

INSPECTION REPORT

**ALVECHURCH CHURCH of ENGLAND MIDDLE
SCHOOL**

Alvechurch

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116983

Headteacher: Mr C Nesbitt

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 13th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 258549

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle Deemed Secondary
School category:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	370
School address:	Tanyard Lane Birmingham West Midlands
Post code:	B48 7LN
Telephone number:	01214451033
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Maybee
Date of previous inspection:	26 th January 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Alvechurch Church of England Middle School is situated in Alvechurch, Worcestershire. The school's status is that of a Voluntary Controlled Church of England Middle School. The religious education taught is non-denominational. Pupils come from the village of Alvechurch and from other local villages. The school is of similar size to that of most other middle schools and provides for 370 girls and boys aged 9 to 13 years, in approximately equal numbers, although there are more boys than girls in Year 7. The school is very popular and provides for 39 per cent more pupils than it did at the last inspection in January 1998. Most pupils come from socially advantaged backgrounds, and the percentage claiming a free school meal is well below average. About five per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Two pupils are at an early stage in learning English. The number of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the usual ages is below average. Some pupils leave at age 11 to transfer to selective education locally. The percentage of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is below average. Their difficulties are mainly in learning and in forming relationships. An average percentage of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school at age 9 is above average. The school gained a DfES Achievement Award for its academic performance in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	<i>Lead inspector</i>	History.
13762	Mr N Shelley	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
25377	Mrs L Brown	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art; Music.
4922	Mr M Driver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.
3643	Mr D Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.
27748	Mr S Singh Minhas	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology; English as an additional language.
30563	Mrs J Pentlow	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education;
3731	Mr W G Robson	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Special educational needs.
14790	Mr R Schlich	<i>Team inspector</i>	French;
18188	Mrs C Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.
18673	Mr R Wilkins	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	4
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	7
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	12
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS	15
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. It provides a good quality of education for pupils of differing abilities and ethnic backgrounds, who achieve well in all years. The teaching is good and pupils learn well. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good. The headteacher rightly has the overwhelming confidence of parents and pupils. He, key staff and governors lead the school well and provide a clear vision for its future development. The school is well managed and gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well in all years and exceptionally well in science.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used extensively enough across the curriculum to ensure that pupils reach the standards that they should in this subject.
- The school fills all with a powerful sense of belonging to a like-minded community, where pupils work hard, enjoy being members of the school and are very well cared for.
- Pupils behave very responsibly and maturely and relationships are very good.
- The teaching and learning are good in all years.
- The deployment of teachers partially restricts the development of their expertise.
- The headteacher has, with good reason, the overwhelming confidence of parents, pupils, staff and governors in his leadership of the school. He, key staff and governors give the school clear direction and have ensured good improvement since the last inspection.
- The management is effective and ensures that the school runs smoothly. Teamwork is very good.
- The co-ordination of the use of literacy across the full curriculum is not monitored and evaluated enough to ensure that good practice is consistent.
- The provision made for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well managed and effective and enables them to achieve well.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Pupils and staff in this good school deserve better.

Since the last inspection in January 1998, the school has improved considerably. The pupils learn successfully and achieve well as a result of the good teaching that they receive. The standards that they reach in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests have much improved. Good progress has been made in dealing with the issues of the last inspection. Provision for ICT has greatly improved, but it is still not yet used enough across the curriculum. Provision for music has greatly improved from a low base in 1998 and is now satisfactory. Overall, teaching now matches work effectively to the needs of all pupils. Subject leaders have restricted time to monitor teaching, but much very good monitoring now takes place. Performance data are now used effectively by management to ensure improved standards.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	A	B	C	C
mathematics	A	B	C	B
Science	A	A	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2. Performance data for 2003 are not yet nationally validated.*

Pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6, girls and boys with differing levels of competence and from all ethnic backgrounds, including those at an early stage in learning English, achieve consistently very well in science and well in mathematics. Their achievement in English is satisfactory. Standards compared well with those of similar schools in the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests and have been higher in some recent years. Standards in the tests in English have been adversely affected by staffing difficulties in recent years. Although standards in citizenship are satisfactory, pupils do not yet extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject well enough across the curriculum. Pupils are competent users of ICT, but they do not yet use it enough in every subject to enable them to reach the standards that they should. In Years 7 and 8 overall, pupils continue to make good progress to the point of transfer to high schools at age 13. By the end of Year 8, their standards are above those usually found among pupils of this age. However, although these pupils achieve well in the work they do, their achievement is restricted by the effect of unsatisfactory accommodation on teaching and learning, particularly in art and design, design and technology and physical education.

Pupils are diligent. Their **attitudes to school and to learning** are very good. They behave with impressive maturity and act very responsibly. Their spiritual understanding and self-knowledge are good and their cultural development is equally good. The school provides very well for their moral and social development, which is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides its pupils with a **good quality of education**. The teaching is good throughout the school. The school is very caring and supportive of pupils' academic and personal development. It helps them to share well in its life and decisions. Links with parents are good, and parents have great confidence in the headteacher and the school. Links with other schools are very good and ensure that pupils' have a smooth and happy transition through their middle school years. Community links are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher and key staff is good and much appreciated by parents, pupils and staff. The school works harmoniously, with effective teamwork. The governing body is well informed, closely involved in setting priorities and plans effectively for change. Management ensures that the quality of teaching and learning are high priorities; close analysis and evaluation of performance ensure that there is no complacency.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the warmth and friendliness of the school, which they believe is well led. They consider that their children have a smooth entry into and passage through the school, where they are expected to work hard and to achieve well, academically and personally. Pupils enjoy being members of the school, have confidence in the staff who they believe expect much of them. They feel trusted and recognise that the school is well run.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- ensure further development of the use of ICT in all subjects and provide more equipment to enable this to take place;
- continue to plan for, and implement as soon as possible, improvements to the accommodation;
- enable teachers to build up their subject expertise and minimise the deployment of more than one teacher of a subject to any one class;
- monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning of literacy across the curriculum to ensure that standards and practice are more consistent.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, girls and boys from different social and ethnic backgrounds and with differing abilities achieve well throughout the school. They reach above average standards by the end of Year 6 and sustain these standards to the point of transfer to high schools at the end of Year 8.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Pupils reached above average standards in the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests in mathematics and science.
- Compared with similar schools, the standards that pupils achieved in English were lower than those gained in science and mathematics in the 2003 National Curriculum tests.
- Pupils achieve very good standards in science.
- Although pupils achieve well in the work they do in art and design, design and technology and physical education, the restrictions imposed by unsatisfactory accommodation prevent them from reaching even higher standards.
- Inadequate access to resources restricts the standards pupils achieve in ICT across the curriculum.

Commentary

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2. Performance data for 2003 are not yet nationally validated.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.9 (28.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.5 (28.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.9 (30.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 89 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. 2003 data are unvalidated.

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 5, the standards that they have achieved in English, mathematics and science are above average. In most other subjects, their standards are very little above what is typical nationally. By the end of Year 6, in the work seen during the inspection, they achieve well to reach standards above those usually found among pupils of their age in most subjects. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys in the work that was seen.

