Strategy but the teaching and impact of the agreed programme are not yet being systematically

evaluated. The school's implementation of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy builds on the successful introduction work undertaken in Years 5 and 6, where literacy strategies are now firmly established in all subject areas. All departments have revised their schemes of work and have identified ways in which they can contribute to improved language skills. Schemes now include foci on the learning and use of specialist words, developing the techniques of successful listening and encouraging pupils to write more effectively. The impact is clear to see in most classrooms, which display specialist words and pupils' written work linked to the units of work studied. Many teachers create opportunities in lessons for pupils to talk about and use specialist subject language. Inspectors noted particularly good examples in music and art, but overall there is still too much variation in the quality of literacy teaching. This is because of insufficient sharing of the more effective approaches across all subjects of the curriculum. The school has recently invested £2000 in buying reading books carefully selected to link with different subjects. Pupils are encouraged to spend 20 minutes each afternoon in private reading, but do not keep a detailed record of this. As a result of this lack of recording, parents are not yet sufficiently involved in supporting their children's reading development. The recently nominated literacy link governor has a clear understanding of the key literacy issues and recognises ways to strengthen her 'analytical friend' monitoring role.

30. Overall, strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. Whilst whole school training for teachers has taken place, and each subject area has been audited to check where numeracy skills may be developed, there is no formal tracking of how successful this is. The teaching of numeracy skills in mathematics is consistently good. For example, a wide range of games, number fans and individual white boards are regularly used to sharpen up the four rules of number.

### **The teaching of information and communication technology across the subjects of the curriculum**

31. The teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, as this strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy<sup>5</sup> is not yet in place. Whilst there have been significant improvements in provision, the school is still not sufficiently well resourced for ICT and provision is not yet sufficiently well planned across all subjects of the curriculum. There have been some delays in the local authority's programme for the training of teachers in the full implementation of the strategy.

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

### **The provision of learning opportunities and the statutory curriculum**

32. Overall, curricular provision is satisfactory. The curriculum provides a sound range of learning opportunities designed to meet the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of its pupils in all years. Provision is strong in music, art and science but unsatisfactory in design and technology because schemes of work in graphics and resistant materials are inadequate. Provision is satisfactory in all other subjects. Apart from the weaknesses in design and technology, the school uses its time well to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

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<sup>5</sup> The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools, in particular in English and mathematics, but also by ensuring that all subject departments contribute to the development of pupils' understanding and skills in literacy and numeracy. For more information please go to the Government's Department for Education and Skills web-site: [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keywstage3](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keywstage3)

33. The introduction and provision of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory. Teachers are conversant with the national strategies for pupils in Years 7 and 8 but monitoring of the effectiveness of these strategies in the literacy, numeracy, ICT and science strands is limited and under-developed. Specialist lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) are taught in Years 5 to 8. These discrete lessons are covering the required aspects of the National Curriculum programme under a new scheme of work. The school has established a sensible programme to ensure that new resources are purchased as the various curriculum units are introduced. However, the use of ICT in other subject areas does not yet fully support the implementation of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
34. The school provides effectively for personal and social education, which is taught by form tutors during tutorial time. The course satisfactorily covers health, drugs and sex education together with elements of citizenship. Useful contributions are made by outside speakers including the school nurse, the community police officer and representatives of local industry. Pupils' awareness of possible future careers is raised through wall displays and in lessons, for example in geography, where they study a unit entitled 'The World of Work'.
35. The school takes its commitment to equality of opportunity seriously. All pupils have access to the curriculum and are encouraged to become involved in the school's life and work. However, gifted or talented pupils have not yet been formally identified and there is little specific extension work or enhancement provision for them.
36. Overall, extra-curricular provision is good and pupils are actively encouraged to take part in activities outside the classroom. There are particular strengths in music, drama and sport. Regular drama productions take place, school musicians visit Switzerland and Holland, pupils have extensive sporting opportunities and a variety of educational visits takes place. Good use is made of the local environment and Amble pupils are involved in a variety of community projects, which range from tree planting to constructing mosaics. Pupils have opportunities to take part in well planned and interesting theme days such as 'Tudor Day', which enlivens the teaching of history.
37. Curricular links with partner schools are good. Teachers liaise well with colleagues from the high and first schools to plan schemes of work, which ensures that pupils progress through a range of increasingly complex themes and ideas. Joint planning has been particularly effective for citizenship where a new course is being introduced.

### **The provision of learning opportunities for pupils with special educational, needs**

38. The arrangements for pupils with special educational needs ensure that they have full access to the whole curriculum. Clear and detailed individual education plans make class and subject teachers fully aware of their needs. However, whilst these are generally linked to the literacy, numeracy and behaviour management needs of pupils with special educational needs, there are no subject specific targets included in individual education plans. Nevertheless, support staff work effectively to ensure that pupils can cope with the ideas, and with practical tasks presented across a range of subjects. For example, in one physical education lesson a pupil with special educational needs was a high achiever in the group. There are well-organised extra sessions to help pupils in Years 5 and 7 who have not yet reached expected standards in literacy. There is good additional support from outside agencies for pupils who are finding it hard to adapt to classroom demands. However, the school is not yet exploiting ICT effectively to support individuals in developing their basic skills.

## **Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

39. The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of the pupils' personal development is good overall. Some aspects, such as moral and social development, are stronger than others. SMSC was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. Sound progress has been made on this key issue, but there are still elements for further improvement and development. For example, there is no whole school policy for SMSC. The headteacher has an over-view of these aspects of the pupils' personal development, but there is currently no monitoring of the success of what the school provides. Governors' minutes, following the previous inspection, record that proper and successful action was taken to raise awareness and understanding of SMSC amongst staff and governors. As a result, individual departments have identified appropriate opportunities within their subjects through which SMSC education is promoted. Most subjects now undertake this aspect of the pupils' personal development well, with particular strengths in science, ICT, religious education, art, history and in music. However, the elements identified within schemes of work are not yet the subject of review. The various strands of the school's SMSC provision have yet to be coherently drawn together, although the headteacher is intending to build this in to future curriculum reviews. Improvement is still required in mathematics relating to spiritual and cultural development and in resistant materials and graphics for all SMSC areas. Nevertheless, the school now has a good overall level of display in classrooms, which supports SMSC education and keeps these aspects in the forefront for the pupils.
40. The school holds regular assemblies for its pupils. These are of sound quality, although low key, and meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship for those year groups attending. However, on days when pupils do not have an assembly, statutory requirements are not met during form tutor time. The teachers who take assemblies keep their own planning, but there is no central record maintained of the school's overall provision. Themes for assemblies appear well related to SMSC elements. For example, during inspection week the themes of consideration for others and 'special things' were presented. There was good cause for reflection on the effects of the Iraq War on children like themselves and prayers for peace from Christian and North American Indian spiritual traditions used effectively. Pupils often take part in assemblies and, during a presentation assembly, the school Ceilidh Band made a good contribution. The key festivals of the major world religions are celebrated on a fairly regular basis. Visitors from charities such as the NSPCC and UNICEF occasionally support assemblies for the pupils.
41. Opportunities for the pupils' spiritual development are satisfactory overall. In subjects such as religious education, the older pupils are provided with good opportunities to explore the values and beliefs of others. In music, pupils consider the mood of pieces they listen to and how this affects their own feelings and emotions. During the inspection, the Year 5 pupils gained a real 'buzz' from taking part in the history Tudor Day, when they explored what it was like to live in those times. In English poetry work, pupils consider well the beauty and power of the natural world and in science, there is much celebration of the environment and wildlife. The concepts of exploration and discovery are well promoted through, for example, the school's Science Week and Internet research in ICT. Almost all departments create a sound climate in the classroom in which pupils are valued and they respect the work and views of others. The school's past success is well celebrated through a display of football shirts donated by former pupils who have turned professional in the sport. However, the school is concerned for its pupils to make increasing connections between aspects of their own learning, thinking and aspirations. It is therefore to become involved in RAIS (Raising Aspirations in Schools) from summer 2003, in order to promote improve further, as a 'thinking' school, such aspects of the pupils' spiritual development.

42. The school's provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils are expected to behave well, show respect for others and are enabled to develop a clear sense of right and wrong. The school's moral code is applied well, and pupils know the implications of breaking that code. The school's personal, social, health and citizenship education programme makes proper provision for dealing with issues such as bullying and sex or drugs education. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility, for example through the new school council or the prefect system. Pupils are keen to support the school and this is reflected in their positive attitudes to the school as a community. Pupils consequently interact well together and good social relationships enable them to work collaboratively in lessons and group activities. Moral and social responsibility is illustrated well through the school's regular charity fund raising activities. The school works well with local community groups. For example, pupils have been involved in local environmental projects such as tree planting. Trips and visits, for example to Norway, give pupils good opportunities to experience living in other communities and different social and cultural situations.
43. However, whilst pupils recognise and respect social differences and similarities amongst their own community, their experience of broader, multicultural communities is more limited. There is some good practice, for example in a teacher-produced display relating to a personal visit to schools in Gambia, and a further display recording the visit of a French theatre company. However, provision for pupils to acknowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the multicultural nature of contemporary Britain is not yet a significant enough aspect of school life. This requires more emphasis in order to equip the pupils better to face life in the wider community outside the school. Consequently, provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, the school does offer a good range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to develop an understanding of their own cultural heritage and traditions. The foyer of the school has a (yet to be finished) mural depicting Amble and its environs. This reflects well, for example, the local fishing industry and historical heritage as represented by Warkworth Castle. Cultural strengths are to be seen through the school's arts provision, not least through its musical activities. There is a strong tradition of performance and school productions, and this is well supported through photographic records as well as being talked about enthusiastically by pupils and their parents. The school's theme days, such as 'Evacuation Day' and 'Tudor Day' are popular with pupils and parental volunteers alike. Such activities are very well planned, represent very good provision and are culturally enriching for the pupils.

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

### **The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development**

44. The overall provision for pupils' care, their support, guidance and welfare is good. Some important aspects of their care have improved since the previous inspection. The good arrangements for child protection enable the pupils to learn in a safe and secure environment.
45. All staff have guidelines relating to child protection, and a designated teacher is in place with responsibility for this area of the pupils' welfare. Staff are properly updated on child protection matters through regular, normal channels such as staff meetings. However, arrangements for updating new staff are initially informal and a more structured approach is required as part of the school's induction programme for new staff. A minor amendment is required to the school's child protection policy in order to ensure that it includes the name of the designated teacher and, consequently, for governors to ensure the policy fully meets statutory requirements.

