

INSPECTION REPORT

BILBROOK CHURCH OF ENGLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124453

Headteacher: Mr R A Hughes

Lead inspector: Dr A R Beaver

Dates of inspection: 24th – 26th May 2004

Inspection number: 258565

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:	343
School address:	Bilbrook Road Codsall Wolverhampton West Midlands
Post Code:	WV8 1EU
Telephone number:	01902 434135
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Job
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd – 27 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bilbrook Church of England Middle School is located in the village of Bilbrook, in Staffordshire, and near to Wolverhampton. The school is a voluntary-controlled, Church of England middle school. The pupils mainly come from the villages of Bilbrook, Codsall and Pattingham, and about one in three comes from Wolverhampton. The school is of similar size to that of other middle schools. It provides for 343 girls and boys aged 9 to 13 years. There are fewer pupils in Year 5 than in any other year in the school, because of families moving in and out of the area. Significantly more girls than boys are in Years 5 and 7, and a few more boys than girls are in Years 6 and 8. Overall, the socio-economic profile of pupils is broadly average, but an above-average proportion claims entitlement to a free school meal. Eleven per cent of pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly from the Caribbean or the Indian sub-continent, a proportion a little above that of most schools. No one is at an early stage in learning English. The number of pupils who join or leave the school, other than at the usual ages of 9 or 13 years, is higher than in most schools, because some pupils leave at the end of Year 6 to attend selective secondary schools in Wolverhampton the Shropshire, where the age of transfer is 11 years. A similar number of pupils join the school at age 11. The percentage of pupils that the school lists on its register of special educational needs is below the national average. Seven pupils have statements of special need, a percentage in line with the national average. Their needs are mainly for learning difficulties, but a few have physical impairment and others have behavioural problems. Pupils' academic standards on entry to the school span the full range and, overall, are a little below typical national expectations at age 9. The school has a national Charter Mark for the mentoring of pupils.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20224	Dr A R Beaver	<i>Lead inspector</i>	History.
11041	Mr M Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
14596	Dr A Fidian-Green	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious Education; Special Educational Needs.
32211	Mr B Geoghegan	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and Technology; Information and Communication Technology.
30518	Mr M Johnson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and Design.
30699	Mr A Kemp	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.
3731	Mr W G Robson	<i>Team inspector</i>	English.
24887	Mrs Y Salmons	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern Foreign Languages.
6432	Dr V M Sewter	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.
18755	Mr R Whittaker	<i>Team inspector</i>	Citizenship; Physical Education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bilbrook is a **good school**. It gives pupils of different abilities and from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds a good education. Pupils achieve well overall, and reach standards in line with those that are typical nationally. The teaching and learning are good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and the vast majority behaves well. The quality of care and support that the pupils receive is very good and is exemplified by the good leadership, commitment and personal care that the headteacher has for every individual. Governors have a clear vision for the further development of the school. Management is effective and the school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6, but the standards that they achieve in mathematics in these years are not high enough.
- Pupils read, speak and listen well, but their writing is less well developed.
- The school takes great care of its pupils. It gives them very good support and very good opportunities to enrich their learning beyond the curriculum.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and to learning; relationships are very good and pupils behave well.
- The headteacher, key staff and governors lead the school well. They have a clear vision for its further development and a strong commitment to meet the needs of all individuals.
- The teaching and learning are good, but too many teachers are timetabled to teach some subjects and do not have sufficient opportunity to build up their subject expertise.
- The use of assessment has greatly improved since the last inspection, but pupils are not informed well enough of how their standards compare with those expected by the National Curriculum.
- Links with parents are excellent, and liaison with other schools is very good.

Since the last inspection in March 1998, the school has made satisfactory improvement. The standards of work and the quality of education have been maintained. The key issues of the last inspection have been tackled well. Information about pupils' standards and progress are now used more effectively to guide them to make progress. Assessment information is used increasingly well, but pupils' work is not always assessed in relation to National Curriculum criteria and they are not well enough informed how their standards compare with those expected nationally. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of the priorities identified by the rigorous process of school improvement planning are good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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.

Pupils achieve well, overall. When pupils enter the school in Year 5, their standards are below those typically found nationally. By the end of Year 6, girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds achieve well. Overall, they reach typical national standards by the end of Year 6. However, they do not reach the standards that they should in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. In

the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests, pupils attained above national average standards in English and science in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. However, their results in mathematics were below average, because the teaching and learning are less effective in this subject in Years 5 and 6, than in English and science. The targets set by the school for pupils to reach in the tests were achieved in English and science, but not in mathematics. Results in other recent years have been similar. In Years 7 and 8, pupils achieve satisfactorily overall, to reach the standards that are generally in line with those expected for pupils at age 13. They achieve much better in mathematics in these years to reach the standards typical of those expected nationally by Year 8.