2. In the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests overall, pupils reached above average standards compared with those gained both in all schools and in similar schools. Their attainment in the two previous years was even higher. Results in the tests are consistently well above average in science. In mathematics, pupils gained above average standards in the tests compared with those reached in similar schools. They attained average standards in English, where there have been staffing difficulties in recent years. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests.

3. The school sets very challenging targets to be reached in the National Curriculum tests in science, and these are regularly reached. Challenging targets were set in mathematics and English in 2003; results came close to the targets set.

4. By the end of Year 8, pupils continue to reach standards higher than those typical nationally overall. The standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection in English and in mathematics in all years were above average. The standards seen in science were well above average. Pupils' standards in numeracy are generally above those typical nationally; they practise numerical skills at least satisfactorily and often well across the curriculum. Their standards of literacy are also above those usually found among pupils of this age. However, insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of marking often leaves basic spelling errors of key subject words uncorrected, and hinders pupils' better practice of this skill. Pupils are articulate and most have particularly good speaking skills.

5. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds often achieve very well. The two pupils for whom English is not a first language are making good progress through the good support that the school is providing. These pupils had previously studied English as a second language and have tuned into the accent and speed of the spoken language quickly. However, their written English is less well developed. Pupils with SEN achieve well because teachers and teaching assistants are aware of their needs and support them effectively. Pupils with more severe learning difficulties also make good progress when they receive support in small groups from teaching assistants.

6. Although pupils achieve well in art and design and physical education, and at least satisfactorily in design and technology, they do not achieve higher standards because the accommodation for these subjects is unsatisfactory. Cramped accommodation, sometimes with shared use, restricts the range of work that can be undertaken. Consequently, pupils have only a restricted experience of some strands of the National Curriculum in these subjects. Although the standards achieved in citizenship are satisfactory, insufficient explicit reference is made in other subjects to the knowledge and understanding of citizenship and, consequently, pupils do not yet reach higher standards in this subject. In ICT, pupils achieve well in the discrete lessons that are provided in all years. However, although the provision of equipment is much better than at the last inspection, it is still insufficient to meet the needs of pupils in all subjects. Consequently, pupils do not reach the standards that they could in the subject.

7. A constraint on pupils' achievement in English, mathematics, history and religious education is the unduly varied quality of teaching in these subjects. Some classes are shared by two or even three teachers; teachers with very few lessons to teach in a subject are often deployed to teach other subjects in subsequent years and the expertise and experience that they have gained in teaching a particular subject is lost. This adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning and prevents pupils from achieving higher standards.

8. Since the last inspection, the standards achieved by pupils have been well maintained. Pupils achieve well overall because of good teaching and their very positive attitudes to learning. These advantages overcome the material constraints on achievement to a considerable extent. Performance in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests has risen and has been consistently at least above the average of similar schools overall. Standards in the tests in English, although satisfactory, have not kept pace with those in mathematics, and especially not with those in science.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, values, personal development and attendance are very good and are very impressive features of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils are very positive about school and about learning.
- They behave very well.
- They are remarkably mature and responsible.

- Pupils achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.5	School data	0.0
National data	6.1	National data	0.3

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attendance is well above average and pupils arrive on time for the start of school and for lessons.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
353	1	0
6	0	0
6	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

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

9. Pupils enjoy school and almost all of their lessons. They co-operate very well with their teachers and do their best. Their very positive attitudes to learning contribute much to their achievement. They participate well in activities in and out of school. Pupils behave very well and their conduct is almost always orderly and respectful. They get on very well together and they are mutually supportive. Instances of anti-social behaviour are few and are effectively dealt with by the school. Pupils take on responsible tasks with integrity, such as being school council representatives and reading 'buddies'. They can be trusted to work conscientiously without close supervision. The calm, purposeful and happy school ethos owes much to the maturity shown by the pupils.

10. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Spiritual and cultural development are good. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual understanding of the pupils. They are expected to think through their own views as well as show understanding of the views of others. This includes an understanding of the traditions and values of other faiths and an appreciation of cultural diversity. However, the input from assemblies is less focused and only satisfactory. Pupils' social and moral development is very good. There is a strong moral code that enables the pupils to learn how to distinguish right from wrong and which permeates the life of the school. Expectations of work and responsible behaviour are high and are fully accepted by all pupils. These values and the promotion of the pupils' social development are to be seen in many aspects of the school's working day. Pupils mix harmoniously and understand the implications of their actions on others. The pupils are developing into valued members of the school community.

11. Pupils with SEN appreciate and respond very well to the extra support that the school provides for them. They have particularly good relationships with teaching assistants, who support them sensitively but ensure that they do not become over-dependent on the extra help that they receive. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are very well integrated into the life of the school, and have the considerate support of a 'circle of friends'.

12. Since the last inspection, the very good ethos of the school continues to be fully maintained by the very positive attitudes of the pupils and the very good provision made for their personal development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides its pupils with a **good** quality of education. It takes great care of each individual. The unsatisfactory accommodation restricts the range of curricular activities available, especially in Years 7 and 8. Links with other institutions are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching meets the needs of all pupils well and helps them to learn successfully.
- Girls and boys of differing abilities and from all ethnic and social backgrounds achieve well.
- Teachers plan lessons very well and ensure that pupils behave very well.
- Teachers' use of assessment has much improved since the last inspection and is good.
- The quality of teaching and learning is usually no more than satisfactory when provided by teachers who teach few lessons in a subject or who are timetabled to teach a subject for no more than one school year. The same applies where the same class is taught by more than one teacher in a subject.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 63 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (3%)	15 (24%)	27 (43%)	18 (29%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen; 63 lessons were seen in total. Figures do not total 100 because of rounding.

13. Teaching and learning are good. Girls and boys of differing subject competence and from different ethnic backgrounds learn well together from the good teaching that they receive. The few pupils who use English as an additional language are well taught. Over one lesson in every four seen during the inspection was of very good or excellent quality and pupils' learning in these lessons was equally very good. There was relatively little difference between the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6, and that in Years 7 and 8. However, cramped accommodation for practical activities in art, design and technology and physical education required great efforts from teachers and pupils to ensure that learning was good. Two lessons were of excellent quality:

Two examples of outstanding practice which illustrate different kinds of learning:

In a history lesson for Year 6 pupils, outstanding teaching enabled pupils to gain vivid insights into schooling in the Victorian era. Much of the hour-long lesson was conducted in role-play, as a class in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The expectations of Victorian society of the education to be provided in Board Schools were conveyed to the pupils with great force. Very good preparation and excellent relationships enabled the teacher and the pupils to enter into the role-play in an impressive partnership. The austere expectations of Victorian society for the formalities of conduct, posture and appearance of pupils brought the past vividly alive to this twenty-first century class. The learning of factual knowledge by chanting and repetition was done with precision. The admonitions and punishments were moments of tension and carried great

emotional force.

The last ten minutes of the lesson were used to evaluate the experience. The pupils were able to make very well informed observations and when asked whether they had enjoyed the experience, every hand was raised with enthusiastic alacrity but accompanied by the intensity of the silence that had been such a potent feature of the role play.

For the pupils, the lesson was a worthwhile and memorable learning experience of the highest quality.

In a Year 7 lesson with a lower attaining group on particle theory, the pupils learned exceptionally well from practical activities.