46. Most teachers and support staff respond well to their pupils' concerns and use formal and informal methods to acknowledge and celebrate pupils' achievements. Lesson and other inspection observations show that pupils are valued and consistently informed about how to learn and serve the school community as responsible and disciplined citizens. The good care pupils receive contributes to their welfare and well-being.
47. Pupils are encouraged to care for the school environment as well as for each other, and this results in the pride the pupils have in their school. Sound health and safety procedures are in place to ensure that pupils learn in a safe environment. For example, the school ensures that the electrical appliances and fire equipment are checked regularly and pupils are made aware of the evacuation procedures. Pupils have confirmed that fire drills are frequently undertaken. Nevertheless, inspectors identified a health and safety hazard in the design and technology department where tools are not always kept in a safe and secure place. The school is aware of the concerns brought to its attention and is taking action to rectify them. Members of the public use the school field, and adjacent unfenced areas, for dog walking both during and after school hours. This presents a potential health and safety hazard and, during the inspection, a stray dog was causing a nuisance in the school playground. The governing body has so far been unsuccessful in gaining additional funding to provide security fencing for the site, but the school makes every effort to minimise any such hazards.
48. Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development are good. They enable teachers to provide good levels of information to pupils and effectively to support their academic and personal development. Most lunchtime and non-teaching staff continue to provide adequate levels of supervision and enjoy a productive relationship with most pupils in their care. Year 8 pupils, who provide additional care and support for the younger pupils, effectively assist them. These arrangements create a learning environment, which is warm, friendly and enhances pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence.
49. There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring pupils' attendance. However, information about attendance is not yet used effectively enough to raise the attendance of the small minority of pupils who prevent the school achieving higher levels of attendance than those presently recorded. The school is starting to take satisfactory action concerning this through the work of the education welfare officer.
50. The school has a comprehensive policy and very effective procedures to achieve good behaviour, which was evident in many lessons seen across the school. Teachers make effective use of rewards and recognise pupils' achievements. Pupils value this system of rewards. Pupil planners are used well to record and monitor pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work. The code of conduct is clear and is understood by the vast majority of the school community. It is properly implemented by most staff and ensures that most pupils respect others and the environment and show consideration, both inside and outside of the classroom.
51. There are sound policies and procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour. All known incidents of bullying are challenged, investigated, recorded and reported to parents and governors. These measures discourage bullying and create an environment of mutual respect and tolerance. Incidents of racism are also challenged, but not consistently investigated, recorded, monitored or referred to senior management, and this sometimes affects pupils' relationship with staff, their confidence and self-esteem.

### **Provision for pupils with special educational needs**

52. The care for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Teachers know the pupils very well. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) works closely with teachers, and with external support agencies to identify effectively the pupils' special needs. These are clearly recorded in detailed and helpful individual education plans so that teachers and support staff understand the sort of help they need to give. Consequently, provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is good. The SENCo arranges to review pupils' progress regularly, sometimes checking every three or four weeks. Class and subject teachers provide detailed and highly relevant comments, which help the SENCo to evaluate progress towards individual targets. Support assistants are very careful to build confidence and self-esteem, so that pupils are able to behave well and to learn effectively. The SENCo provides very clear information for all staff about any urgent or severe needs. Arrangements within the school are sufficiently flexible to enable staff to cope with unexpected individual pupils' difficulties. The SENCo maintains close informal contact with parents. For example, regular telephone conversations are often held with parents of pupils with urgent needs, or with those parents who find difficulty in getting in to school. Nevertheless, sufficient time is not always available to provide all parents with the required formal six-monthly review of progress towards the targets on pupils' individual education plans.

### **Educational and personal support and guidance: Assessment**

53. Assessment, overall, is satisfactory. Almost all subjects assess pupils accurately and follow the school's marking policy. In art, mathematics, physical education, music, food technology and textiles and in English up to Year 6, assessment is used effectively to inform curricular planning. However, in resistant materials, graphics and citizenship, procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory. In history and in geography pupils have little awareness of what their standards are.
54. There is currently no whole school approach to target setting or analysing the extent to which pupils improve throughout the school. This means that the senior management have no hard evidence to judge how effective individual subjects are. The professional judgement of teachers is used to set targets for pupils in individual subjects. Whilst this is often very accurate, because teachers know pupils' attainment well, there are no formal moderation procedures in place to check whether predictions are sufficiently challenging or unrealistic. The school receives performance data for English and mathematics electronically from first schools before pupils arrive at the start of Year 5. However, the school waits more than a term before agreeing targets in these subjects and there is no formal, systematic tracking of pupils' progress towards targets in any subject.
55. School reports are satisfactory. They provide evidence of how hard pupils work and give a reasonable indication as to how pupils are attaining compared with national standards. However, targets for improvement rarely give clear guidance on which areas of subjects need to be developed.

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

56. The school has sustained its satisfactory relationship with parents, as reported by the previous inspection. However, the school and some parents report this to be an area, which requires further improvement. For example, there remain some concerns over the clarity of pupils' annual reports to parents, because they do not tell pupils clearly enough what they need to do to improve.
57. Most parents are pleased with the quality of education provided for their children, and with much of the headteacher's management and leadership. Parents value and appreciate the care and support their children receive, which evidently enables pupils to become

mature members of the school community, to make progress and to work hard. Inspectors agree with most of the parents' views and support their helpful comments. However, some parents are concerned about how pupils' progress is reported and the range of extra activities outside lessons. These concerns were investigated and the inspection evidence shows that pupils' end of year reports are satisfactory, but the language used to report some subjects is unclear and some targets set for improvement are too broad. Furthermore, homework planners are not consistently signed or used by some parents. The present arrangements sometimes affect the relationship between some parents and teachers and communication between school and home. The provision for activities out of lesson is at least good and effectively supports pupils' achievements and personal and social development.

58. Overall, the school provides appropriate information and ensures a sound level of communication with most parents. Good quality information celebrating pupils' achievements and involvement in school and community events are regularly reported through the school's newsletters. These newsletters are produced in an accessible and purposeful style and language. The school prospectus provides new parents with good quality information, which enables them to make informed decisions about the school's provision. The annual report from governors enables parents to keep abreast of important events in the school and community. Both of these documents comply with statutory requirements. A designated teacher works very closely with the linked first schools to ensure parents are provided with any necessary information. This process ensures the smooth transition of their children from first to middle and subsequently on to the high school. The school continues to improve its marketing strategies and is beginning to improve its image in the local community.
59. Parents very actively support sports events, and school drama and musical productions. On 'Tudor Day', which took place during inspection week, some parents entered into the spirit of the occasion by dressing in Tudor costume. Such arrangements have a positive and constructive impact on pupils' achievements, as well as on their cultural and social development.
60. In addition to supporting school activities, most parents support learning at home. These parents encourage the active use of information and communication technology and ensure their children complete homework on time. However, a few parents do not consistently support the school's efforts to improve pupils' attendance and therefore fail to comply fully with the home/school agreement.

### **Partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs**

61. Insufficient time is allocated to provide all parents with the required formal six-monthly review of progress towards the targets on pupils' individual education plans. Parents are invited to discuss the progress of their children at parents' evenings. When individual pupils are experiencing particular difficulties the special educational needs co-ordinator maintains frequent informal home contact. The links with parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs are entirely appropriate.

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

### **Leadership and management**

62. The leadership and management of the school are good, overall. The management skills of the headteacher in identifying areas for development and improvement, and his leadership qualities in ensuring these necessary changes are undertaken are good. The

headteacher is building an effective leadership team and is supported by an active and conscientious governing body. Consequently, the quality of the school's development planning is good. The leadership approach of the school is ensuring that the shared commitment of the staff and their ability to succeed are very good. This is because the focus for the school's development is firmly rooted in a determination to create an ethos<sup>6</sup> for learning where the pupils can achieve well and standards are raised. Through this, the aims and values of the school are being soundly met through its life and work. The school is aiming for continued improvement, recognising the need to build on developments in Years 5 and 6, and to develop increasingly effective learning in Years 7 and 8.

63. The leadership and middle management skills of subject co-ordinators are good overall. In mathematics, leadership is good and improving. The subject leader gives a clear direction to his team. In science, it is similar, so there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. In English, good leadership and training linked to national initiatives has led to improvements in standards. The very good leadership and management of physical education ensure the department's good contribution to the pupils' personal development. In music, very good leadership contributes to a rich diet for pupils, and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. In art and in food and textiles good leadership has led to good improvement. In modern languages and in information and communication technology (ICT), good leadership has ensured a clear direction. Leadership is satisfactory overall in religious education, geography, in citizenship and in history. Nevertheless, there are elements of unsatisfactory management in history where the monitoring of teaching in the subject requires improvement. However, in resistant materials and graphics ineffective leadership and management means there has been a lack of improvement since the previous inspection.
64. However, the analysis and use of performance data to help set targets for their department, groups of pupils and individuals are under-developed at middle management level. For example, within mathematics, assessment is accurate but target setting is insufficiently rigorous. There has been effective progress in setting targets for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in science, but this is insufficiently developed into Years 7 and 8.
65. Monitoring the effectiveness of learning and teaching is insufficiently developed. For example, in science plans have been made, but not yet implemented. In English, there are variations in teaching and marking because of the limited opportunities to monitor them systematically. In modern languages monitoring and evaluation does not take place outside the school's professional development system. In religious education, there is no formal accountability through the school's line management system, and insufficient use is made of non-contact time for monitoring learning and teaching. The situation is similar in physical education, geography, and in history, where it culminates in too much variation in the standards of teaching and learning. The provision for ICT is not adequately monitored across other subjects.
66. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is satisfactory overall. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school. The school's leadership is realistic and practical in its approach to secure improvement. The governing body, senior management and staff take a justifiable pride in the school. The governors fulfil their statutory duties satisfactorily except in the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils, and the naming of the designated teacher for child protection in the school's policy document. The school's management is outward, as well as inward looking. This approach is reflected in its links with local community activities and partner schools, and through

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<sup>6</sup> In this context 'ethos' refers to the characteristic spirit or attitudes of the school as a community.

initiatives such as the Raising Aspirations in Schools (RAIS) initiative. The governors and headteacher have developed a clear vision of the work they need to do to maintain the improvements. A programme of regular visits by individual governors has helped them to monitor how effectively the necessary improvements are being implemented.

### **Social Inclusion**

67. The school is committed to the concept of equal opportunities and this is evident in many of its policies and practices, particularly the support given to pupils with special educational needs. However, the identification and arrangements for gifted or talented pupils are not yet good enough. Nevertheless, the headteacher, senior management team and governors lead by example, and foster good relationships between staff and most pupils. Overall, the school provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils in the middle school and is committed to effective race relations.
68. The school celebrates diversity and there are some opportunities for pupils to learn about other faiths and cultures through religious education and music. This contributes satisfactorily to students' cultural and social development. However, this is insufficiently well developed through subjects such as English literature and there is a lack of emphasis on issues affecting multi-racial Britain. In science and mathematics, the work of ethnic minority scientists and mathematicians is insufficiently celebrated.
69. The school has policies in place to discourage racist and sexist behaviour, but this is not always sufficiently rigorously applied. The recommendations made in the MacPherson report and by the Commission for Racial Equality are not fully reflected in the work of the school. Pupils' test results and teacher assessments are monitored by gender, but not ethnicity. Consequently, the progress of minority ethnic pupils is difficult to assess.

### **The leadership and management of special educational needs**

70. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) maintains careful and detailed records of pupils' needs and progress. Teachers and support staff are given clear details in individual education plans, which include helpful guidance on specific strategies to meet individual pupils' needs. The co-ordinator reviews individual progress very carefully, to be absolutely sure that the support is effective. Class and subject teachers contribute detailed reports to these reviews, with a clear focus on the individual targets set by the SENCo, but not yet specifically for their own subjects. There are effective links with the first schools and the secondary school so that support is continuous. Similar links are maintained with external support agencies. Improvement has been good since the previous inspection. The team of support staff has been extended and a range of appropriate training has been made available to them. The headteacher budgets to make additional time available so that the SENCo is able to conduct properly statutory annual reviews. However, the SENCo's overall workload does not allow sufficient time to provide the necessary six-monthly updates for parents of pupils with individual education plans.