In the work seen during the inspection, pupils achieved well in most subjects. They achieved well and reached standards above those typical nationally in French in all years. Good teaching roused their enthusiasm for French language and culture. Although achievement in citizenship is satisfactory, not enough attention is given to it in other subjects.

Pupils' attitudes to the school and to learning are very good. They behave well, but a few pupils require close supervision. Pupils' spiritual understanding and knowledge of themselves are good, and their moral, social and cultural understanding is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school gives pupils a good quality of education. The teaching and learning are good, overall. The curriculum gives a good range of learning opportunities in Years 5 and 6, and a satisfactory one in Years 7 and 8; extra-curricular opportunities are very good. The quality of care and support given to pupils is very good, and the school responds very well to the needs of each individual. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to participate in school life and to share in decisions. Links with parents are excellent, and those with other schools are very good. Arrangements are effective in ensuring that pupils have a smooth and successful transition through their middle school years into high school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is good. Pupils and parents much appreciate his personal contribution to creating the very supportive, caring ethos of the school. Teamwork is good and staff work well together. The governing body is active and clear sighted. Planning for the further development of the school is very good and is based on the rigorous analysis of current performance. Management is effective and uses the meagre funding available as well as possible to support pupils' achievement.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. Pupils are very pleased to attend the school. Both parents and pupils recognise that the school has properly high expectations of hard work and high standards. Some parents and pupils think that a small minority of pupils does not behave well enough.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the standards that pupils achieve in mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Develop further the range and accuracy of pupils' writing.
- Help teachers to build up their subject expertise, by reducing the number of them deployed to teach individual subjects.
- Assess pupils' work in all subjects, using National Curriculum criteria, and help them to understand the levels that they are reaching and how to achieve higher levels.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

Standards achieved in subjects

Girls and boys from different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds achieve well in Years 5 and 6. Their achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Their standards are typical of those reached nationally, both at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6, but they do not reach the standards that they should in mathematics in these years.
- Results in the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests in English and science were above the national average, but below average in mathematics, compared with all schools and with similar schools.
- Pupils reach standards above those usually expected in French. They are enthusiastic about French language and culture and they achieve well throughout the school.
- Teachers' subject expertise varies considerably and hampers pupils from achieving more in some subjects.

Commentary

1. When pupils join the school in Year 5, their attainment is below average in all subjects. By the end of Year 6, they achieve well to reach the standards that are typical of those expected nationally at age 11 years.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.5 (27.0)	26.8 (27.0)
Mathematics	26.0 (25.9)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	29.3 (29.3)	28.6 (28.3)

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

2. Average results were gained in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2003 compared with the results of all schools nationally and with those of similar schools. Results in English and in science were above average. However, pupils' results in mathematics were below average. In 2002 and 2001, pupils' performance in the science tests was consistently above average. Their performance in English has improved; it was below average in 2001 and average in 2002. However, mathematics results have remained below average over the last three years. The school sets itself challenging but realistic targets to reach in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests. In 2003, targets were reached in English and science, but not in mathematics. Pupils' achieve at least the standards that might reasonably be expected of them, except in mathematics, in which their standards should be higher than they currently are in Years 5 and 6.

3. Overall, when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, they reach standards that are typical nationally. They achieve well in science, information and communication technology (ICT), French and physical education to reach standards higher than those usually found nationally at age 13 in these subjects. They also achieve well in their work on the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. In mathematics in Years 7 and 8, pupils' progress increases; they achieve well in these years to reach typical national standards by the end of Year 8.

4. Pupils' achieve satisfactorily in applying the skills of literacy and numeracy in their work in all subjects. They have sound numerical skills. Their literacy is generally satisfactory, and they read, speak and listen well. Their writing is less well developed, both in the range of work that they undertake and in the accuracy with which they do it. Although no pupils currently attend the school who are at an early stage in learning English, those at an advanced stage with the language use it effectively in their learning in all subjects. Pupils' ICT skills have greatly improved since the last inspection in 1998. They achieve well in ICT lessons and use the skills that they learn satisfactorily in their work in other subjects. However, access to equipment restricts what can be done across the curriculum.

5. Although broadly satisfactory, pupils' achievement in citizenship in Year 7 and 8 is restricted by insufficient reference to the knowledge, understanding and skills to be expected in this subject in lessons in other subjects. However, pupils' very positive attitudes to school and to learning and their good behaviour illustrate well their responsible participation in the life of the school community.