A brisk starter activity enabled pupils to recall effectively the key ideas of the particle model of matter. The teacher made very good use of humour by allusions to why he did not wear after-shave in the class, and astutely enabled the pupils to appreciate that the particles of a gas must be moving for the smell to travel. Effective demonstration was used as a potent means of assisting pupils' understanding of the science. Balloons were inflated and air sucked out of a plastic bottle; some very well directed questioning followed that enabled the pupils to understand that the moving particles exerted a pressure. Astute, entertaining and active use was made of the pupils themselves to model differences in the movement of particles in solids, liquids and gases. The teacher ensured that the loud noise created when a vacuum pump was used to evacuate air from a tin can took all pupils by surprise. All were subsequently able to explain clearly that the push of the particles of air on the outside of the can was greater than the push on the inside. Pupils' learning was very well consolidated by a well directed extension activity in which they had to show imagination in applying particle theory to explain other phenomena.

14. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is generally good, but there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the quality of pupils' learning of these skills. Consequently, the quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work is too varied. Pupils' mis-spelling of important subject key words is not always corrected. In other respects, marking is generally good, helpful and encouraging. The few pupils for whom English is not the first language receive good literacy support. However, their writing is not marked to support their literacy and vocabulary in subjects other than in English.

15. Teachers do their best to enable their classes to use ICT in subject learning. Although some classrooms have a few computers, only one room is available for whole-class use. Consequently, pupils do not use ICT enough in most subjects and do not reach the standards that they could.

16. Although teaching and learning are good overall, there is considerable variation in quality. Subject co-ordinators and teachers with other specific subject responsibilities generally teach their subjects well and often very well. However, other teachers are timetabled to teach a few, or even a single lesson in some subjects, for example, in English, mathematics, history and religious education. In some cases, the teachers who have taught a few lessons or a single lesson in a subject are timetabled to teach other subjects in a following year. Consequently, the expertise that they gain from teaching a subject and working with the subject co-ordinator is not reinforced and extended.

17. Most lessons are very well planned. Most teaching makes the learning objectives of the lesson clear to the pupils, and summaries at the end are usually effective in reinforcing the learning. Teachers ensure that most lessons maintain a brisk pace of learning and they adapt work well to the range of pupils' needs. Very good standards of behaviour are consistently maintained and pupils respond very well to teachers and to learning and achieve well.

Effective teaching of pupils with SEN enables them to make good progress in all subjects. Teachers take these pupils' needs into account when planning their lessons and adapt tasks well to enable pupils to succeed. Since the last inspection, the school has considerably increased the number of teaching assistants to help pupils with SEN. Teachers manage the work of these staff well and the quality of support provided for these pupils is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. For example, in a Year 5 English class, the assistant helped a small group of pupils to read and understand features of a traditional fairy tale, while the teacher

helped individual pupils to write a summary of the tale in their own words. Teaching assistants plan extra lessons for pupils with more severe difficulties very well, with good support from the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO). As a result, these pupils make good progress when withdrawn from their classes during morning registration.

18. Teachers' use of assessment is good. The outcomes of assessment are used to set realistic targets, closely related to National Curriculum Levels. The school has all the data it needs and uses it well. Information of National Curriculum standards at age 7 years are supplemented by commercially provided tests in Year 5. The results are used very well in determining the teaching groups in English and mathematics. Targets are set in English, mathematics and science and are reviewed annually for each pupil and for a variety of different groups of pupils. This practice enables most pupils to achieve well. Assessment evidence shows where this is not the case, and effective remedial action follows. Pupils are regularly helped to assess their own work. They know the standards that they are achieving and those for which they are aiming. This information is used well to establish challenging targets. Assessment is used well to determine any SEN that pupils may have and to determine whether a pupil is gifted or talented. This assessment is followed up by appropriate supporting or extension work.

19. Since the last inspection, the proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching has considerably increased. Key issues of the last inspection have been met well; work is now generally well matched to pupils' needs and assessment is used more effectively.

THE CURRICULUM

Curricular provision is **good** in Years 5 and 6 and **satisfactory** in Years 7 and 8. Accommodation is **unsatisfactory**. Provision for staffing and learning resources is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' access to the curriculum is very good, especially for pupils with SEN.
- Teachers are timetabled to teach different subjects in successive years and so lose the expertise that they have built up.
- The accommodation is cramped and unsatisfactory; the lack of adequate facilities adversely affects achievement in some subjects where specialist rooms are too small and restrict the range of work that can be done.
- The opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- The number and quality of teaching assistants are good.
- The opportunities for the enrichment of learning by extra-curricular activities are good.

Commentary

20. The curriculum provides a good range of opportunities in Years 5 and 6, and a satisfactory one in Years 7 and 8. All pupils have the opportunity to learn French from Year 5, but the time allowed is insufficient for them to make rapid progress. All year groups receive discrete ICT lessons, but there is insufficient access for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum. Curricular provision meets the needs, interests and capabilities of both girls and boys from all ethnic and social backgrounds and cultures equally well.

21. The school provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which is taught mainly in tutor periods. The programme includes sex and relationships education. A police liaison officer visits regularly to talk to the pupils about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and vandalism. Citizenship is effectively included in the PSHE scheme of work.

22. Provision for pupils with SEN is very good. The school provides a good mix of effective support in different subjects and extra help for pupils with more severe needs in small groups. Setting arrangements allow the school to teach pupils with learning difficulties in smaller classes, where they benefit significantly from more individual support.

23. Extra-curricular provision is good. There is a comprehensive programme of activities. Sport and music are well represented. The annual school productions are successful and popular events. There is a wide range of school visits, including residential experiences, which extends pupils' learning well. After-school activities include social evenings, as well as a 'Cool Club', which provides opportunities to do homework. Activities are generally well supported. The few pupils for whom English is not their first language participate well in extra-curricular activities.

24. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and plans are in place to build new premises. Some improvements have been made to the existing accommodation to support pupils' achievement well. For example, new temporary classrooms have replaced old ones; a computer suite has been built and a new library created. However, standards of achievement are adversely affected by inadequate accommodation in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Many science lessons cannot be conducted in laboratories and this restricts the range of work that can be undertaken. Only one room is fully equipped with computers, and although there are a few machines in different subject areas, access for all classes is inadequate. Accommodation for the learning of individual musical instruments prevents free use of a room mainly designated for support for pupils with SEN. The hall is too small for many of its intended uses and is the only indoor accommodation for physical education. The accommodation for individual and small group work with pupils with SEN is inadequate and noise from groups being taught in the hall often affects pupils' concentration.

25. Most subject departments have at least satisfactory learning resources. Design and technology and art departments lack the space for the learning resources that are needed. The number of computers is insufficient. The recently formed library which has been very well supported by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is in an open area where quiet study is often difficult because of the movement of pupils. It houses a restricted range of books.

26. Overall, teachers are adequately qualified to teach the curriculum. However, the deployment of teachers is not always effective. The use of different teachers to teach the same pupils in a subject adversely affects the continuity of pupils' learning. Teaching assistants provide support of good quality. Arrangements are good for the induction and professional development of staff and the training of student teachers.