### **The school's resources: *staffing***

71. Staffing is good overall. Funding of staffing has been a priority and, as a result, there are more teachers and learning support assistants than at the previous inspection. They are well matched to the teaching of the curriculum and there is a good mix of youth and experience. There is a pool of regular supply teachers who are familiar with the school and whose employment is organised well. Whilst technical support for ICT is very good, there is insufficient specialised support for science.

72. Teachers have good opportunities for in service training in most curricular areas, which are not only linked to the needs of the school but also to their professional needs. However, there is no programme of staff training for the support assistants. Although there is no discrete programme for the induction of new teachers, their support from the local education authority, the school's senior management team and from curriculum leaders is very good.
73. There is a coherent policy for performance management of staff and a very well developed strategy in place for its implementation. Lines of responsibility are clearly defined and two cycles of monitoring and review have now been completed. A good portfolio of teachers' personal and professional records is being established.

#### **The school's resources: *accommodation***

74. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory. There have been some satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection to enhance the learning environment, but the headteacher and governing body are aware that further improvements are required. Nevertheless, the school's accommodation continues to support adequately teaching and learning in most subjects. In physical education and mathematics, accommodation is good. The building is kept clean, but is not in good enough decorative order. Some of the school's toilets have inadequate ventilation. However, teachers make effective use of colourful displays to create a more stimulating environment. The building is not designed to accommodate physically disabled pupils. There are regular small flights or single steps. This also limits access by the local community who use the indoor space for recreation classes. The current use of the library as a base for the school's main computer network, and for the discrete teaching of the subject, is unsatisfactory in that it restricts access for other subjects.

#### **The school's resources: *resources for learning***

75. The provision for resources is satisfactory overall, and adequate in most subjects. This enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. In general, the shortcomings identified at the time of the previous inspection have been satisfactorily remedied. This is as a result of the establishment of tighter budgetary planning relating to learning resources. However, some textbooks are ageing, such as in religious education. There are weaknesses in the use of resources for resistant materials and graphics. Nevertheless, the school and its governors are working hard, in the face of financial constraints, to ensure that pupils have adequate resources to support their learning. However, there are areas for continued improvement, particularly in ICT, in order to support fully all subjects of the curriculum. Nevertheless, significant improvements have been made to support ICT as a specialist subject.

#### **The efficiency of the school**

76. The school makes good strategic use of its resources. The school's budget clearly reflects the educational priorities of its development plan. Over recent years, the number of pupils forecast to come to the school in Year 5 has been significantly below the actual intake. As a result, the headteacher and governors have exercised prudence in spending until more accurate numbers have become available. Consequently the budget remains in surplus beyond the recommended level, but there are clear plans to use the accumulated funds to maintain teacher:pupil ratios, and to implement improvements within the school development plan. The governors are concerned about the condition of the fabric of the buildings. The school has a programme of planned refurbishment, which is closely linked to curriculum needs.

77. Grants for specific purposes are well used. These are currently related to special educational needs. The school's systems for financial planning and control are good. There is a high level of collaboration between the headteacher and the chair of the governors' finance committee. The local education authority (LEA) provides the school with a three-year financial forecast. This means that long-term financial planning is possible, and the governing body is well placed to anticipate opportunities for development, and to recognise when to exercise caution. The school secretary effectively controls income and expenditure from day to day. The headteacher ensures all staff are clear about their role relating to the school's financial systems. The chair of the finance committee completes a thorough analysis of every financial statement from the LEA, so the headteacher, secretary, and the governing body have an entirely accurate and up to date account. Governors use this information to ensure that the school is fully accountable to them. Consequently, governors make informed decisions, for example, concerning the resource implications for all aspects of their work.
78. There are good arrangements to ensure that the principles of best value are applied in the school's use of resources. Governors are consulted in the planning of the budget and staff are kept aware of the financial situation to ensure widespread understanding of decisions taken. Subject co-ordinators are invited to make bids for extra funding linked to the school's development priorities. Tenders are sought from a number of contractors, recommended by the LEA, in order to obtain best value for the school's money. For items of major expenditure, the governors prefer to use the services of the LEA to ensure that they can demand the highest quality. However, they are prepared to challenge LEA costs when they compare unfavourably with other estimates.

### **Value for money**

79. Overall, the school is providing a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' attitudes are very good, and their behaviour and personal development are good. Standards are average, but pupils achieve well as they move through the school. The management and leadership of the school are good. The school's unit costs per pupil are high in comparison with national figures. Improvements in standards and in resolving the issues from the previous inspection have been good. Consequently, the inspection team finds that the school is providing good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. In order to secure further improvement the governors, headteacher and senior management should take further action to: -

**[1] Implement a more rigorous system for the monitoring of teaching and learning by:**

- The introduction of the school's new learning and teaching policy, and the development of strategies to ensure its successful implementation.
- Ensuring heads of department have sufficient, regular, planned time to observe lessons in their departments.
- The sharing of good practice identified through the monitoring of learning and teaching and each department's processes for self-review.
- Raising the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to that practised in Years 5 and 6.
- Enabling the further development of teachers' professional strategies to underpin improvements in pupils' learning.
- Improving the school's systems for identifying and meeting the needs of pupils identified as gifted or talented; ensuring all departments plan for the provision of enhancement and enrichment work for higher attaining pupils in their subjects; and that this planning is fully implemented through the teaching.

*[See paragraph(s): 11; 12; 25; 26; 28; 35; 65; 67; 82; 83; 89; 90; 93; 94; 96; 100; 103; 108; 110; 124; 130; 138; 139; 140; 144; 145; 150; 156; 160; 175 and 180]*

**[2] Improve the school's procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, and setting targets for improvement, by:**

- Ensuring all heads of department receive training to enable them to analyse and use properly the school's performance data to help set targets for their department and all groups of pupils.
- The improved use of assessment information to help all teachers to plan and set targets for individual and groups of pupils, and to set greater levels of challenge.
- The development of more formal moderation procedures to check whether teachers' assessments of pupils are sufficiently accurate against the standards set by the National Curriculum levels in their subject, and that these are applied in their assessment of pupils' work.
- The improved, systematic tracking of pupils' progress towards targets in all subjects, in order to give clear guidance on which areas require development.
- Ensuring that the targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs reflect the demands in different subjects.
- Ensure the full implementation of the recommendations of the Code of Practice for special educational needs by including parents in reviews of individual education plans twice each year.
- Ensuring the more effective use of teachers' assessment information in reports to parents in order to give more clearly the required information on attainment, progress and targets for improvement.

*[See paragraph(s): 2; 9; 11; 28; 38; 52; 53 to 55; 56; 57; 61; 64; 69; 70; 82; 85; 89; 93; 101; 103; 110; 118; 132; 138; 142; 151; 167; 174; 175; 177 and 186]*

**[3] Ensure the full implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy by all subjects of the curriculum by:**

- Ensuring learning and teaching strategies as promoted through the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are fully developed.

- The more rigorous monitoring and tracking by subjects of the success of their implementation of this national strategy in order to make the required changes and amendments to their schemes of work.
- Taking action to ensure that the information and communication technology and science strands of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are implemented fully across all subjects and departments.

*[See paragraph(s): 14; 29; 31; 33; 75; 90; 91; 93; 98; 102; 103; 112; 113; 117; 128; 131; 132; 146; 154 and 155; 156; 160; 161; 166; 175 and 180]*

**[4] Take action to improve the unsatisfactory quality of educational provision for pupils in the resistant materials and graphics areas of design and technology by:**

- Providing additional support in order to develop the leadership and management skills of the co-ordinator for resistant materials and graphics.
- Developing a clear strategy to raise standards, and the achievement of all pupils, in the resistant materials and graphics areas.
- The development of a proper scheme of work for these specialist areas of design and technology.
- Designing an assessment system which is properly related to National Curriculum standards, levels and expectations, and which helps pupils to understand how they can improve and make progress.
- Improving the quality of the teaching environment for these specialist areas and the subjects' resources for learning, particularly those relating to information and communication technology.
- Ensuring and establishing a clearly co-ordinated leadership for the whole of the design and technology department in order to improve the quality and consistency of learning and teaching within the subject and in order to enable its more systematic development.

*[See paragraph(s): 21; 22; 23; 32; 53; 63; 123; 129 to 131]*

**81. In addition to the main areas for improvement, the governors, headteacher and senior management should consider the following subsidiary issues:**

[5] Establish responsibility for the co-ordinated monitoring of the success of the school's significantly improved provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

*[See paragraph: 39]*

[6] Ensure the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils when classes do not attend an assembly.

*[See paragraph: 40]*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	63 <sup>7</sup>
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	19	26	11	5	0	0
Percentage	3	30	41	18	8	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents 1.59 percentage points.*

### **Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y5 to 8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	384
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	61

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y5 to 8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	9
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	66

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

<sup>7</sup> On the Wednesday of inspection week the school held a 'Tudor Activity / Experience Day' for all Year 5 pupils. Normal lessons were therefore suspended for this particular year group throughout the day. Consequently, whilst this was judged as very good provision for the pupils, and contributed significantly to their personal development and history studies, the inspection team observed fewer lessons than normally expected. Judgements on pupils' standards and achievements were therefore made on a more extended scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with pupils.

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	6.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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	39	47	86

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	29	25	34
	Girls	41	36	43
	Total	71	62	78
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	81 (78)	70 (73)	89 (93)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	23	30	35
	Girls	37	39	44
	Total	60	70	80
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	69 (72)	80 (83)	91 (91)
	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	377	16	0
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	1		
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded	4		

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 to Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.32
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.96

### Education support staff: Y5 to Y8

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	178

### Deployment of teachers: Y5 to Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.9
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### Average teaching group size: Y5 to Y8

Key Stage 2	24.63
Key Stage 3	24.34

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
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	£
Total income	923,793
Total expenditure	827,570
Expenditure per pupil	2,155
Balance brought forward from previous year	101,678
Balance carried forward to next year	96,403 <sup>8</sup>

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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<sup>8</sup> See Paragraph 76

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate: 37%

Number of questionnaires sent out	384
Number of questionnaires returned	142

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	26	63	9	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	28	61	5	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	66	9	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	65	12	4	2
The teaching is good.	18	69	4	1	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	56	17	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	43	50	5	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	52	3	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	14	56	22	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	25	59	3	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	66	5	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	56	14	6	6

### Other issues raised by parents

- Some parents at the parents' meeting, and in their written comments with the parents' questionnaires, raised some concern, as to the standard of the school's accommodation, and particularly its state of decoration. The inspectors agree with the parents' concerns relating to the overall decorative quality of the school.
- There was some concern from a few parents in respect of some teachers' more negative approaches to raising pupils' self-value and self-esteem. The inspectors found no cause for such concern. The school places a high value on raising pupils' self-esteem. This is reflected in the good quality of its improved provision, since the previous inspection, for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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

### ENGLISH

82. Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards achieved by the end of Year 6 are very good compared with similar schools.
- Good understanding of National Curriculum levels, especially of levels at the end of Year 6, leads to detailed lesson planning and good progress by pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress
- A broad range of writing tasks throughout the school provides pupils with opportunities to write in a variety of styles.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Very caring relations between teachers and pupils result in confident, mature and well-motivated approaches to learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Further development of systems for collecting reliable performance data in Years 7 and 8 and using it better to inform short-term planning.
- Extension of effective monitoring of teaching and learning into Years 7 and 8.
- Developing a range of materials specifically designed to extend higher attaining pupils.
- Planning more opportunities for extended speaking and listening between pupils, for example drama, role play, and, debates.
- Develop further the use of performance/progress descriptors linking to National Curriculum levels that are shared with pupils and parents.

83. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, and above average in Years 5 and 6. These standards are achieved because the teaching is carefully planned to support pupils' progress. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 5 are good. The mutual respect between teachers and pupils together with effective use of carefully selected resources contribute to the good quality of pupils' learning. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school from Year 5 to Year 8. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make very good progress, particularly when support staff are present in lessons. The department does not specifically identify gifted and talented pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

84. The standards achieved by the end of Year 6 have been improving year on year. In 2002 the National Curriculum test results were the best ever achieved by the school with 81 per cent of pupils achieving the national target of Level 4 or above. This was above the national average and was well above results achieved by similar schools. Although boys performed less well than girls, their attainments were higher than average and the difference between boys and girls was smaller than occurs across the country. Performance information shows standards on transfer from the first schools are about average, so Amble pupils make good progress by the end of Year 6.

85. The school does not have clear information for Years 7 and 8 but is now adopting the optional national tests that will provide it with essential information on progress further up the school. From work seen, however, pupils make at least satisfactory progress and by the end of Year 8 are on target to achieve above average levels in the national tests at the end of Year 9. Results achieved by Year 9 pupils in the high school over the last few years confirm this pattern. Standards in reading by Year 5 and 6 pupils were inspected and were above average in both years.

86. The two features that stand out most clearly in the English department are the willingness of pupils to do their best and the dedication of the teaching and support team. These features underpin the many strengths of English teaching and learning. The pupils' positive attitudes show in many ways. They are prompt to lessons, organise themselves well if teachers are delayed, as they inevitably are in an inspection week. They take a pride in the completion and presentation of their work. This mature and self-disciplined attitude means that lessons have a sense of purpose and are devoted to learning. The respect that teachers have for their pupils provides a good model. It encourages pupils to listen to others, offer constructive comments and help each other when working in pairs or groups. No pupil is left out. Even those with learning difficulties are drawn fully into lessons by accomplished support staff and by teachers who know their pupils' individual needs very well. This means that pupils with statements of special education needs, and others, who find some aspects of learning difficult, make very good progress even in the mixed age classes in Years 5 and 6
87. Teaching is good, often very good and leads to good progress. Well-structured lessons have clear aims and develop through a sequence of activities. This owes much to the styles introduced by the National Literacy Strategy and teachers have developed these further. A lesson in Year 7 with a lower attaining group was divided into a sequence of short, linked activities. This matched the limited attention span of the pupils and kept them interested so that they scarcely noticed how hard they were working for the whole lesson. Pupils are given the teaching objectives for each lesson. In the most effective sessions, attention is again drawn to these at more than one point in the teaching. One example occurred in a lesson about styles of fiction writing. A timely reminder of a key objective resulted in pupils listening attentively to a story in order to spot where the author revealed that it was, in fact, a ghost story. They also understood the underlying moral message that bullying is wrong. Teachers regularly take opportunities to encourage pupils to think and talk about important social matters. However, although there were many examples of talking and discussing, there are too few opportunities for role play and other active techniques commonly used in drama teaching. Homework is regularly set and supports the progress made by pupils
88. Classrooms are bright with well-mounted displays of pupils' work. Most of the work on display is word-processed, much of it undertaken by pupils at home. In school, there is limited access to computers. The school has plans to buy more computers. In the meantime, the library doubles as a computer room. Day-to-day, there is good management of the library with support from Year 7 pupil librarians who also keep an eye on the computers. Overall, there are insufficient multiple copies of the more popular story and reference books and too few copies of poetry books and play-scripts. This limits the pupils' choices, both in terms of private reading and in topic work. The school has responded by placing larger numbers of story and non-fiction books in classrooms but this is not a complete answer. Pupils in Year 5 say that they frequently have to make hurried choices when changing their reading books at the end of lessons. Pupils keep their own reading records in Year 5 and take this home for parents to monitor. This good practice does not extend further up the school where parents are not systematically involved in helping to support regular home-based reading.
89. The range of writing tasks is very broad across the school. Use of different exercise books for different focuses means that each book (drafting, grammar etc) has coherence and work of the same type is kept together so that pupils can see their progress. However, the usefulness of this is reduced because the department does not make systematic use of individual progress targets. Whilst pupils in Year 6 have a clear idea of their predicted overall National Curriculum levels, they do not know clearly enough what they have to do to make sure of achieving them. This limits the extent to which pupils can

focus their efforts and help themselves. Without clear performance data from Years 7 and 8, the department cannot precisely identify higher attaining pupils. One consequence is that this reduces the pressure to plan work that is more challenging specifically for the highest attainers.

90. Leadership and management are good. Planning by the 11 teachers who contribute to English teaching is well co-ordinated and closely follows the agreed scheme of work. There has been a series of national initiatives since 1999. Staff training and development linked with these have secured improvements in teaching and in the standards achieved. Links with the feeder first schools and Coquet High School are good. There are variations in the quality of teaching and marking that result from limited opportunities to monitor these systematically. Teaching resources are satisfactory and careful management means that they are used to best effect. There are too few opportunities for the head of department to contribute to the monitoring of the progress of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy'

### **The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Literacy across the curriculum**

91. The school has made satisfactory progress in implementing the strategy but does not yet systematically evaluate the teaching and impact of the agreed programme. The Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy builds on the successful introduction work undertaken in Years 5 and 6, where literacy strategies are now firmly established in all subject areas. All departments have revised their schemes of work and have identified ways in which they can contribute to improved language skills. Schemes now include focuses on the learning and use of specialist words, developing the techniques of successful listening and encouraging pupils to write more effectively. The impact is clear to see in most classrooms, which display specialist words and pupils' written work linked to the topics studied. Many teachers create opportunities in lessons for pupils to talk about and use subject language. Inspectors noted particularly good examples in music and art, but overall there is still too much variation in the quality of literacy teaching because there is insufficient sharing of the more effective approaches across the curriculum. Pupils' work shows an overall improvement in the standards of spelling, writing and listening in Years 7 and 8 but there is no effective system for finding out how much of this is due to the literacy strategy.
92. The school has recently invested £2000 in buying reading books carefully selected to link with different subjects. Pupils are encouraged to spend 20 minutes each afternoon in private reading but do not keep a detailed record of this. Because of this, parents are not yet sufficiently involved in supporting their children's' reading development. The recently nominated literacy link governor has a clear understanding of the key literacy issues and recognises ways to strengthen her 'analytical friend' monitoring role.

## MATHEMATICS

93. Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards in national tests and lessons are securely in line with national expectations and are improving.
- The attitudes of pupils to mathematics are very good.
- Learning is consistently good. It is often very good, particularly for lower-attaining pupils.
- Teaching is consistently good. It is often very good. Teachers regularly use a wide range of resources, other than computers, to good effect.
- Leadership and management are good and are improving.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers rarely use information and communications technology (ICT) or focus on literacy to enhance learning in mathematics.
- Whilst teachers assess pupils accurately, there is a lack of rigorous target setting and sharing attainment levels with pupils in order to motivate them even further.
- The most gifted or talent pupils are not identified clearly and often make less progress than they are capable of.

94. Standards of work seen during the inspection are securely in line with the national expectations. These standards are achieved because the teaching is consistently good. Pupils enter the school with standards that are in line with the national expectations and improving. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are satisfactory by the end of Year 6 and good by the end of Year 8. Pupils' very good attitudes, consistently good teaching, typified by a skilful use of resources, also cause the quality of pupils' learning in mathematics to be good. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Pupils with special educational needs make consistently very good progress because of high levels of support, whereas gifted or talented pupils often make less good progress, although satisfactory, because they are not clearly identified. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

95. In 2002, results for pupils at the end of Year 6 were in line with the national average. They were below average for schools with similar prior attainment and in line with schools with the same proportion of free school meals. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. This represents a rising trend from the results in 1999 that were well below the national average. Results in mathematics are below those in English and in line with those in science.

96. Standards seen in lessons confirm that pupils in the current Year 6 are working securely at the national average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, particularly with the help of learning support assistants. For example, they work out percentages with the aid of a 10 by 10 square grid and with support correctly recognise decimals, fractions and percentages of the same size. Pupils in a middle group learnt very well how to change numbers with whole and fraction parts to numbers that consist only of fractions. The teacher's demonstration, by using cardboard 'pizzas' and engaging pupils in a competitive game, motivated pupils to work very hard throughout the lesson. They developed better levels of understanding than could reasonably be expected. The most able pupils attain levels above the national average, but this is only to be expected. Whilst they show high levels of competence, the gifted or talented pupils are not clearly identified and few opportunities are provided for them to extend their learning at a fast pace.

97. Standards of work seen in Year 8 are also securely in line with the national average. Overall, this represents good achievement. The highest attaining pupils engaged in good discussion about which data were available to compare modern day school pupils and those from 50 years ago. However, no opportunity was given at this stage for pupils to discuss how mathematical decisions would be taken to make meaningful comparisons. Nevertheless, these pupils all measured accurately and recorded data systematically as would be expected for their ability. Average attaining pupils show competence when drawing pie charts. They use protractors accurately and sensibly estimate that the portions of pie are approximately correct. Lower attaining pupils achieve the best of all. In a very good lesson on calculating percentages of large numbers, almost all pupils worked with confidence and enthusiasm. They mentally calculated more difficult percentages, such as 45 or 55 per cent by first working out easier percentages, such as 50 and 5 per cent then subtracting or adding these intermediate answers. The setting arrangements, allowing small numbers, particularly in lower attaining groups, allowed the teacher and the learning support assistant to spend time very effectively to prompt and encourage individual pupils. Whilst many of these pupils have special educational needs, often for behaviour, all persevered and achieved extremely well.
98. Teaching is consistently good. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. The best teaching ensures that pupils are actively involved in a variety of tasks to develop understanding rather than rote learning. In an outstanding lesson with the most able pupils in Year 5, the teacher wasted no time asking for hands up, but targeted particular pupils to help when explaining the mathematics. Pupils achieved exceptionally well in working out areas of compound rectangular type shapes. They were given choices of methods of solution, as well as the choice of whether to work in pairs or not, having been carefully seated in suitable groups. Pupils' learning was significantly extended because they were required to work in reverse order, from the area value, to calculating parts of sides. This, as well as the challenging homework activity, ensured that these more able pupils were suitably challenged to develop real understanding. However, teachers do not make regular enough use of ICT or enhance learning and develop pupils' literacy skills regularly enough by focusing more on key words and asking pupils to summarise learning in writing.
99. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils. They set and maintain high standards of behaviour and attitudes to work. All teachers smile and look happy in their work. They all work hard and manage pupils well. In a very good lesson on equivalent fractions, decimals and percentages with middle ability pupils in Year 7, the teacher's scanning ensured that some difficult boys were prompted quickly, by a knowing look from the teacher or a question to ensure the boys remained focused. This teacher gave choices of methods, examined the merits of each with the pupils and used a competitive game to encourage motivation. What could have been a mundane topic became fun and very good understanding was developed.
100. Pupils' attitudes are very good. The pupils have enthusiasm for school generally and this is helped by mathematics being fun and yet challenging in nearly all lessons. Only the most gifted, in Years 6 to 8, do not always find the subject challenging. Pupils bring their own equipment and take a pride in their work. They co-operate well because they are given many opportunities to work together. However, whilst there is good provision for pupils' moral and social education, there is no planning to improve spiritual or cultural aspects.
101. Leadership and management are good and improving. The mathematics co-ordinator has provided clear educational direction within the two years in post. Mathematics is popular with pupils because it is usually enjoyable and challenging. The department has good resources, apart from computers, and traditional resources play an important part in

helping the teachers implement the national strategy effectively within mathematics lessons. Assessment is accurate, but pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of their own attainment and target setting is insufficiently rigorous. However, all teachers, including non-specialists, are well supported and guided. Teachers have been deployed very effectively to match to suitable groups of pupils.