6. The many teachers timetabled to teach some subjects and their relatively slim subject expertise hampers pupils' achievement. For example, teachers' restricted subject expertise was unhelpful to some pupils' progress in physical education, although, overall, pupils achieve well in this subject. Also, many teachers are timetabled to teach some subjects – for example, English and history. Consequently, pupils' achievement in these subjects is sometimes adversely affected because of the teachers' differing levels of subject expertise.

7. Overall, there is little difference between the performance of girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds, either in their performance in the Year 6 national tests, or in the work seen during the inspection in all years. Pupils with a wide range of special educational needs (SEN) generally make good progress and achieve well. This is made possible by the good support that they receive from teachers and teaching assistants, who give very valuable additional help to individuals when needed.

8. Since the last inspection in 1998, pupils' standards have been effectively maintained. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout the school, but their rate of progress in mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is not rapid enough to enable them to achieve as well as they do in other subjects in these years.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school and to learning are very good. They behave well. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning in lessons.
- Relationships are very good.
- Pupils are very interested in school life and the range of activities provided.
- Pupils' moral, social, and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

Attendance

9. Attendance is satisfactory and improving. The school has very good arrangements to promote attendance. These include the monitoring of pupils' first day of absence.

Attendance in middle deemed secondary schools in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	0.2
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

10. The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to the school and to learning. They behave well, both in and out of class. Pupils are proud of the school and value highly the opportunities it gives them. Consequently they enjoy coming to school. A small minority of pupils behave in a challenging or silly manner. This behaviour is managed well by staff, and these pupils are not allowed to disrupt others' learning. Many pupils willingly take on responsibilities. For example, they act as school councillors, peer-group mentors and monitors. Most pupils are confident, have high self-esteem and relate well to other pupils and to adults. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the way that they are expected to relate to, and communicate with, others. Pupils respect each other's feelings and beliefs and form constructive relationships. Bullying is rare and is mainly name-calling. When it occurs, it is dealt with very firmly.

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	298	13	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	3	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	1	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

11. There have been no permanent exclusions during the last year. Nine pupils received 18 fixed-term exclusions. These were given for good reasons and meticulously recorded.

12. The school has created a very positive ethos for learning, where pupils develop their speaking and listening skills, celebrate the success of others and express views and opinions with increasing confidence. The very positive attitudes and relationships reported at the last inspection have been well maintained. The very good relationships that pupils have with each other have a positive effect on the progress that they make during their life at school and their wider awareness prepares them well for life in a culturally diverse society. Pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds work well together. Pupils care for each other and support others with physical or learning difficulties. There is no graffiti or vandalism, and very little litter. Pupils respect their own property, other people's property and school property. Pupils play well together and lunch times are pleasant, social occasions where they are pleased to chat informally and discuss the day's events. In the

playground, the overwhelming majority of pupils behave sensibly and well. They respect the school's code of behaviour and consider that the rewards and sanctions system is fair.

13. Pupils' personal development is promoted very well, particularly by whole-school initiatives, though subject departments also make a positive contribution. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good. They clearly understand what is right and what is wrong; they also have a good understanding of the responsibilities of living in a school community. The school promotes respect for adults and other pupils very well. The headteacher and staff provide very good role models, helping to create the school's very good ethos of care and concern for the individual. Religious education makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' sensitivity to others' feelings and beliefs. Pupils develop very good appreciation of Western culture through art, music and dance. The school also provides pupils with very good, whole-school experiences of inter-cultural achievement. For example, the COSMO Club gives information, pictures and quotations from West Indian and African people, such as Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan. Poets, artists and musicians with Afro-Caribbean backgrounds are invited into the school to share their experiences and talents with the pupils. Pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies provide times for reflection and opportunities for prayer, for those who wish. Overall, the very positive ethos reported at the last inspection has been very well maintained.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school gives its pupils a good education. Good teaching ensures effective learning throughout the school. The school cares very well for its pupils. Partnerships with parents are outstanding. Links with other schools are very good and ensure the smooth transition of pupils through their middle school years.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment is used satisfactorily.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Girls and boys of widely different competence and from all social and ethnic backgrounds learn well from good teaching.
- Teachers manage pupils very well and plan their lessons thoroughly; the use of and the contribution made by teaching assistants are very helpful to pupils' learning.
- Some teaching methods do not involve pupils actively enough in the process of learning.
- The school collects considerable data on pupils' academic performance; these are electronically recorded, analysed and made fully accessible to teachers.
- In most subjects, teachers do not inform pupils of the National Curriculum Levels that they are reaching; most pupils do not know well enough how to improve their work to reach a higher level.