27. Since the last inspection, the curriculum continues to provide a sound range of learning opportunities. Increased numbers of pupils attend the school; more classes impose greater demands on the accommodation, which is inadequate to meet these requirements. Staffing is sufficient, but some deployment of staff is unhelpful to learning. Learning resources have been improved, but ICT resources are still insufficient to meet all needs.

Care, guidance and support

The care that the school takes of its pupils is **very good**. Pupils receive **good** advice, support and guidance and are encouraged to take responsibility for their school community.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils are very well cared for.
- The arrangements for health, safety and welfare are good.
- Pupils receive good information and help about how to improve their standards of work.
- Pupils' views are sought, respected and acted upon by the school.

Commentary

28. Pupils feel supported, safe and valued because of the considerate and respectful way in which they are treated. Teachers are helpful, considerate and approachable. The school goes to considerable lengths to meet the needs of all girls and boys, including those with SEN and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. The induction process ensures that new pupils settle in smoothly.

29. The procedures for health and safety are very well implemented. The provision of first aid is good. Child-protection procedures are in place and suitably followed, but temporary staff and mid-day supervisors are not briefed on the procedures in sufficient detail. Specialist health and educational agencies supplement the school's provision very well.

30. Pupils are aware how they are progressing in almost all subjects. Self-evaluation by pupils and the target system contribute well to academic and personal improvement. However, marking and guidance about improving literacy skills across the curriculum are not sufficiently effective.

31. Helpful 'booster lessons' are arranged for Year 6 pupils prior to the Year 6 National Curriculum tests. A lunchtime homework club is available, although few pupils attend. Pupils' views are represented mainly through the school council. Representations are respected and frequently acted upon. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility for each other, for example as house captains and 'buddies'.

32. The school meets the requirements for pupils with SEN, as outlined in their statements. It carries out annual reviews of these pupils' progress efficiently. The SENCO communicates well with several support agencies, which provide very good advice and support for children with more severe difficulties. Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils' individual needs and targets well and use them to adapt their work. However, pupils are not sure about their targets and are not sufficiently involved in the reviews of their progress.

33. Good standards of support and guidance have been well maintained since the last inspection. The school takes very good care of its pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents have a high regard for the school. The partnership between school and parents is **good**. Links with the community are **good**. The school works **very well** with other schools and institutions.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Parents express great confidence in the school.
- They are very supportive of the school but do not involve themselves greatly in its daily life and work.
- Working arrangements with the partner high schools are very well developed.
- The wider community is used well to augment learning and to promote pupils' personal development.
- There are some omissions in the information supplied to parents.

Commentary

34. Parents are very pleased with the quality of education and care that the school provides. The only significant concern, which was expressed by a minority, was about homework. Inspectors judge that the amount is satisfactory overall, but it is not set consistently.

35. The information provided for parents is generally good. However, annual school reports do not clearly describe how pupils achieve compared to the national expectations for their age group. The annual governors' report omits details about facilities for disabled pupils and progress with key issues from the previous inspection. A survey of parents' views has recently been undertaken and a school website is under construction. Parents are kept well informed of developments regarding the support and progress of pupils on the school's special needs register. They are fully involved with the reviews of their children's statements and individual education plans.

36. Parental attendance is high at consultation evenings, events and performances. Parents co-operate very well with strategies to support their own children, but few are directly involved in the day-to-day life of the school.

37. The school works very closely with its partner schools to ensure the smooth transfer of pupils. Curricular projects that effectively promote continuity of education are very well developed with the high school. Links with other institutions promote teacher training and work experience for students.

38. A wide range of experiences in the community enhances pupils' learning opportunities and personal development.

39. Since the last inspection, strong links with parents and the community have been maintained.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher rightly has the overwhelming confidence of governors, parents, staff and pupils in his leadership.
- The leadership of the headteacher, key staff and governors gives the school a clear sense of purpose and direction.
- The school has been led and managed well to ensure good progress since the last inspection.
- The deployment of many teachers to teach certain subjects, for example, English, mathematics and history, is detrimental in maintaining a consistently good quality of teaching and learning.
- The monitoring and evaluation of standards and practice in literacy across the curriculum are insufficient.

Commentary

40. The leadership of the school is good. Governors' leadership is good. They are very committed to the success of the school and inform themselves well of its standards and practice by their own monitoring and through specialist committees. They question management pointedly and hold it to account. They use their professional expertise generously in the interest of school and community. They ensure that pupils receive an education adapted to their needs. School development planning is clear and manageable and governors contribute effectively to planning for change; they are currently working closely with the headteacher and key staff to improve the accommodation. There are two statutory omissions from the written information that the governors give to parents.

41. The headteacher provides good leadership and contributes directly to the very positive ethos that the school exudes. He is vigorously supported by the diligent deputy headteacher and other key staff. They rightly inspire pupils with confidence that the school cares for them and will do all it possibly can to meet their needs and to help them achieve their best. Consequently, girls and boys of differing competence and from all social and ethnic backgrounds have very positive attitudes to the school and to learning. The headteacher has clear vision for the future development of the school and his enthusiasm and commitment to it are manifest. He has led the school well to improve standards and the quality of teaching and ensured good improvement since the last inspection.

42. Subject co-ordinators lead their staff teams well. They ensure that pupils achieve well in their subjects and do all that they can to lead teachers who lack experience of the subject to teach at least satisfactory lessons. Leadership in science has ensured that pupils maintain very good standards. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with SEN are very good. The SENCO manages a large team of teaching assistants very effectively, despite the lack of time provided to carry out this responsibility. Appropriate priorities for further development have been identified. The school monitors the progress of individual pupils well but does not yet use data well enough to evaluate its overall provision for these pupils.

43. The management is good at all levels of responsibility. It is self-critical and aims for better standards of achievement and quality of teaching. Performance is evaluated efficiently and senior management uses monitoring, assessment and review consistently throughout the school to help sustain the good standards that pupils attain. The school manages its middle-school position very well. It works very closely with the high schools to which pupils transfer at age 13. Liaison is also good with pupils' first schools, although the school does not indicate to them how well their former pupils achieve in the middle school. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of literacy across the curriculum to ensure that standards are equally good in all subjects. For example, there is inconsistent practice in the marking of basic spelling errors, including those of key words in some subjects. The progress of the few pupils for whom English is an additional language is generally well managed. However, no additional support for their linguistic development has been gained from the local authority.

44. Subject management is good. However, several subject co-ordinators have great difficulty in ensuring that the standards achieved and the quality of teaching and learning are consistently good across their subjects. The deployment of many staff who have a minimal timetabled commitment to a subject and who often change their timetabled commitments year-on-year creates considerable difficulties for co-ordinators in managing subject practice to ensure good provision and achievement. Management has much improved the monitoring of teaching, which was a key issue at the last inspection, reduced the average size of classes, and introduced more teaching to pupils grouped by their potential in particular subjects to assist their progress. However, difficulties in ensuring a good, even quality of teaching and learning across all subjects remain, because of the deployment of an excessive number of staff in some subjects. Nevertheless, performance management is well managed and contributes well to enhancing the professional skills of the staff.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	880,534.00
Total expenditure	849,074.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,379.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	29,445.00
Balance carried forward to the next	31,459.00

45. The school's modest funding per pupil is used well to ensure the achievement of good standards and good educational provision. Learning resources have been improved since the last inspection, particularly in the provision of ICT, although this is still insufficient for current needs.