### **The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Numeracy across the curriculum.**

102. Overall, strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. Whilst whole school training for teachers has taken place, and each subject area has been audited to check where numeracy skills may be developed, there is no formal tracking of how successful this is. However, the teaching of numeracy skills in mathematics is consistently good. For example, a wide range of games, number fans and individual white boards are regularly used to sharpen up the four rules.

## **SCIENCE**

103. Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Standards are rising overall.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned to include investigative methods that lead to independent learning.
- The department is well managed. There is a shared commitment to raise standards.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Monitoring of pupils' progress, tracking and target setting are underdeveloped.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently used for measurement and data analysis, especially in Years 7 to 8.
- The more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

104. In the 2002 national tests for Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected Level 4 was average when compared with all schools, as was the proportion attaining the higher Level 5. Results were also average when compared with similar schools. Results since 1999 show a rising trend, faster than that seen nationally. Overall, there is no gender disparity. In the most recent tests, the pupils' performance was poorer than in English, but a little better than in mathematics, relative to national benchmarks.

105. Standards of work seen in Years 5 to 6 are a little above those seen nationally. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Year 6, the most able pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of a range of scientific topics. They recall past work clearly and accurately and explain their observations using simple scientific concepts. They grasp new work effectively and show sound numerical skills when, for example, they draw and interpret line graphs. Their literacy skills are often good. For instance, in one lesson on sound, a number spoke clearly and confidently to the class about the musical instruments they could play. Pupils with lower prior attainment have less detailed knowledge, but they do grasp basic scientific concepts. Their literacy skills, however, are weak, and in written tests, they often fail to understand fully what the questions require. Pupils across the ability range are beginning to develop good investigative skills, relative to their prior attainment. They make simple predictions and suggest how to make their investigations fair. The allocation of additional teaching time in Years 5 and 6 is having a positive impact on the good progress that most pupils make during their first two years in school.

106. Overall, standards seen in Year 8 are average. Pupils make appropriate progress and achieve satisfactorily by Year 6. In the higher to middle ability sets, pupils have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of topics such as the structure of chemicals and the human reproductive system, and use scientific terminology appropriately. They plan investigations and make accurate conclusions from their results. Pupils with lower ability have a less sophisticated understanding of scientific concepts and their applications, but recall simple scientific facts accurately and use good observational skills when, for example, using keys to identify types of rocks. However, their literacy skills are weak and their written work simplistic.
107. Throughout the year groups, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially when they have extra, dedicated support. Teachers have a good understanding of their individual needs and in Years 7 and 8, regrouping of pupils' aids their progress. Although there is no formal identification of gifted pupils, the regrouping helps those with higher ability make satisfactory progress.
108. Teaching is good overall and this results in good learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Most is better than satisfactory and much is very good. Teachers, including the non-specialists, have good knowledge and understanding of the subject material and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher's enthusiasm and expertise in the geology of the local environment greatly enhanced the pupils' understanding of the rock cycle. Lessons are well planned and structured; time and resources are used well and the pace of learning is effective. Teachers use questions skilfully, ensuring pupils think and contribute to the development of lessons. Almost all lessons include investigative work that helps to keep pupils interested and motivated. Teachers encourage pupils' to question and find out for themselves. A good example was seen in a Year 5 lesson on forces. Here, a variety of demonstrations, together with careful questioning, challenged pupils to explain the interaction of air resistance and gravity on samples of falling paper. They rose to the challenge positively, planning and predicting the outcomes of an investigation into the effectiveness of different sized parachutes. However in the mixed ability classes of Years 5 and 6, teachers do not always ensure that work is sufficiently well matched to the full range of attainment and in Years 7 and 8 that work for the higher ability groups is sufficiently demanding.
109. Teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and class management is very good. Pupils' attitudes to their work, throughout the year groups and across the ability range, are very good and often excellent. This contributes much to the good learning seen in lessons. Homework is set regularly but often it is not sufficiently demanding and marking is not always sufficiently constructive. Although there are no departmental policies on literacy and numeracy, key words are introduced effectively into lessons and pupils have appropriate opportunities to apply their numerical skills. Some teachers, however, do not provide sufficient opportunities for extended writing. Pupils make good use of ICT for research, but its use in measurement and data handling requires further development. There is insufficient specialised technical support to meet the demands of the curriculum, especially in Years 7 and 8.
110. Management of the department is good. The head of department has a clear view of the way forward and together with the teaching team is keen to raise standards. A good curriculum is in place and is supported by a range of extracurricular activities. The celebration of the local environment is commendable and contributes much to pupils' spiritual and moral education. There are plans to monitor teaching, learning and pupils' work, but they are not yet being implemented. Formal assessment is carried out regularly and pupils know how well they are doing. Although better tracking and target setting has been introduced for Years 7 and 8, it is still underdeveloped and needs extending to Years 5 and 6. The department does not yet analyse available data sufficiently well in

order to improve its awareness of the subject's performance. There are adequate resources in science though more of the larger and sophisticated items of equipment available would enhance provision. The two laboratories are sufficient but one is in need of refurbishment.

111. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen in Years 5 to 6. More teaching time has been allocated to Years 5 and 6; more investigative work and greater opportunities for independent learning have been introduced. There has been ongoing development and improvement of the curriculum and there is an increased awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Better monitoring and target setting has been introduced into Years 7 and 8.

### **The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Science across the curriculum**

112. Although some aspects of science are included in the teaching of other subjects, such as ICT, there is, as yet, no structured plan for the co-ordination of science across the curriculum.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The good quality of teaching supports good learning.</li><li>• Pupils' have very good attitudes to learning in lessons.</li><li>• The scheme of work which has been carefully planned to support continuity and progression in teaching and learning.</li></ul>
Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole class access to information and communication technology (ICT).</li></ul>

114. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average overall, but pupils' achievement is good. This level of achievement is gained because the teaching is good. Pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour also contribute to good learning in art. The work of pupils currently in Years 7 and 8 indicates that the majority are on course to meet national expectations by the end of Year 9. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs, or those who are talented in the subject, is good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

115. Standards on entry to the school are variable. By the end of Year 6, standards are average. However, good teacher planning enhances the learning process and pupils gain a growing appreciation of artists from a variety of periods and cultures. For example, they cross-reference the work of Klee with Van Gogh. Art makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. For example, older pupils showed heightened self-awareness when linking their own portraits and religious art. Activities ensure that pupils make gains in knowledge and skills. Pupils' work shows an increased understanding of good quality presentation skills in both their sketchbooks and in practical work. They have a growing understanding of the formal elements of art, line, tone, pattern, texture, form, colour, shape and space. This is evident in their work.

116. The pupils make good progress throughout the school in a range of skills, including drawing and painting, printing, textiles, ceramics and paper sculpture. Drawing skills are particularly well developed by Year 8. Good relationships exist between the teacher and the pupils. There are well-established classroom routines including the sharing of

learning objectives with pupils, and a good mix of information, demonstration, and open questioning. These, together with individual support during activities, ensure that pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and the more able, participate fully in the tasks.

117. The leadership and management of art are good. The good scheme of work supports continuous progress for the pupils. Together with sound assessment procedures, shared with pupils, it ensures that they have a clear understanding of the things that they do well and that which needs improvement. Inter-school moderation of standards ensures that marking is appropriately linked to National Curriculum criteria. The classroom provides a stimulating learning environment with good displays of pupils' work. Art now contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning. There has been some progress in the use of ICT, but access to computers is not yet adequate.

## CITIZENSHIP

118. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good teaching overall promotes pupils' learning.</li> <li>• Very good relationships help pupils to do well.</li> </ul>
Areas for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop effective methods for assessment, recording and reporting pupils' progress.</li> <li>• Continue to extend the course to broaden pupils' understanding of their role in society.</li> </ul>

119. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average by the end of Year 6 and average by the end of Year 8. These standards are achieved because teaching is good overall and supports pupils' learning. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is particularly well matched to pupils' needs. The school's good moral and social provision, leading to pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour, contributes to the good progress they make.

120. Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6 and pupils progress well because of the confident teaching which is taking place. Pupils watch video scenes about the use and abuse of drugs and answer well-chosen questions to raise awareness about the dangers of taking other people's tablets. Higher attaining pupils also point out that some drugs can be mistaken for sweets. In Years 7 and 8 good teaching and learning helps pupils to understand the contribution they can make in a democratic society. Because of this, they express opinions on social issues and discuss choices of lifestyles. Higher attaining pupils in both years make good use of the opportunities offered to them and take the lead in discussions in their group. Some lower attaining pupils including those with special educational needs are good at practical work such as cutting and pasting but lack the confidence to join in class discussions. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social understanding. In the lessons seen, there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.

121. The strategies used in the election of the student council were a good learning experience for the whole school. Candidates were proposed and seconded, rosettes were worn and campaign speeches made to give a flavour of a real election. Visiting councillors spoke in assemblies about their job, which added to pupils' understanding of how local government works.

122. Leadership is satisfactory and a good start has been made in addressing some of the issues that enable pupils to learn more about themselves and the society in which they

live. Assessment procedures need to be developed to track pupils' progress. There are close links with the local high school and the present course has been devised so that there is continuity in Years 7, 8 and 9. Religious education and the assemblies already contribute to citizenship. However, the contribution, which all teachers make to aspects of citizenship within their subjects, is not yet effectively monitored.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**. This is because there is no overall co-ordination of the areas taught within the subject, and they are managed separately. Consequently, whilst the quality of provision in food studies and textiles is **good**, provision in resistant materials and graphics is **poor**.

### Strengths

- The good leadership and management of food studies and textiles, which ensures good provision for the pupils in these areas, and leads to above average standards.
- The good quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievements in food studies and textiles.
- The good contribution food studies and textiles make to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

### Areas for improvement

- The overall co-ordination of design and technology as a department.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources overall for design and technology.
- The unsatisfactory leadership and management of resistant materials and graphics, which leads to poor provision for the pupils in these areas.
- The below average standards and achievement of the pupils in resistant materials and graphics.
- The unsatisfactory teaching and learning in resistant materials and graphics.
- The unsatisfactory planning and lack of schemes of work in resistant materials and graphics.
- The unsatisfactory systems for assessment in resistant materials and graphics.