Commentary

14. The teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In the 68 lessons seen, teaching was a little better in Years 5 and 6, than in Years 7 and 8. Consequently, girls and boys of differing competence from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds make good progress in Years 5 and 6 and learn well. In Years 7 and 8, the teaching and learning are also generally good and pupils sustain standards at the typical levels expected nationally up to the end of Year 8. Of the lessons seen, a substantial majority was of at least good quality. Almost one lesson in three was of very good or excellent quality. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained at a good standard since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 68 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (3%)	19 (28%)	26 (38%)	18 (27%)	3 (4%)	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.

Example of outstanding practice

Inspirational teaching in an ICT lesson resulted in a very high standard of work by Year 5 pupils in which they produced art in the style of Matisse.

Initial revision of the learning from last week's lesson enabled pupils to recall, confidently and competently, their use of the Internet to find the image of a painting by Matisse. Careful questioning by the teacher fully engaged pupils of all levels of competence, including those with special educational needs. The teacher skillfully drew out key points from all pupils. The pupils were very keen to participate and to enhance their skills. They revisited a range of skills and demonstrated these to each other. A gasp of 'HOW?' was exclaimed when the teacher introduced the pupils to the idea that the flat elements of the picture could be made three-dimensional automatically. Pupils' concentration and enthusiasm for their work were sustained throughout the lesson, as the teacher supported and encouraged them to create their own pictures in the style of Matisse. The pupils spoke excitedly about their results, and welcomed the opportunity to see and evaluate each other's work. When putting the final touches to their artistic creations, some improvements were made from their evaluations of the work of classmates. Pupils were thrilled by the 'Matisse' pictures they had created using ICT.

15. Teachers usually plan their lessons very well and share their objectives with the pupils so that the latter know what they are intended to learn. Their timing of lessons is usually precise enough to allow an opportunity to review the objectives near the end of the lesson. Teachers are also very skilled in managing pupils and insist on good behaviour. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils greatly assist teachers' management of their classes. The teaching assistants make a very good contribution in lessons. Lesson planning is sometimes shared between teachers and assistants, who work very well in partnership to the considerable benefit of the pupils, all of whom are very well known individually to all staff.

16. Pupils' learning is less well assured when teachers have restricted subject expertise. This is the case, for example, in English and history, where, in addition, too many teachers are used and some have too few periods to develop their knowledge and confidence in the subject. Where fewer teachers are deployed, for example in French and science, teachers' subject expertise is more concentrated and pupils often learn more successfully. This issue affects Years 7 and 8 rather more than Years 5 and 6 and accounts, in part at least, for the stronger teaching in the earlier year groups.

17. Overall, teachers' choice of methods enables pupils to learn well and pupils are expected to use their skills and imagination to enhance their learning. In some lessons, however, questioning techniques do not challenge pupils to think through a problem, and this was the case in some mathematics lessons.

18. The quality of teaching and learning of pupils with SEN is good. Teachers provide appropriate work for these pupils and understand their needs well. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) makes good use of her considerable expertise when teaching those English classes in which there are many pupils who have SEN.

19. The use of assessment is satisfactory. The school has established and analysed a substantial assessment data base and uses it not only to indicate pupils' current performance but to provide a basis for grouping pupils according to prior attainment when they join the school, and to set and review targets for groups and individuals. Class work and key assessment tasks in most subjects are regularly marked and reported upon. Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and

science is assessed against National Curriculum Levels and most pupils are aware of their current levels of performance in these subjects. In most other subjects, National Curriculum Levels are not used enough, so that pupils are less certain of their standards or of what they need to do to improve their work in these subjects.

20. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching and learning continues to be good. Assessment procedures, which were a weakness in the 1998 inspection, have become more systematic.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is good in Years 5 and 6 and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school ensures that all pupils have free and equal access to the curriculum.
- Pupils are given a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching assistants and other staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- The accommodation for the use of resistant materials in design and technology is cramped.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources have greatly improved, but the number of computers does not fully meet all needs. Learning resources in citizenship are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

21. The curriculum provides a good range of worthwhile opportunities for learning in Years 5 and 6 and a satisfactory range in Years 7 and 8. All pupils are able to learn French from Year 5 and this enables them to achieve well in the subject. The middle school organisation also enables pupils in Years 5 and 6 to benefit from teaching by specialist teachers in art and music. Overall, the quality of the curriculum is similar to that provided at the last inspection.

22. The school provides a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), mainly through a one-hour lesson each week. This includes sex and relationships education and information about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. The PSHE programme is enhanced by a five-day residential visit for all Year 6 pupils, during which they develop their personal, social and physical education skills. Citizenship is included effectively in the PSHE scheme of work, but opportunities for teaching citizenship through other subjects are not yet identified clearly enough.