The funding of assistants to support pupils with SEN is used well and so these pupils achieve well. The decision to reduce class sizes has contributed to better standards. However, governors and management currently have the challenge of balancing the school's budget for the current financial year. They are managing this thoughtfully, in a context of future budgetary uncertainties. The school applies best-value principles well. It compares its performance closely, and favourably, with that of similar schools. Good challenging learning opportunities are provided, especially in Years 5 and 6, and the constraints of unsatisfactory accommodation are overcome as well as possible. There is good consultation with pupils and parents and the restricted spending on services is appropriate. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

46. Since the last inspection in 1998, good leadership and management have maintained good standards and ensured a good rate of improvement.

SUBJECTS KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils attain above average standards by the end of Year 8.
- Good teaching enables most pupils to learn well, but competent pupils are not challenged sufficiently in some lessons.
- Pupils with SEN make good progress.
- Data is not used enough to set targets for teachers and pupils to achieve each year.
- Lack of time for managing the subject is adversely affecting standards.

Commentary

47. Standards in Year 6 are above average. This represents satisfactory achievement for most girls and boys from all social and ethnic backgrounds because they enter the school with above average standards. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. They are keen to contribute to class and group discussions; most speak clearly and fluently in correct English. Most pupils read widely. They make good progress with writing in a range of styles. The more competent pupils produce very imaginative short stories. However, pupils' writing often lacks accurate spelling and punctuation. Results in National Curriculum tests have fallen during the last two years, from well above average in 2001. They were above average in 2002, but in line with the national average in 2003. Pupils' results in 2003 were in line with those achieved in similar schools, but they did better in science and mathematics than they did in English. There is little difference in the performance of girls and boys in the national tests.

48. In Year 8, current standards are above those typical for this age group. Pupils are achieving as well as expected from their results in Year 6. They continue to listen carefully and develop further confidence to speak at length during discussions. They read a wide range of texts with good understanding. However, the more competent pupils find it difficult to analyse the way that writers use language for effect. Pupils adapt their written style well for different purposes. For example, they wrote fascinating biographies of their grandparents with a suitable mix of facts, anecdotes and quotations from interviews. However, much spelling and punctuation continues to be inaccurate.

49. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well. In all years, pupils with SEN achieve well. They make the most of good support from teaching assistants and the extra attention that they receive in smaller classes. By contrast, the more competent pupils do not learn or achieve as well as they might in some lessons because teachers do not always challenge them sufficiently. In most lessons, teachers use a good variety of teaching methods to interest and motivate pupils. However, when they teach the more competent pupils in large classes, they do not vary their teaching methods enough and the pace of learning slows. In all lessons, teachers build well on their very good relationships with pupils to ensure that they work hard and concentrate well. They mark pupils' work precisely and helpfully. They carefully explain the ways that pupils can improve their work and set them clear targets that they can easily understand. Teachers' reference to the purpose of lessons is inconsistent. Most explain what they expect pupils to learn at the start, but do not always help them to evaluate their learning at the end.

50. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership for a large team of committed teachers who work well together. The management of the subject is satisfactory but the co-ordinator has insufficient time to carry out her many responsibilities, especially monitoring the work of 13 English teachers. The department does not use data from assessments as well as it could to set targets for teachers and pupils. Results have fallen since the co-ordinator has taken a part-time post and no other teacher has been appointed to share responsibility for the management of the subject.

51. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Although standards have fallen recently, they are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Teaching has improved but the more competent pupils are still not sufficiently challenged in some lessons.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

52. Pupils' language and literacy skills are above average. They speak confidently and listen carefully to teachers and each other. Their reading skills enable them to understand and respond to texts in all subjects, with support from teachers and teaching assistants when necessary. Many read widely. They write effectively in a range of styles and are able to use technical terms in different subjects. However, in all years, many pupils make frequent spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.

53. Provision for developing pupils' language and literacy skills is satisfactory, but lacks consistency in different subjects. The school does not have a policy to ensure that all teachers work together to develop pupils' skills. For example, there is a common scheme for marking mistakes in pupils' writing but not all teachers use this, even within the English department. Teachers of English emphasise the importance of pupils' spelling, punctuation and forming of sentences correctly, but in other subjects, notably history and religious education, mistakes are seldom corrected. Teachers often encourage pupils to write in different styles, especially in religious education, but do not check the accuracy of the work. In design and technology and in art and science, teachers introduce technical vocabulary and key words well but pupils still make spelling mistakes. By comparison, opportunities for pupils to express their ideas and evaluate each other's work in discussion are very good, especially in physical education, art and music. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their reading skills in most subjects. The school has not allocated responsibility for a teacher to monitor the development of literacy across the curriculum, with the result that provision is not consistent.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers are dedicated and hardworking, and prepare lessons well.
- Pupils work seriously and responsibly, both individually and together.
- Written work is of high quality and is supported by careful and helpful corrections.
- Pupils' speaking skills are unsatisfactory: teachers do not use enough spoken French in lessons.

Commentary

54. By the end of Year 6, girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds attain standards above those typical nationally. They make a good start in Years 5 and 6, but progress is restricted by the very small allocation of lesson time. In Year 5, pupils learn how to greet each other, answer simple questions about themselves and begin to build up a simple vocabulary. By the end of Year 6, their understanding of written and spoken French is good and their written work is carefully presented. However, their speaking skills are under-developed. Many are hesitant and lacking in confidence in answering questions.

55. By Year 8, pupils continue to achieve standards above those usually expected for their age. Pupils in classes of higher potential command a good range of vocabulary and grammar. Their written work is impressive and they write ambitiously in complex sentences. The work of pupils in lower-attaining classes, including those with SEN, is less ambitious, but their written work is mostly neat and carefully completed. Spoken French remains a weakness at all levels. Pupils answer questions and try hard when speaking in pairs, but opportunities are lacking for them to develop their speaking skills.

56. The overall quality of teaching is good, but it is not above satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Six out of seven teachers are non-specialists in French, and they are not sufficiently confident in their use of spoken French. This is reflected in the weakness of pupils' use of spoken language. However, the teachers' experience of teaching other subjects and the very positive attitudes of their pupils result in good learning. Lessons are carefully planned; explanations are clear and a variety of activities provides interest and challenge for pupils of all abilities. Pace and momentum are usually well maintained.

57. The subject co-ordinator is dedicated and hard working. She is well informed about recent developments in language teaching, and this is reflected in subject documentation which is detailed and helpful. Excellent records are kept of pupils' attainment and progress and used to set targets in consultation with them. The other teachers of French are all new since the last inspection; they receive excellent advice and support from the subject co-ordinator. Her expertise and experience have been particularly important in maintaining standards and the quality of teaching since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning are good, so pupils achieve well.
- Standards are well above average in Year 6.
- Good assessment of pupils' work is used well.
- Computers are not used enough in teaching and learning.