### ***(a) Design and technology: food studies and textiles.***

124. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection are above average by the end of Years 6 and 8. These standards are achieved because the teaching is good throughout all year groups. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school at the start of Year 5 are good in the areas of food studies and textiles. Pupils' positive attitudes in these design and technology areas also contribute significantly to the quality of pupils' learning being good in all year groups. Consequently, the pupils make good progress as they move through the school from Years 5 to 8. Pupils with special educational needs are enabled to make good progress. Although those who show potential gifts or talents in the food or textiles areas are not yet specifically identified by the school, higher attaining pupils are empowered to achieve well. Overall, there has been good improvement in the food studies and textiles areas since the previous inspection.

125. From Year 5, pupils focus well on research and investigation work, for example relating to their puppet project. They have a sound understanding of the characteristics and use of a range of materials. They develop a useful technical vocabulary, and this contributes well to their literacy development. Throughout all year groups, pupils get clear design briefs and their portfolios are well presented. As a result of the groundwork being securely laid

in the earlier years, pupils by Year 8, for example, analyse food products well for nutritional value and the quality of packaging. Their findings are clearly communicated through presentation sheets, and pupils show an above average understanding of the characteristics of food products such as rice and pasta.

126. Good planning and teaching methods securely underpin pupils' learning. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, lesson objectives were clearly shared with the pupils and understood by them. There was a good balance of teacher explanation, open questioning and demonstration to ensure pupils were well prepared for their tasks. For example, practical work involving tie and dye is well supported by fact sheets provided for the pupils. Classroom organisation is often very good so that pupils are well supported and working relationships between teacher and pupils are very good.
127. Food and textiles studies make a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. Pupils in all year groups are encouraged to be imaginative in their studies and approach, for example in Year 7 work on 'Creative Cushions'. They value each other's contributions and are appreciative of each other's efforts, and pupils are actively involved in the constructive evaluation of their own, and others' work. They concentrate well individually and are co-operative when working in groups. The schemes of work provide good opportunities for pupils' SMSC education, although the systematic monitoring of the departments' success in this has yet to be established. Displays make good use of limited wall space and help to make the food and textiles area a pleasant environment in which to work, as well as providing exemplar material for the pupils.
128. Leadership and management of food studies and textiles are good. Planning is well considered and schemes of work well related to National Curriculum requirements. Good thought has been given to the production of units of work and how they relate to the needs of the pupils at the school. In this, the curriculum in food studies and textiles is well balanced. Sound assessment systems have been introduced in Years 7 and 8, which are well related to National Curriculum levels. These systems are shortly to be extended for use in Years 5 and 6. Good use is made of the resources available for food studies and textiles. Nevertheless, there are areas for development. For example, reference resources within the library require improvement, and updating, to fully support pupils' independent learning and research. There is access to shared computers. However, software, CD-ROMs and ICT resources in general are under-developed. Textiles does not have, for example, programmable sewing machines to help make its required contribution to pupils' ICT education within the subject, particularly in Years 7 and 8.

***(b) Design and technology: resistant materials and graphics.***

129. Standards in work and lessons seen during the inspection are below average. This is because the quality of teaching, and consequently pupils' learning, is unsatisfactory across all year groups. Pupils' achievements in resistant materials and graphics work are therefore unsatisfactory. Pupils' attitudes to these areas of their design and technology work are satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, the progress of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and potential high attainers, is unsatisfactory as they move through the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.
130. Throughout Years 5 to 7, pupils' work is poorly presented in their folders. The work seen during the inspection illustrated a lack of challenge in terms of creative imagination or product finish. In this alone, there is an unsatisfactory contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In lessons seen, the lack of teacher expectation was evident from pupils being off-task and taking short cuts in the quality of their work

because tasks were monotonous and the teaching did not inspire them. The pace of lessons is pedestrian. In spite of this, most pupils behave satisfactorily. However, pupils tend to talk over their teacher because of insufficient class control fully to focus their attention or interest. No real consideration has been given to educational priorities for the support of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or those who are potentially gifted or talented in the subject.

131. There are a number of further significant weaknesses in the provision for resistant materials and graphics which contribute to the poor provision overall. There has been a lack of professionally directed planning, and schemes of work for the courses are not properly in place. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory because they are not well focused on National Curriculum levels. When questioned, pupils do not have a clear enough understanding as to the standards they are attaining, or what they need to do to improve. The overall lack of planning, organisation, pace to lessons and lack of challenge for pupils has a negative impact on their learning, progress and achievements. The teaching room is poorly furnished, for example with inappropriate seating, and there are health and safety issues relating to the storage of tools and their access by pupils. The area is devoid of displays, and that which does exist is of low quality and fails to celebrate the pupils' work. The lack of ICT resources means that design and technology is not providing properly for systems and control work, and computer-aided design and manufacture work (CAD/CAM). In this, National Curriculum requirements are not being met. Overall, the leadership and management of the resistant materials and graphics areas of design and technology are poor.

## GEOGRAPHY

132. Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and they have good relationships with their teachers.</li> <li>• Specialist geography teachers have good knowledge of their subject.</li> </ul>
<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of assessment data to set targets for pupils and plan their future learning is underdeveloped.</li> <li>• Opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork are limited.</li> <li>• The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning is limited.</li> </ul>






133. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the national average at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. These standards are achieved because teaching in all year groups is satisfactory overall and often good. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour also contribute to satisfactory learning in the subject. Pupils' achievement, in relation to their standards when they enter the school at the start of Year 5, is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress from Year 5 to Year 8. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

134. In a lesson seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 5 understood clearly the different jobs which people do and explained why these jobs are important. Pupils make good progress when they are set short tasks, which have a sharp focus, and they are clear about what is required of them. The pace of learning slows when they are asked to complete longer tasks, which require more extended writing. Teachers give constructive help to individual pupils. In some lessons they provide a clear structure to help pupils with their writing which ensures they make satisfactory progress and attain standards in line with national averages.

135. Pupils in Year 6 have a sound knowledge of the physical geography of India and can locate its main regions on a map. Study of this topic improves their understanding of other cultures and the issues, which affect the people who live there. Most pupils select relevant information from the text and use this to construct an accurate table. Some lower attaining pupils are less secure in reading, selecting and transferring information but make satisfactory progress when helped by classroom assistants. Pupils are confident when reading aloud to the class, who listen attentively. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear answers to the questions pupils ask, which increases their understanding of the subject.
136. Teachers make good use of local Ordnance Survey maps to engage pupils' interest and help them develop satisfactory map skills. Higher attaining Year 7 pupils can use these maps to identify the reasons why local roads follow a particular route. Pupils have some opportunities to develop their fieldwork skills but these are limited to local enquiries such as traffic surveys. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and some helpful comments show them how to improve but work in books is not graded so many pupils are not clear about the level at which they are working.
137. In the best lessons seen during the inspection, teachers use attractive resources to stimulate pupils' interest. Year 8 pupils' clear understanding of the need to protect the environment was enriched by the use of varied resources ranging from the proverbs of North American Indians to the Alnwick District Council Newsletter. However, in most lessons teachers rely on textbooks and work sheets as their main resources. As they progress through the school pupils become increasingly confident in their use of geographical terminology and their learning is supported by attractive classroom displays of key words relevant to geographical topics.
138. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified in the departmental plan to improve teaching and learning. Detailed schemes of work are in place and good liaison with first and high school teachers ensures that pupils progress through a range of increasingly complex geographical themes and ideas. Meetings of subject teachers take place where the good knowledge of subject specialists is shared but, as yet, little formal monitoring of teaching takes place. The use of assessment data to set targets for pupils and plan their future learning is underdeveloped. However, pupils are now making more use of ICT to research topics and analyse data although this is not yet used fully to support learning.

## HISTORY

139. Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arranging to focus on history for concentrated periods within the school year allows pupils to build on their previous learning and make good progress.</li><li>• The range of teaching and learning activities especially in Years 5 and 6, helps pupils to understand better the way the past helps us to understand our present world.</li><li>• The 'living history' days provided in Years 5 and 6 are one of the strengths of the school and generate both excitement and a real depth of understanding for pupils and participating parents.</li></ul>
<p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitoring has not been effective in eliminating too much variation in standards of teaching and learning.</li><li>• Providing more challenge for all pupils in lessons, and in particular identifying the more gifted and talented is a continuing issue from the previous inspection.</li><li>• Use in Years 7 and 8 of more practical approaches to teaching and learning seen in Years 5 and 6 in order to build more effectively on pupils' good attainment.</li></ul>

140. During the inspection, there were limited opportunities to see normal classroom teaching because of the effect of the Year 5 'Tudor Day'; however, work from pupils in every year was seen. Visits to Year 7 and 8 lessons included discussions with pupils. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average in Years 5 and 6 and in Year 8. These varied because they reflect the steadily improving standards in literacy skills that have not yet completely worked through the school. Pupils' achievements in relation to standards on entry to the school are satisfactory by Year 6 and for the current Year 8, where a small minority of pupils reduce the effectiveness of some teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall. The school does not identify or track their gifted, talented or more able pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory.

141. The standard of work seen was average overall. Attainment in Year 8 is in line with national standards but there is little evidence of the higher skills of analysis and evaluation. Pupils arrive to lessons promptly and usually settle quickly. They take care with their work, which is carefully and colourfully presented. There is little use of artefacts because the current topics ('Native Americans' and the 'French Revolution') are not easy to resource. However, items relating to 'Britain in the Second World War' and 'Ancient Greeks' fill cupboards and there was a display of brightly painted pottery jugs produced to a 'totem' theme. There is relatively little work by pupils on display in classrooms or corridors.

142. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers do not share details of attainment sufficiently clearly with the pupils who are, therefore, not able to talk about what subject skills they have acquired or might still need to develop. Most pupils listen carefully and have a good memory for facts but find identifying causes and effects much harder. Teachers had some difficulty in getting Year 8 pupils to understand why the peasants might be resentful of the riches and excesses of the royal family and nobility in late eighteenth century France. In Year 7, pupils recognised the importance of the buffalo to the life of plains Indians but did not understand how this might change through the seasons or explain the tribes' reactions to buffalo hunters.

143. The 'living history' day involved all the Year 5 pupils, their teachers and about 15 parent helpers. The school employs a specialist firm to plan and equip the day. During the

morning, pupils, all in period costumes, engaged in a wide range of practical activities. They learned to use specialist words and Elizabethan forms of speaking. They tried skills such as quill pen writing and came to understand many of the difficulties of living in Tudor England. The afternoon was a mock banquet, conducted in the proper manner. Learning was immediate and powerful as servants served at table while others performed Tudor dances, songs and a mummer's play. The 'lord' trained the staff in manorial etiquette, admonished poor servants, explained the Latin Grace and told stories about life in the court of Henry VIII. Pupils were enthralled. Support assistants and teachers ensured that all pupils were challenged, whatever their level of skill and understanding. As in previous years, the experience will become the basis for recording detailed aspects of Tudor life. The quality of learning was exceptional but not unique. There is a similar 'living history' experience for Year 6 pupils, who use the local community centre to spend a day in role as Second World War evacuees. Work in Year 6 encourages pupils to collect information from picture and text sources, record it accurately and try to note and explain differences. Their books and project files are carefully maintained and the decision to split history and geography into blocks of time means that pupils are provided with concentrated experiences that encourage them to build on their earlier learning.