23. Extra-curricular opportunities to enrich pupils' learning are very good. The Year 6 residential course is just one of a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are provided for pupils during lunchtimes and before and after school. Parents and pupils appreciate these activities, which greatly enrich pupils' learning, and rates of participation are high. The activities include many sports for boys and girls. The choir, orchestra and a recorder club extend the music curriculum. Science, art and dance clubs and a young engineers' group provide further, well established, popular activities. The involvement of Wolverhampton Wanderers football club coaches has considerably increased girls' interest and participation in football.

24. The school makes strenuous efforts to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities from all ethnic and social backgrounds. It has been successful in helping pupils from Black African and Caribbean backgrounds to develop more positive attitudes to learning by, for example, investigating and celebrating Afro-Caribbean culture through the COSMO club. A recent visit by the rapper, dancer and poet, Winston Nzinga, was an important event in the school's Afro-Caribbean Awareness Week.

25. Provision for pupils with SEN is good. Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to meet the needs of these pupils and give good levels of support in lessons. Targets are well matched

to their needs and they are achievable. Pupils with difficulties with literacy, for example, receive good support from teaching assistants who teach literacy progress units and learning-challenge materials, as part of the national literacy initiative for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Many pupils are keen to attend these extra lessons before morning registration.

26. There are enough qualified teachers to teach the curriculum. Staffing arrangements are good in French, design and technology, music and religious education. However, some teachers are not subject specialists and they are timetabled to teach few lessons in some subjects - for example, in English, history and physical education and have too little opportunity to build up their subject expertise. In English and science, the recent, unavoidable use of temporary teachers has disrupted some pupils' continuity of learning. The contribution of teaching assistants and other support staff is good. It is especially effective in science, where they provide both technical assistance and help for pupils with their personal organisation.

27. The accommodation is satisfactory. It is safe, well maintained and respected by the pupils. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to the accommodation for science, food technology, art and music. Two additional classrooms have been provided. The new resource area for SEN is proving valuable. Access for pupils with physical impairments is good. Although the school hall is satisfactory for the wide range of activities for which it is used, the floor is barely adequate for gymnastics and dance and requires replacement. Accommodation for work with resistant materials, in design and technology, is cramped. Storage space for pupils' work and subject materials is inadequate in design and technology and in art.

28. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, and are good in mathematics, music and physical education. In religious education, resources are very good. Although there has been an improvement since the last inspection in the ratio of computers to pupils, the number of machines available does not meet all needs. However, two networked computer clusters now give greater access to support pupils' learning. The recent addition of data projectors in science enables teachers to improve the visual presentation of their materials, though some basic science equipment is not good enough. In French, the lack of personal copies of textbooks restricts pupils' ability to study at home. Learning resources for citizenship are inadequate to ensure effective teaching and learning in some parts of the course.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' care, guidance, health and safety is very good. Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school has very good procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.
- Pupils have a very good and trusting relationship with one or more adults at the school.

Commentary

29. The school gives pupils a very good standard of care. The headteacher is the child protection officer. He has received the necessary training and has made all staff aware of the priorities from this training. The child protection policy is comprehensive and current. The local authority carried out an audit of health and safety requirements in 2003 and the outcome was satisfactory. The health and safety policy is detailed. The school has an adequate number of qualified first-aiders

and accidents are recorded correctly. The school is a secure, happy and safe environment. Staff supervise pupils well, both in and out of the classroom. Pupils are confident to go to staff if they have any concerns or complaints. They confirm that staff are very caring and respond well to their needs and concerns.

30. Pupils' personal development is very well monitored by staff. Regular meetings are held between heads of year and form tutors to discuss pupils' personal development. Pupils with challenging behaviour are given support through individual education plans. The school also uses a 'buddy mentoring' system in which individual pupils give support to others experiencing behavioural difficulties. The school listens to pupils' views through a council system. Pupils have secured the support of the school's management to make practical changes to benefit all.

31. The support and guidance to help pupils to achieve well in their academic work is generally very good. The school has developed a system of mentoring individual pupils who encounter difficulties and has received national recognition for its work. Adult mentors visit the school and work with individual pupils, helping to boost their self-esteem through exercises that build their confidence. Although pupils are generally well supported by subject teachers, their work is not assessed in most subjects in relation to National Curriculum criteria. Consequently, they are not always clear about what they need to do to reach a higher level.

32. Induction arrangements are very good. Bilbrook staff visit first schools to ensure that each individual pupil's needs are known before transfer. Staff also liaise closely with the high school to which pupils transfer at the end of Year 8 to ensure pupils have a smooth transition between schools.