Commentary

58. The standards that pupils reach by the end of Year 6 are well above average. This represents good achievement when compared to pupils' above-average levels of attainment on entry to the school. The different groups of pupils, boys, girls, those with SEN, those for whom English is not their first language and high attaining pupils, achieve equally well because teaching and learning are good. Number work is particularly good. Standards in the work seen are significantly higher than the average results that pupils gained in the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests, although those results were still above the average of similar schools. Current work indicates a return to the well above average test results of 2001. Girls' and boys' performance in the tests in mathematics is better than in English, but not as good as in science.

59. Pupils' standards by Year 8 are currently above average compared to pupils of their age group. Standards are close to being well above average, because a large majority has already reached the National Curriculum Level expected at the end of Year 9. Achievement is good. Algebraic processes are developing well, especially the use of negative signs. Standards of numeracy are good. However, higher attaining pupils do not yet use an efficient method for calculating percentage increases and decreases.

60. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The quality ranges from satisfactory to very good. The good planning of lessons invariably provides a firm framework for learning and varies activities in lessons. This maintains pupils' concentration and ensures a good rate of learning. Short-term goals, for example, 'You only have five minutes for this', are particularly effective. The very good teaching continually challenges pupils with questions that develop their thinking skills, such as, how to use a quick method to calculate 17×41 at the end of a Year 5 lesson. However, open-ended questions are less well used in other lessons. Question and answer techniques are used well in the learning of basic number facts and in the introduction of new work in all lessons. Pupils are engaged very well in their learning and their behaviour is excellent. However, teachers' use of brackets in the ordering of numerical operations is not always correct. Insufficient access to computers limits their use for teaching and learning, and restricts pupils' understanding of algebra. The use of computers for lower attainers to practise with numbers is also restricted by access to the equipment. Sometimes only two pupils have that opportunity in a lesson.

61. Leadership and management are good and overcome the difficulty of co-ordinating the work of many teachers as well as possible. The practice of one teacher taking a class for one lesson a week is unhelpful to pupils' learning. Teaching arrangements are effective because assessment evidence is used well to match teaching to the learning needs of the pupils. Improvement since the last inspection is good, because standards in Year 6 have improved and assessment has improved significantly.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Standards across the school are good. The National Numeracy Strategy is effective in this school and responsible, in part, for the pupils' good achievement. In science, graph work is good. For example, in Years 7 and 8, the drawing of cooling curves for different solutions is good, and

shows that different solutions retain more heat than others do. In Years 5 and 6 good graphs are drawn showing the length of a day. Standards are good in geography, mathematics and art. Numerical work develops well through the good teaching of mathematics. The teaching of the relationships between the imperial and the metric systems of measurement enables pupils to make accurate estimations in both systems. The development of spatial awareness is good in art. Standards are satisfactory in design and technology, where lack of space for practical work prevents pupils' skills of measurement from being any better. In geography, Year 6 pupils managed arithmetical calculations successfully when working out the cost of camping equipment. Standards are as expected nationally in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests are regularly well above average.
- Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 7 and 8. Consequently, pupils achieve well, although their skills in the use of ICT are underdeveloped.
- Leadership and management are good, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment has improved, but does not yet give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve.
- In Years 7 and 8, many lessons are not taught in a laboratory and this restricts teaching and learning.

Commentary

63. Girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds and of all abilities achieve well in Years 5 and 6 and reach well above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils with SEN achieve well. All pupils use ideas beyond the essential curriculum to explain phenomena. For example, they understand how the brightness of a bulb will be affected by the length of wire in a circuit; they predict the outcome and explain this from their understanding of resistance. However, their skills in choosing what to investigate are underdeveloped. Results in the end of Year 6 tests have been consistently well above average in recent years, and were well above those of similar schools in 2002 and 2003.

64. In Years 7 and 8, all pupils achieve very well. They attain well above the standards typical for their age. For example, they grasp chemical formulae, and distinguish between elements, compounds and mixtures, using the particle model. Nevertheless, their skills in selecting factors to investigate for themselves remain underdeveloped.

65. Teaching and learning are very good in Year 7 and 8, and good in Years 5 and 6. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set them challenging work. Questioning is used effectively to develop pupils' understanding and to make them think. Demonstrations, problem solving, practical work, investigative work and data interpretation exercises are used effectively. The best lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Pupils respond with enthusiasm and interest. They make good progress and always, at least, achieve well. Insufficient ICT resources are available to ensure adequate use by teachers and pupils. Many lessons in Years 7 and 8 are not taught in a laboratory and this restricts the learning activities that teachers can organise. Teachers' use of assessment has improved since the last inspection, but formative assessment has not been implemented fully.

66. The subject co-ordinator is an excellent role model for staff and pupils. He is an enthusiastic and skilful practitioner. Schemes of work for the subject provide clear guidance to staff of high expectations for lessons. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive impact on the quality of lessons. However, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning and a lack of opportunity for staff to observe good practice.

67. Since the last inspection, there has been a continuing focus on raising standards and these have improved significantly. Targets in National Curriculum tests have been set high, but the quality of teaching and learning has enabled impressive test standards to be maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils receive challenging, well planned work in discrete ICT lessons.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should, because ICT is not used enough across the curriculum.
- Good improvements in assessment practice are being implemented.
- Longer term planning for the development of ICT is lacking.

Commentary

68. By the ends of Years 6 and 8, pupils of all levels of competence and from all social and ethnic backgrounds reach standards below those typical for their age groups nationally. However, pupils are achieving well in the lessons timetabled specifically for ICT in all years. The gap between the standards that pupils attain and their potential for the subject has narrowed since the last inspection, when raising attainment was made a key issue for improvement. Better equipment has been provided and is used well in the designated ICT lessons. However, pupils' experience in using ICT is restricted outside these timetabled lessons and insufficient use of the subject is made across the curriculum for pupils to make the progress that they should. In the discrete ICT lessons, pupils concentrate, work hard and make good progress. However, their attainment is constrained by the need to revisit areas of learning and reinforce skills. They lack the opportunity to practise these skills regularly enough in all subjects so that techniques are well embedded and pupils reach the standards that they should.

69. The quality of teaching and learning in the discrete ICT lessons is good. Learning is generally challenging in Years 5 and 6. Compared with the situation at the last inspection, teachers plan and operate a more coherent sequence of work in Years 5 and 6. However, in Years 7 and 8, much time is spent revising and repeating exercises in lessons specifically for the development of ICT skills, rather than relying on other areas of the curriculum for pupils to practise and apply these skills. Assessment is now becoming more helpful to pupils in focusing their efforts to raise their achievement. The pace of teaching and learning in the discrete ICT lessons is brisk; pupils respond well. They are well motivated and work hard throughout the lessons. Pupils from ethnic minority groups, including those who use English as an additional language, and pupils with SEN are fully included and they make good progress in these lessons.

70. Leadership and management of the subject have improved and are now satisfactory. The teachers work well together. Much effort has been made to improve the schemes of work, the quality of teaching and learning and assessment. However, full benefit from these efforts cannot be gained without wider use of ICT across all subjects. Longer-term planning is not yet in place for raising attainment by the provision of more extensive accommodation and resources, taking into account depreciation and the need to replace equipment. Given the low base at which the subject stood in the 1998 inspection, improvement has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

71. Pupils' standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum are below those typical nationally, because they have insufficient opportunity to develop their skills in ICT outside the discrete ICT timetabled lessons. Cross-curricular development of ICT was an issue for improvement in the last inspection where a minimal amount of word-processed, stick and paste work was seen. The situation is little better now. Some training in the use of ICT has been provided. However, this is insufficient for all teachers to be able to enhance the teaching and learning of ICT in their subjects and to enrich pupils' learning with ICT. The skills they learn in discrete ICT lessons are not reinforced enough in their work in all subjects.