144. The quality of marking across the department is inconsistent and little use is made of teacher comments that clearly advise how pupils might progress. Descriptions of attainment levels are not systematically shared with pupils and do not appear in classroom displays.

145. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The part-time head of department does not monitor books or the quality of history teaching and has not arranged for this to be done by others. There is no system for identifying and sharing the most effective ways of teaching, so that recent national developments in teaching and learning styles have not been adopted. The range of lesson activities is still too limited and the use of assessment to plan the next stage of learning is not well developed. The head of department recognises that the improvements suggested by the previous inspection have not taken place.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

146. Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The pupils' good attitudes to learning and their interest in the subject.
- The sound management of the subject, which is enabling gradual improvements in resources.
- Rising standards, which have resulted from the improved provision for the subject.
- The department's contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- The further development of the subject's hardware and software resources.
- Levels of challenge for pupils who are higher attainers, or gifted and talented, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- The contribution of subject related targets to the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs.
- The development and full implementation of the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- The monitoring of provision for ICT across the other subjects of the curriculum, and the establishment of assessment procedures for ICT through all departments.

147. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by Years 6 and 8. These standards are attained because the teaching overall is satisfactory in all year groups, and sometimes good with the younger pupils. Consequently, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with below average standards in ICT. In relation to these standards, achievement is therefore good by Year 6 and satisfactory by Year 8. The younger pupils in particular are increasingly gaining from the recent improvements in the school's ICT resources. Progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good by Year 6 and satisfactory, but improving, by Year 8. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive and good overall. They enjoy their ICT lessons and are keen to learn. Consequently, the pupils' positive response to the subject, the improved resources and quality of teaching enable the pupils' learning in ICT to be sound. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
148. Pupils and ICT teachers alike are enthusiastic about the subject. They are appreciative of the improving resources and the consequent opportunities afforded to the pupils to enhance their learning and achievement. The school is making good use of its current resources and is planning sensibly for gradual improvements as it introduces new units of work. Basic skills and techniques are being soundly taught and pupils meet the expected levels in all year groups. For example, pupils log on to the network efficiently and independently and few pupils experience any problems in identifying and loading programs. Whilst input skills using a keyboard vary, depending upon pupils' experience with home computers, mouse skills are efficient and enable pupils to access necessary program menus and commands. Such secure skills enable the pupils to concentrate well on the work in hand rather than the technicalities of computer operation.
149. During the inspection, many pupils, particularly in Year 6, were involved in a common project to design a school garden for an area being reclaimed outside the school canteen. This work results from a competition suggested by the school council. Whilst providing the pupils with a good opportunity to develop their graphic modelling skills, it is helping to develop their creative and imaginative skills well. It is also giving them effective ownership and responsibility for improvements to the school environment. In the lessons, this exercise gave pupils good opportunity to explore and use commands from the 'Drawing' toolbar in their word-processing program. Good progress was made by most pupils, for example, in the use of the 'AutoShapes' facility to create their plans, and the use of the 'Fill' command to add colours and textures to their work. Pupils worked well, and co-operatively in pairs on this task, which also provided good opportunity for the exchange of ideas and discussion about their learning.
150. In Year 8, pupils were undertaking sound Internet research work concerning Northumberland, in order to create a tourist leaflet for their own locality. Pupils showed satisfactory skills in the use of a variety of search engines, and in the integrated use of a browser and word-processing program for the collection and selection of relevant information and images. Pupils satisfactorily copy, paste and save such source material efficiently to provide themselves with a resource base for their future work. However, particularly with these older pupils, the work is not always designed to provide sufficient variation or challenge, particularly for the more able. The school has not yet identified those pupils who may be particularly gifted in computing or who have higher levels of skills, which demand the provision of enhancement work.
151. Whilst teachers monitor such individual pupils' work well during lessons, and are supportive of pupils, there are some areas for improvement. Introductions to lessons, and reviews of work at the end, tend to be teacher dominated. Lesson objectives are clearly set, and the pupils understand what it is they are being asked to learn, or undertake, during practical sessions. However, teachers sometimes miss opportunities for questioning pupils in a more open way in order to assess their learning and

understanding, or to promote discussion. Pupils are not always sufficiently involved in reviews at the end of lessons. This restricts their opportunities to share and self-evaluate their own learning. Whilst oral advice to pupils in lessons is satisfactory, the marking of work lacks the analytical comments designed to enable pupils to know how to improve. Until recently, the school has not met statutory requirements for reporting ICT to parents, and targets for improvement have not been included. Reports for ICT have now been re-designed, for the current year, to provide parents with a clearer picture of their children's progress. The use of performance data on pupils requires some improvement, particularly in making firm analysis of pupils' attainment at the start of Year 5 and at the end of Year 8. This is in order to assess more securely the progress being made by pupils as they move through the school. The department has not yet specifically identified any subject related targets to support the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs.

152. Provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development within the subject is good. This was a key issue for the school at the previous inspection and now all units of work clearly identify how contributions are made to these areas. Spiritual development is quietly enhanced through, for example, the discoveries pupils make in their Internet research and the inspiration and ideas this provides for their own work. The younger pupils' creative imagination is being enhanced by the environmental plans for the school garden. Older pupils are being asked to place themselves in the position of others to consider, for example, the range of tourist opportunities provided by the local area. Moral and social development has a positive impact on pupils' co-operative work, and the good working relationships established with their teachers'. Cultural development is being enhanced through pupils' Internet research on local historical, religious and other heritage sites, including the impact of sporting success through local soccer clubs!
153. The leadership of the department is good and its management satisfactory overall. Development planning for the subject is good and there is a clear focus on future improvement. Furthermore, the commitment to improvement by all teachers is very good. However, the work of individual teachers is not effectively evaluated to identify and share the most effective practice. The school has done much to help itself, not least through the work of a very effective ICT technician who has been involved in building computers for the department. However, there are still insufficient computers for pupils to have a workstation each. The sharing of computers limits the progress pupils can make in lessons, particularly in the development of their practical ICT skills. The subject is based in the school library, and this inevitably limits access by other subjects to this area during lesson time.

### **The National Key Stage 3 Strategy: Information and communication technology across the curriculum.**

154. The overall quality of provision for ICT across the other subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. The school has not yet fully implemented the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. This is mainly for two reasons. First, ICT and computer resources, including software, are not yet sufficient to fully support the required contribution from all subjects. Secondly, training for the strategy within the local authority has commenced later than seen in most other areas of England. However, two ICT teachers are currently involved in a programme of training and briefings relating to the strategy, and the school's planning is gradually moving forward.
155. Nonetheless, there is currently little evidence from display and pupils' work of any major input into the pupils' ICT education from departments other than ICT itself. Neither are subjects involved in the assessment of their required contribution to the pupils' ICT education. The work provided by the school shows some satisfactory use of word-

processing, including attention to the use of fonts, layout and of clip-art in English and French. Pupils are using a digital camera, on occasions, to record their activities in physical education. In science, Year 6 pupils are using temperature sensors satisfactorily to produce, for example, heating and cooling graphs on energy output of a Bunsen burner. In Year 8 science, there is sound evidence of Internet research on the topic of solids, liquids and gasses. Bar and pie charts are used satisfactorily in mathematics, for example in the analysis of extra-school activities in Year 5. Internet research is also supported in art through sound work on Klee, Van Gogh and Disney. Nevertheless, there is very limited evidence of planned opportunities for ICT permeating the work of departments. However, a good example was the use by an English teacher of a screensaver to ask pupils different vocabulary questions each day.

## MODERN LANGUAGES

156. Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and creates a positive learning environment in lessons.
- Good leadership and clear direction are strong features of the department.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are fully aware of their attainment and progress, and of targets for improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- The system of monitoring and evaluating teaching does not provide sufficient opportunity for the subject teachers to be independently observed.
- Subject teachers do not have the formal opportunity to observe each other and share good practice.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is insufficiently integrated into the teaching of the curriculum, and the subject does not have regular access to central facilities.

## French

157. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by Year 8. These standards are achieved through good teaching, and consequently pupils achieve well. Pupils have a positive attitude towards French and behaviour is good overall. Pupils in Year 7 make a good start to French, and their good progress is maintained in Year 8. Teacher assessments in 2002 showed that standards of attainment at the end of Year 8 were broadly average on transfer to high school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and has been helped by the improvements in resources for the subject.

158. Inspection evidence shows that standards for the current Year 8 are in line with national expectations. Comparison with pupils' results at the end of Year 7 shows that almost all have improved by at least one level in all four skills. Of the four skills, listening is marginally weaker. Pupils are speaking confidently in class exchanges. The teaching enables them quickly to pick up a sentence framework, to adapt it, and even extend it, into articulate and meaningful communication. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils were so confident in their use of a construction describing their brothers and sisters, that they pressed the teacher for more words so that they could use the same framework to describe aunts and cousins and other family members. Pupils in Year 8 are beginning to practise future time within another framework. This is preparing them well for the higher levels they will be aiming for by the end of Year 9. In their extended writing, higher-attaining pupils show a good deal of independence, manipulate the language efficiently and produce work of a high standard. Middle attainers make good progress assimilating more complex grammar, and produce very accurate work when they have a framework to

follow. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, perform well in basic tasks, and produce good written work with prompts.

159. Teaching is good overall. Lessons were good or better and none were unsatisfactory. The emphasis on literacy skills is strong, and there is a sensible balance between the use of French and English in the classroom. In good lessons, pupils' learning is enhanced by well-planned, well-timed and varied activities, which cover different skills, and become more challenging as the lesson progresses. In a Year 8 lesson, with a wide range of middle and lower-attainers, the teacher introduced the future tense with recall and revision of the verb 'aller', gradually extending into use with infinitive and description of future activities. The work became increasingly more challenging, but pupils had quickly grasped the framework of the question and answers and were eager to make their contribution to the tasks. The teacher also offered those who wished the opportunity to extend their homework sentences with the time and place of their future activities. Marking is frequent and consistent. Teachers give constructive feedback to pupils where there has been confusion or a need for improvement. Pupils are also able to track and record their progress through the units, evaluate their performance and agree their targets for improvement. They are familiar with and understand the National Curriculum levels.
160. Leadership of the department is good. The subject co-ordinator provides clear educational direction. Management is also good, as firm policies and detailed schemes of work are in place. The marking and assessment policy is good, as it allows regular and detailed tracking of pupils' progress and attainment, and aids target-setting. French is taught only in Years 7 and 8, and contributes to pupils' social and cultural education through its contact with a French school via correspondence. The department also organises trips to performances of French plays, and runs a Latin club. Of particular note is the ongoing independent reading scheme starting in the summer term of Year 7. Pupils have the opportunity to enhance their language skills through borrowing and commenting on a wide range of short readers. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. The department does not have regular access to central facilities. Pupils' experience of ICT through French is restricted to individual work or 'carousel' demonstration on the department's one networked computer. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching does not take place outside the school's professional development system, and is unsatisfactory. Although the teachers meet weekly to discuss good practice and future planning, there has been little independent observation, nor is there time allocated for teachers to observe each other, to see and share good practice.