33. Care and guidance for pupils who have SEN are good. The special needs team meets regularly in order to discuss individuals and their needs. Individual education plans are shared with all staff. The pupils involved, and all those concerned, know and understand the targets to be achieved.

34. Since the last inspection, the good provision of care and support for pupils reported in 1998 has improved still further.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has excellent links with parents, very good links with other schools and colleges, and good links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The partnership between home and school is extremely effective.
- Information for parents about the school, pupils' standards and progress is excellent.
- Procedures to ensure satisfaction to deal with any concerns or complaints are excellent.

Commentary

35. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire have confidence in the school. They thought that they were kept very well informed about how their children were getting on. They were comfortable about approaching the school with questions, a problem or a complaint. They thought that staff treated their children fairly. They recognised that their views were important to the school, which took account of their concerns or suggestions. The inspection's findings confirmed all these positive views. A significant minority of parents thought some pupils did not behave well enough and their children were bullied or harassed at school. The findings of the inspection do not, in the main, agree with these negative views.

36. The school's links with parents are excellent. The school produces a regular newsletter which gives well-written information about school activities and the events that the school promotes. Annual reports on pupils' progress give clear indications of what pupils have studied, their progress in each subject and an explanation of grades and targets for improvement. These reports are extremely well produced and are welcomed by parents. The school has excellent arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress. Parents' meetings are held once each term, and the school runs courses for parents entitled, 'Keeping up with your Children'. These teach parents the basics of the literacy, numeracy and ICT that their children are taught at school, so that they can provide informed help and support at home.

37. A number of parents help at school. They accompany pupils on school visits and help in school productions. The pupils' planner is used as a useful form of communication between home and school; parents frequently make written comment in the planner on their children's progress. Questions asked are responded to promptly. The school has an excellent complaints procedure. Parents are provided with further information through the school's website, from which parents can learn about the activities that the school promotes.

38. Links with the community are good. Pupils raise money for local charities and the school hosts a luncheon club for senior citizens once each week. Links with the community are being further developed. Members of the community now come into school to talk to pupils about their life experiences. Links with, and recognition of, the cultural achievements of minority-ethnic communities are a strong aspect of the school's community links.

39. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. Bilbrook is one of three partner middle schools and is a member of the Codsall Partnership of Schools. Liaison is very good with the first schools from which pupils transfer at age 9, partner middle schools, and the local high school to which most pupils transfer at age 13. The school liaises closely with its partners at headteacher level. Subject staff are also regularly involved. The school works hard with its partners to ensure curricular continuity across Years 2 to 6 and Years 7 to 9. Liaison also includes consideration of individual pupils' progress and the implications for what, when and how the curriculum is to be taught.

40. Parents of pupils who have SEN are kept very well informed. They are very well involved by the school in their children's education. They are invited to parents' evenings where they can discuss the outcomes of the pursuit of targets in their children's individual education plans.

41. Since the last inspection, the strong links with parents have been well maintained. Liaison with other schools has grown stronger to ensure better curricular continuity.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The headteacher, key staff and governors lead the school well and have a clear vision for its future development.
- The management is effective and ensures good teaching and learning, although too many teachers are deployed to teach some subjects - for example, English and history.
- The leadership and management have very strong commitment to meet the needs of every individual.
- The headteacher and staff have established a very good ethos in the school.
- The use of performance management and training opportunities is good.

Commentary

42. The school is well led. The headteacher sets a very good example. He takes great care and interest in every individual, and is supportive and encouraging to all. His contribution is greatly appreciated by parents, pupils and staff and enables girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds to achieve well. He is well supported by key staff, and teamwork is good across the school. Staff share and accept responsibility. They work well together to make the school a very inclusive community in which each individual's needs are recognised and met. The school ethos is very good.

43. The governors lead the school well. They have a clear vision for its future development and have worked closely with staff to plan for change. School development planning is very good. It identifies key priorities, and has a strategic overview for the management of change. The process involves specific criteria by which to evaluate change. Governors work in close partnership with the headteacher and senior staff in directing the future development of the school. Statutory requirements within the remit of this inspection are met.

44. Subject leadership is good overall. It is very good in modern foreign languages and in religious education. Subject co-ordinators are effective in enabling pupils to achieve well and to reach, at least, the standards that they should. The SEN department is very well led and managed. The co-ordinator, who is relatively new, leads a good, committed team, and together they enable pupils with SEN to make good progress.