72. The provision of equipment has much improved since the last inspection. There is now one ICT suite. Four computers are located in the library and some classrooms now have a few networked computers. However, accommodation, hardware and software are inadequate to meet the specialist needs of all subjects. Some very recent purchase of data-logging equipment for science had not been brought into use at the time of the inspection. The log of use of the ICT suite indicates that it is not used in some periods.

HUMANITIES

The focus was mainly on history and religious education. Geography was sampled; one lesson could be seen. The positive attitudes of Year 6 pupils enabled them to achieve well in a well-planned lesson on the topic of living in a mountainous environment.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teaching and learning are good overall, but an excessive number of teachers is timetabled to teach the subject and the quality of teaching varies too much.
- Subject leadership is very good.
- Insufficient attention is given to analysing and interpreting sources of evidence.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used enough to enhance pupils' understanding of the subject.

Commentary

73. Girls and boys of differing competence and from all ethnic backgrounds achieve the standards expected nationally by the end of Year 6. They attain those typical for their age group when they leave in Year 8. Most pupils are articulate and speak in an informed way about their work. They often produce very well presented written work. They write extended pieces competently and have sound knowledge and understanding of topics. However, written work often contains many spelling errors of key subject words. Pupils with SEN achieve well, particularly when they are supported in class by assistants who are, invariably, very helpful and effective. Those who use English as an additional language access the curriculum well and make good progress. Pupils research and investigate topics for themselves and work well independently. Although there is some use of ICT, this is insufficient to advance pupils' subject knowledge and understanding well. Pupils are not sufficiently practised in analysing and interpreting sources of evidence, although they are familiar with classifying basic types of evidence.

74. Although teaching and learning are good overall, the quality varies too much. One lesson was excellent and some were no more than satisfactory. Of the five lessons seen, the two in Years 5 and 6 were respectively very good and excellent. One inspired pupils with a vivid experience of the past, by role-play set in a Victorian classroom. Lessons are usually very well

planned and organised. Objectives are made clear to the pupils. All teachers have very good control of classes and help pupils to research topics for themselves. The assessment system is informative to pupils. The marking of work is invariably encouraging, but basic spelling errors of key subject words are not corrected consistently.

75. The leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator leads by example as a teacher of history, provides much help and support for colleagues, liaises closely with the high schools to ensure good continuity of learning for pupils when they leave and enter Year 9 elsewhere. Monitoring is extensive. However, there are considerable difficulties in co-ordinating classes taught by two teachers, by many teachers timetabled for very few subject lessons, and by many changes of teachers timetabled for the subject each year, dissipating the expertise in teaching the subject that has been accumulated. The situation is detrimental to pupils' achievement.

76. Since the last inspection, the standards achieved have been maintained and teaching has improved, despite the difficulties of continuity of staffing.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching and the good attitudes they bring to lessons.
- Standards are rising because of good leadership and management.
- Marking does not do enough to help pupils understand how to improve their work.

Commentary

77. Pupils of different levels of competence in the subject and from different ethnic backgrounds achieve well by the end of Year 6, and reach standards above those typical nationally. They have, for example, a good knowledge and understanding of the roles of Jesus and Mohammed as the founders of Christianity and Islam. Pupils also achieve well to reach standards above those expected for their age group at the end of Year 8. They have a good understanding of the place of Christianity and other principal religions, and of their origins, distinctive beliefs and practices. Their skills in making a personal response to religious questions are particularly well developed, although their evaluative skills are less secure.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. Pupils come to lessons keen to learn. Where learning is strongest, it is because teachers plan their lessons very well to achieve their aims. They challenge pupils with a rich variety of interesting activities and tasks, which are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 6 pupils made very good gains in understanding aspects of the personal representation of Jesus. This was because the teacher challenged their Western European stereotypical image of Jesus, through powerful use of his depiction in art from different cultural traditions. Meaningful homework extends the learning in class. Good teaching and learning are underpinned by high expectations, and the very good relationships engendered in the classroom. Where learning is less secure, it is because marking does not do enough to help pupils understand how to raise the level of their attainment. Correction of the misspelling of key subject words is not done consistently. Opportunities are also sometimes missed to set extension work for higher attaining pupils.

79. The subject is led and managed well by a clear-sighted co-ordinator, who, with the active support of non-specialist colleagues, has done much to move the subject on in a short space of time. Standards are now significantly higher than at the previous inspection, because the quality of teaching and learning has been raised, and schemes of work and assessment procedures improved. Action is in hand to address weaknesses in the monitoring of teaching and learning, partly created by the excessive numbers of teachers deployed to teach the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Some teaching is dynamic, vibrant and lively.
- Pupils' design ideas and creativity are good.
- Leadership is good.
- Cramped accommodation and insufficient resources inhibit pupils' opportunities to develop a full range of practical skills.

Commentary

80. Standards in Years 5 and 6 are at the nationally expected level. This represents satisfactory achievement. Girls and boys of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds understand and use technical language well. They work well together and create good imaginative designs. For example, in a Year 6 class, the pupils, planning in groups, were animated by the thematic work on fairgrounds. They were able to work well together and take a democratic vote on the best design from members of their group, based on their chosen theme. However, practical skills and finished products are below average and less well developed because cramped accommodation restricts practical work.

81. Standards by the end of Year 8 are equal to those of pupils of that age group nationally. Pupils' standards of work and subject skills are above those usually seen in design, creativity and an understanding of industrial practices. Their teamwork is very good. For example, Year 8 pupils designed questionnaires in groups and sketched a variety of new creative chocolate products inspired by their visit to Cadbury's. Nevertheless, pupils' practical skills and the quality of products are below expectation.

82. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A strong feature of the best teaching is teachers' dynamic, vibrant and lively delivery of the subject. They give clear explanations of complex ideas and make good links to other subjects, particularly to science. There is great mutual respect and very good rapport between teachers and pupils. A weakness is failing to ensure that all pupils concentrate on the set work enough. Consequently, they do not achieve well enough. Some are allowed to handle tools incorrectly.

83. Leadership of the subject is good. The curriculum is well planned, reflective and is constantly adapted to meet well the needs of different pupils, including those with SEN. The subject co-ordinator has other key responsibilities in the school, but manages a close-knit team very well; together they regularly monitor their teaching and pupils' learning. The use of assessment is good.

84. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection, although graphics skills are still under-developed. Cramped accommodation and insufficient resources inhibit pupils' opportunity to learn and develop a good range of practical skills, particularly in the use of different materials.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Provision in art and design is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The subject expertise of teachers significantly contributes to the rise in standards since the last inspection, and ameliorates, to some extent, the deficiencies of accommodation and resources.
- Good planning and assessment enable all pupils to build well on their prior knowledge.
- Literacy is well developed in art but opportunities for using ICT creatively are insufficient.