## MUSIC

161. Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good**.

### Strengths

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm encourages pupils to learn well.
- The well-planned lessons motivate pupils: this promotes very good relationships and attitudes towards the subject.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and many pupils play instruments.

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to improve the provision for information and communication technology (ICT).
- Make use of homework to raise standards even further

162. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the national average by the end of Years 6 and 8. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good overall and is a key factor in improving pupils' learning. The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour also contributes to the progress that they make. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection.

163. By the end of Years 6 and 8, attainment is above average with all abilities making progress and achieving well compared with their prior learning. General musical knowledge is improving because of the lively teaching. Higher attaining pupils understand and use technical language well, but less confident pupils struggle for the right word to describe musical elements. Singing is done enthusiastically and good habits of physical, breathing and vocal exercises are used to warm-up first. Pupils with special educational needs play a full part in the lessons and make good progress. Those recognised as talented are often the first to answer questions. In the lessons seen, there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.

164. Teaching and learning are very good overall in Years 5 and 6 and lessons are planned to interest and motivate pupils. An excellent lesson in Year 5 was full of activities to stimulate and increase pupils' knowledge and enjoyment of music. The learning support assistant made a good contribution to the success of the lesson. Because of well-focused teaching Year 6, pupils locate Indonesia on the globe atlas, learn about the religious significance of the gamelan and work out improvisations on classroom instruments. This contributes to their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they have support from a partner.

165. Very good teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8 are due to the teacher's subject knowledge and high expectations, which motivates pupils of all abilities to be involved and to make progress. Year 7 pupils learn about chromaticism and listen to extracts from 'The Flight of the Bumblebee' and L'Après-Midi d'un Faune' as a stimulus for their own contrasting compositions. Year 8 pupils compose and write down 8 bar melodies, they hear music by Mozart and Grieg and learn about Gracie Fields and the music of the 30s and 40s to give them a wider musical background. A few pupils have examples of melodies done on the department's only computer but the lack of basic hardware inhibits development in this area. No homework was given during the inspection.

166. There is very good leadership and management of the subject by a co-ordinator who has a good rapport with pupils. All policies are in place and the scheme of work gives a very rich diet of music to stimulate and make pupils want to learn. Good records are kept and pupils' progress is assessed regularly. National Curriculum levels are used and known to pupils. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular musical activities, shows and

foreign trips and many pupils including talented pupils learn instruments. The close liaison with feeder schools and the local high school gives continuity to the subject throughout the whole statutory school age. However, resources to enable the subject to make its full contribution to the ICT strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy require further improvement.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and leads to good standards, particularly in gymnastics.
- Pupils work hard in their lessons and behave well at all times.
- Very good links with community sports organisations enhance what is provided in school.
- Comprehensive information on pupils is passed to the high school at the end of Year 8.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers' use of National Curriculum levels to guide their assessments of pupils.
- Pupils' understanding of the effects of exercise on the body is not extended as they move from Year 5 to Year 8.
- Links with partner first schools are underdeveloped.

168. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good and pupils work hard in lessons. Pupils' achievements in relation to what they could do when they joined the school in Year 5 are good. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are talented make good progress overall. The school has maintained the high standards and good provision reported at the time of the previous inspection.

169. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 show that standards are above average. The work seen in gymnastics confirms these good standards. Both boys and girls are able to combine movements into a sequence. They are skilful at observing their partner's work and offering ideas as to how the movements could be improved. Sometimes teachers do not immediately give pupils time to improve on the suggestions that have been given. Boys and girls do equally well but girls have slightly more control of their movements. Teachers plan these lessons very well. There is a good balance of practical work and opportunities for pupils to think about what they are doing and to assess their work and the work of others. Because teachers makes good use of questioning and expect pupils to talk about their work pupils have many opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills.

170. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 8 show that standards are above average. At least half of the pupils when they leave the school at the end of Year 8 have reached the standard expected at the end of Year 9. During the inspection, lessons were seen in athletics and netball. The standards in athletics in Year 8 were below what is expected because pupils have not spent a lot of time learning to throw the discus and the javelin. In a netball lesson girls' passing skills and footwork were good. All pupils in all years show a good understanding of the effect of exercise on the body and can take responsibility for their own warm ups and cooling down. Although pupils do this well, the same warm up activity was seen in Year 6 as was seen in Year 8. The department has not planned how it will extend pupils' knowledge and understanding in this aspect of the physical education curriculum. For example, there was no mention of the names and functions of muscles with older pupils.

171. All teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. This, together with pupils' positive attitudes, creates a very productive atmosphere for learning. Teachers know their pupils well and provide good support for those pupils with special educational needs. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils show respect for each other and genuine care and concern. Relationships between pupils are excellent which means that when they work together they help each other to learn. Although they do not appear openly enthusiastic, they work hard and give of their best.
172. Experiences in lessons are enhanced by contributions from various community sports organisations and the school's partner high school. Links with partner first schools are not as well developed, so teachers do not know what pupils have experienced or achieved when they join the school in Year 5. A good proportion of pupils represent the school, the area, the district and sometimes the county in netball, football, athletics and cross-country. An ex-pupil of the school has played football for the England Under-16 team.
173. The leadership and management of physical education are both very good. Departmental documentation includes very good guidance on how the subject can contribute to pupils' personal development. High expectations of behaviour support their moral development. Teachers provide many opportunities for social development through pupils working in pairs, groups and teams. The department works hard to promote pupils cultural development and includes work on racism in sport. The practice is not as good as it could be in terms of helping pupils' spiritual development. For example, pupils are not always encouraged to applaud the efforts of others as a way of showing an emotional response. There is no formal monitoring of teaching and learning to identify and share good practice.
174. Good use is made of National Curriculum guidance to plan lessons but not to assess pupils. Brief records are kept of what pupils can do in the different aspects of the subject. These records and teachers' knowledge of pupils are used to complete very detailed annual profiles. These comprehensive profiles are passed on to the high school at the end of Year 8. Teachers do not use computers to help them to manage this information. Allocating National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 6 and Year 8 relies too heavily on teachers knowing their pupils. There is not enough evidence to support the awarding of the different levels. Reports to parents are informative. They provide information on attainment in relation to expected standards and pupils' attitudes. However, the targets that are set relate to improvement in attitudes rather than being specific to the subject.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The overall good levels of interest shown by the pupils towards the subject.
- The overall good contribution of the subject to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly for the older pupils.
- The overall satisfactory improvement in resources, particularly artefacts, for the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of learning and teaching by the head of department, particularly of provision by the non-specialist teachers of religious education.
- The development of greater opportunities for pupils to learn *from* religion in addition to learning *about* religion.
- The lack of challenging work resulting from the use of worksheets and the simple copying of information by pupils.
- The marking of work by teachers and the development of improved assessment procedures.
- The development of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to support learning in the subject.

176. Standards of work seen during the inspection are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus by Year 6, but in line with expectations by Year 8. These standards reflect mainly unsatisfactory learning and teaching for the younger pupils but satisfactory teaching and learning for the older pupils. Consequently, pupils' achievements in relation to standards are unsatisfactory by Year 6 but satisfactory by Year 8. However, pupils' attitudes to religious education are satisfactory in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make unsatisfactory progress by Year 6 but satisfactory progress by Year 8. Improvement overall since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory because standards have declined.

177. During the inspection, lessons were seen in each of Years 5 to 8, and interviews were undertaken with pupils in addition to a scrutiny of their work. The key factor limiting pupils' progress, and contributing to declining standards, is the over-reliance on worksheets. When sets of religious education folders are examined, mostly identical work is to be found for all pupils. Indeed, worksheets seen in lessons often state 'copy this' from the worksheet itself or from a textbook. Pupils' answers to set questions are mainly of the basic 'comprehension' type. Consequently, teachers can gain little practical information from such work as to the actual level of learning achieved by the pupils. When questioned, pupils have no real concept of the standards they are attaining, or what they need to do to improve. This is because there is so little difference between pupils' work that most teachers merely tick it to confirm that it is correct, without adding any formative comments or targets. Where this happens, provision is not good enough.

178. In a Year 5 lesson, learning was unsatisfactory because the teaching, on the topic of 'Jesus and Prayer' took a restricted view of the subject. This was largely because the textbook being used was some 16 years old and did not reflect a contemporary approach to the subject. Insufficient consideration was given, for example, to any multi-faith view of 'prayer' or Jesus's roots in Jewish tradition. Opportunities were lost to draw any parallels between the Christian heritage of prayer and that of other major world faiths. Inadequate regard was given to the concept that pupils holding other than strict Christian beliefs may have been present in the class. In a Year 6 lesson, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory because of low-level tasks being given to the pupils and opportunities were missed to involve them in discussion and debate concerning Puja, Hindu worship in the

home. Although a Puja Tray was provided, containing the ceremonial objects used in daily acts of worship, no real attempt was made to explore the symbolism of the artefacts and pupils were basically asked to draw them and colour in their drawings.

179. Standards and achievement do improve with the older pupils in Years 7 and 8. In a Year 7 lesson, discussions with pupils showed they are developing a sound factual knowledge about religion. For example, they know about religious 'heroes' they have been studying such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Mother Theresa. However, most of the work in their folders is concerned with these facts and there is little evidence of individual interpretation or analytical work. Pupils spoken with had difficulty in recalling or explaining the key points raised, for example, by King's '*I have a dream ...*' speech. Only one more able pupil drew any parallels between religious, racial and humanitarian issues arising from consideration of Civil Rights. However, such work is better developed in Year 8. In a lesson on human rights, the teacher enabled good consideration of contemporary issues relating to the Iraq War, and there was positive encouragement of the pupils to express their personal views and opinions. In such activities, the subject is making a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and citizenship development. These Year 8 pupils were presented with starkly contrasting pictures of well-fed Western European and starving African children. Through discussion, the pupils showed a good appreciation of the problems of poverty, malnutrition and disease, and made above average distinctions between those who 'have' and those who 'have not'. However, such good work is either absent, or inadequately covered and recorded, in the pupils' written work.
180. Whilst the leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory overall, there is a balance of strengths and areas for improvement. The head of department has, for example, made good improvements to some areas of the department's resources, particularly in respect of artefacts. This represents good investment and these are generally used well and effectively, through the teaching, to support learning. However, other resources, including some textbooks, are significantly out of date and do not reflect contemporary approaches to the teaching of religious education. The department lacks ICT resources, particularly CD-ROMs and access to the Internet, in order to develop fully its expected contribution to the pupils' ICT education, or to facilitate independent research work by pupils. Insufficient use is made of non-contact time properly to monitor learning and teaching by other teachers within the department, particularly non-specialists. There is no formal accountability of the work of the head of department through the school's line management system. The school's policy for the subject pre-dates the previous inspection and there is little evidence of any subsequent, substantial review or revision to meet the developing needs of the subject. Overall, teachers' marking of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and assessment procedures require improvement in order to meet not only demands of the locally agreed syllabus, but also national exemplar expectations and levels for the subject.