45. School and subject management is good overall. Management is self-critical and identifies accurately the subjects where achievement should be better, for example, in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. The school's self-evaluation and the use of data are good, but better used at senior management level than in subject departments. Data describing pupils' performance from entry to the school onwards are used much more effectively than at the last inspection, when their use was made a key issue for improvement. Management liaises effectively with partner schools and the pupils have a smooth transition through their middle school years. The training and development of staff are good and the quality of teaching and learning is equally good. Performance management is well established and effective. Teachers and support staff regularly review their professional development with senior staff, and the good opportunities for further training are linked to this review. Skills gained from training are shared more effectively than at the time of the last inspection; teachers are now required to evaluate the training that they receive and to pass on to colleagues the knowledge and skills that they acquire. The school is working well towards its target of recognition as an Investor in People. The induction of new teachers is good.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,043,230.00
Total expenditure	970,320.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,658.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	44,100.00
Balance carried forward to the next	72,910.00

46. The meagre funding available is below the average of middle deemed secondary schools. However, the school has maintained a balanced budget. Funding is used effectively to ensure a good quality of education. Best-value principles are applied well. The school compares its performance closely with that of similar schools, and evaluates well the strengths and weaknesses among subjects. It challenges itself to provide learning opportunities beyond the usual curriculum, and the enrichment of learning through extra-curricular opportunities is very good. The school consults very well with pupils and parents to ensure spending is well targeted to meet pupils' needs. Funding is well managed and due regard is taken for competition for the services it buys. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

47. The good standards of leadership and management reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching enables pupils to achieve well, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in Years 7 and 8 because of staffing difficulties.
- Reading standards are good, but pupils do not write at sufficient length or accurately enough.
- Assessment procedures have greatly improved but data is not used enough to evaluate the work of the English department.

Commentary

48. Pupils' performance in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests has improved during the last three years. Results were below average in 2001, average in 2002 and above average in 2003, when they were also better than results in similar schools.

49. Current standards in Year 6 are typical of pupils' performance nationally. This represents good achievement for most pupils because they enter the school with below average standards in Year 5. Pupils have good speaking and listening skills. They listen carefully and share ideas well, especially when working in small groups. Reading standards are also good. Pupils read widely because they are encouraged to evaluate books during a lesson each week, when they share favourite extracts with each other. High-attaining pupils read fluently and have a good understanding of the techniques that writers use in vivid descriptions. However, few pupils produce enough extended pieces of writing. Although they can write in different styles, their work is very short, with inaccurate spelling and little punctuation.

50. In Year 8, standards are in line with those usually found nationally. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory overall, but two classes have not done as well as expected. They have been taught by a succession of temporary teachers because of difficulties in recruiting experienced staff; this has badly affected their attitudes and achievement. Overall standards of speaking, listening and reading remain good. However, many pupils still write very little and the length, structure and accuracy of their work are unsatisfactory.

51. Pupils with SEN achieve well in all years. They benefit from good teaching in small classes and effective support from teaching assistants. Boys and girls achieve as well as each other in most years; pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well.

52. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons well. In the best lessons, they use their assessment of pupils to organise the class into different groups in which all are given suitably challenging work. They explain objectives clearly at the start of lessons, so that pupils know what they are aiming to achieve. However, teachers rarely ask pupils to reflect on how well they have done; this restricts pupils' understanding of how well they are doing. Teachers manage classes and class discussions very well. They ask well chosen questions to check pupils' understanding of texts and to give as many as possible the opportunity to contribute. Pupils have very positive attitudes and move briskly from one activity to another with a minimum of fuss. Their

personal development is good. Teachers mark pupils work regularly. However, they do not give enough guidance about how pupils can structure their writing better, nor do they insist on the correction of spelling and punctuation. Some teachers, who are not specialists in the subject, do not challenge higher-attaining pupils to achieve as much as they should.

53. The team of eight teachers is well led and managed. However, the co-ordinator is the only specialist English teacher and has insufficient time to manage and support such a large team. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Since the co-ordinator's appointment, standards have improved each year. Schemes of work now meet National Curriculum requirements. The department implements its assessment policy consistently and well, but it does not yet use the available data well enough to evaluate pupils' achievement or set realistic targets for each year.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Pupils' language and literacy skills are satisfactory. In all subjects, they speak confidently in class and group discussions; they listen carefully to teachers and to each other. In mathematics, for example, Year 6 pupils use subject specific vocabulary, such as "axes", "coordinates" and "origin", with confidence. Their reading skills are good and enable them to understand and respond well to a good range of texts, with support from teachers and teaching assistants when necessary. However, in all subjects, pupils often produce short, written answers and their skills of extended writing are not well developed. Many pupils make frequent spelling mistakes and do not use punctuation accurately.