Commentary

85. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above those typical for girls and boys of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds nationally. This represents good achievement for pupils who entered the school with, at best, the knowledge and skills in art to be generally expected of a pupil at the age of nine. Pupils produce good observational drawings and paint well. They use a range of media for two-dimensional work. They also produce good ceramic figures. Pupils' standards in Year 8 are above those typical of this age group, particularly in two-dimensional work. They achieve well and speak confidently about their work with good use of subject vocabulary. Standards of three-dimensional work are not higher because there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to practise the techniques learned more frequently.

86. The teaching of all pupils is consistently good and some is very good throughout the school. This encourages good attitudes to the subject among well behaved pupils. Very good planning of lessons ensures that pupils are given access to all artistic experiences, despite the difficulties of cramped accommodation. Teachers' very good subject knowledge enthuses pupils and ensures - for example, that all Year 8 pupils are well challenged to understand the symbolism of Renaissance painting; they examine its composition and note details of clothing before selecting the medium in which to draw a still-life drapery design. Year 5 pupils are encouraged to examine storybook illustrations, to discuss them and then paint silhouettes in the manner of Pienkowski. Lively informative introductions with very good questioning develop pupils' speaking skills well. Although ICT is used by some pupils to photograph 'natural' sculptures in the style of Goldsworthy, it is insufficiently used as a vehicle for artistic exploration.

87. Very good subject leadership promotes a clear vision of art and encourages teamwork. Very good management ensures the maximum benefits for pupils. The contribution of art and design to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, despite the constraints in accommodation and learning resources. Assessment is used much more effectively, and now involves pupils' self evaluation, although they have yet to understand fully how they might improve their work further. The art department has worked closely with a community metalwork artist to produce a splendid millennium bench for the quadrangle.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory** and provides a sound basis for future development.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards overall are in line with expectations and provide a sound basis for further development.
- Challenging schemes of work engage pupils well.
- Teaching expertise enables good assessment of pupils.
- There are increasing numbers of instrumentalists, but accommodation for instruction and practice is inadequate.

Commentary

88. By the end of Year 6, the standards of pupils from all social and ethnic backgrounds are similar to those found nationally. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEN, have benefited from the work of a specialist music co-ordinator and are achieving satisfactorily. They listen knowledgeably to Gamelin music and separate the rhythmic and melodic lines, playing them on various tuned percussion instruments. However, independent learning is constrained by lack of rehearsal rooms in which to develop pupils' skills of composition and performance.

89. Standards by Year 8 are typical of those found nationally for pupils of this age. Pupils currently in Year 8 have achieved well to reach this point, because their progress was unsatisfactory when they were in Years 5 and 6 because of the unsatisfactory teaching and learning that was reported at the last inspection. Consequently, the pupils now in Year 8 had lower standards when they entered Year 7 than they should have had. However, all pupils can now read a simple tune and play it on a keyboard accurately and fluently, both individually and in pairs, at intervals of a sixth. The most capable pupils select appropriate chords to accompany it. Pupils have a sound knowledge of musical history but their singing is less developed.

90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in all years. Some lessons have very good features which enthuse and motivate pupils, and encourage all abilities to succeed. Very good relationships in the classroom give pupils the confidence to persevere and perfect their work. Marking of class work and homework is of good quality and leads to well founded assessment of standards. Although the best lessons are vibrant and lively with pupils engaged in a variety of tasks as in the case of a lesson on Balinese music, others can be too abstract and theoretical.

91. Leadership of the department is good and has brought about a good improvement since the last inspection when the low standards were made a key issue for improvement. The department is well managed. Peripatetic instrumental teaching is very popular, and more pupils are taking graded examinations. There has been a significant increase in the number of extra-curricular musical opportunities since the last inspection. Planning and assessment procedures ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily but pupils' progress in it is constrained by insufficient access to equipment. There is good use of literacy, and music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' very good attitudes and good teaching provide a good learning environment for pupils of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances pupils' learning well.
- Levels of assessment are not shared with the pupils and they are unaware of what they need to do to raise their work to the next level.
- A lack of suitable accommodation restricts extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes, and pupils' achievement, especially in Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

92. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. Standards at the end of Year 8 are also above the standards expected at this age. The standards in games are better than those in gymnastics and dance. Pupils enter the school with skills broadly in line with typical national expectations and make good progress to achieve well by Year 6. Their progress levels off through Years 7 and 8 because of the constraints of unsatisfactory accommodation and facilities for gymnastics and dance. Consequently, pupils' achievement by Year 8 is satisfactory, but not as high as it could be. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well as others, as do those with SEN.

93. Teaching is good in all years and results in good learning. Pupils respond to the challenge and high expectations that they are offered. They change into subject kit quickly; they are enthusiastic and work very well in pairs and groups. Their very good relationships also encourage a positive environment in which learning can take place and in which pupils of all abilities feel confident in trying out new ideas. Pupils routinely evaluate the work of their peers and this develops their speaking skills well. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the good provision of extra-curricular activities. However, the National Curriculum Levels at which pupils are assessed are not shared with them. Consequently, although the pupils are aware of the specific skills to be improved during a lesson, they are not made aware of what is required to raise their work to the next level.

94. Leadership and management of the department are good. The subject co-ordinators have a clear vision for improvement, instill enthusiasm into pupils and are good role models for both staff and pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; standards have improved; new curricula have been introduced; National Curriculum requirements have been met. Although the use of assessment has improved, its practice is not yet fully satisfactory. The unsatisfactory indoor accommodation restricts provision for the full curriculum and, consequently, pupils' achievement, especially in Years 7 and 8.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good leadership and management have the vision to move the subject on.
- Standards are satisfactory and improving.
- There are missed opportunities in some subjects to contribute to pupils' development in citizenship.

Commentary

95. The school teaches citizenship through discrete citizenship lessons within the programme of PSHE, indirectly through other subjects, and through its provision for pupils' social development outside the classroom.

96. The achievement of girls and boys of differing abilities from all ethnic backgrounds is satisfactory at the end of Years 6 and 8, where they reach typical standards for their age. They have a satisfactory understanding of how democratic processes can be used to influence planning decisions affecting the lives of local communities. They have sound skills of enquiry and communication which enable them to explore and influence issues affecting their lives. They are learning how elections work, and experience the exercise of leadership and responsibility through, for example, the school council, and the system of house representatives.

97. For timetabling reasons, there was no opportunity to observe dedicated personal social education lessons in citizenship during the inspection. However, analysis of pupils' work shows that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned, and relevant to pupils' experience of family, school and community life. They challenge pupils with work of increasing depth and complexity as they move through the school. The use of commercially produced learning resources ensures consistency of delivery by the large numbers of teachers providing the lessons, but these resources are not always well matched to the differing needs of pupils. Opportunities are missed to enrich these resources with those freely available through the national and local media.

98. Citizenship is led and managed well by two enthusiastic and committed co-ordinators, who have done much to establish the subject. They have ensured in a short space of time that pupils achieve satisfactory standards that are improving further. They have succeeded in welding together the different strands of the school's provision into a coherent programme with a distinct identity. Within that context, all subjects have identified how they can contribute to pupils' citizenship development. In practice, however, these opportunities are not always followed up, or made sufficiently explicit in the lessons of subjects.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).