55. Provision for developing pupils' language and literacy skills is satisfactory. Teachers emphasise the importance of using subject-specific vocabulary and pupils respond well to this. However, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for the development of extended writing. For example, pupils often write in history lessons, but teachers usually require only short answers. In science, teachers ask pupils to record experiments in a clear, formal style but rarely require more imaginative written responses. Teachers' marking of work for accurate spelling and punctuation is inconsistent in all subjects, apart from in French. As a result, the accuracy and presentation of pupils' writing is much better in this subject. The school provides good support for pupils with literacy difficulties. Teaching assistants teach booster classes and literacy progress units effectively, so that these pupils make good progress with basic literacy skills.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

Provision in French is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well and reach standards above those expected nationally.
- The teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 are very good.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are particularly enthusiastic about learning French.
- In Years 7 and 8, pupils' speaking and writing are insufficiently extended.

56. By the end of Year 6, the achievement of girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds is good and their standards are above those expected nationally. Pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening, because of teachers' consistent use of French in lessons. Pupils write brief sentences with reasonable accuracy, according to their competence, and confidently use basic vocabulary and grammar. By the end of Year 8, all pupils continue to achieve well, and standards are generally above those found nationally. In Year 7, standards are higher than in Year 8 because of the greater proportion of abler pupils in the year group. In listening, all pupils, including low-attaining pupils, make very good progress. They understand taped extracts of native speakers - for example, about school, home and family. In speaking and writing, pupils express

themselves competently, but too briefly, because they lack practice in fully extending their own use of the foreign language. All pupils tackle challenging reading texts confidently. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning; in Years 5 and 6 they are particularly enthusiastic about French language and culture. Their personal development is very good. Pupils with SEN make good progress.

57. The teaching is good overall. In Years 5 and 6, teaching is very good; pupils enjoy and remember their French, because teachers skilfully use colourful displays, repetition and mime. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is good, but the lack of text books restricts opportunities for homework. Teachers support pupils' literacy well by careful explanation of the structure of the language, and detailed correction of written French. Pupils receive good guidance on how to improve. However, they lack understanding of their progress, because the use of National Curriculum Levels is not part of teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8.

58. Leadership is very good and management is good. Very clear vision and direction are provided through comprehensive documentation and highly effective partnerships with other schools. The monitoring of teaching and use of information on pupils' progress are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory; good standards have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The quality of teaching and learning is insufficient to enable pupils to attain higher standards by the end of Year 6.
- The planning of lessons is good.
- Assessment is effective in identifying causes for concern.

59. Results in the 2003 Year 6 National Curriculum tests were below average in comparison with all schools and with similar schools. Pupils do not do as well in mathematics as in English or in science. Similar results were gained in 2002 and 2001.

60. Girls and boys from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 6. Their attainment in mathematics on entry to the school has been consistently below the standard usually to be expected nationally at the start of Year 5. Currently, the standards of work of Year 5 are not as satisfactory in presentation, output and skill as those of Year 6, who have had more time in the school. Pupils make adequate progress during their first two years in the school, but their standards by the end of Year 6 are still below those usually found nationally. They do best with number work and use of ratio and approximation.

61. By Year 8, pupils' achieve well. Their work is of a higher standard than that produced in Years 5 and 6, and, for example, they use graphical methods competently to solve algebraic equations. The work of pupils with SEN improves well in line with that of others. Standards by the end of Year 8 are in line with those typical nationally. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are increasingly positive. Their presentation of work improves, and they have an increasingly secure use of mathematical vocabulary. The use of booster materials enables pupils to make better progress, and some pupils of middling ability are able to explain sequences by use of simple rules. However, pupils are markedly less confident when questions require interpretation of the text with which they are working.

62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The planning of lessons is good, and this represents an improvement since last inspection. Questioning forms a part of all lessons but questions which invite discussion are seldom used, reducing the contribution that pupils can make to mathematical debate. Where lessons are better than satisfactory, the teacher involves the pupils, values their contributions and gives praise when it is deserved; as a result their enjoyment increases and their achievement improves. Learning objectives are always stated at the beginning of lessons, but they

are seldom recorded in pupils' books. Whilst monitoring of progress is good and pupils are made aware of their current performance, they remain uncertain about the means to reach their targets. Teachers follow closely the guidance of the National Numeracy Strategy; all lessons begin with a starter designed to set the tone to the lesson. Pupils speak warmly of their use of ICT, which usefully supports their class work.

63. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Documentation is well managed and assessment procedures are comprehensive. Improvement since the last inspection has been just satisfactory. However, the department has been open-minded to change and to the support provided by senior management. The crucial matter of raising attainment through improvement in the quality of teaching and learning remains the leading issue, together with an explanation of why standards are lower than those that pupils achieve in most of their other subjects.

Mathematics across the curriculum

64. Standards in the use of mathematics by the end of Year 8 are broadly in line with those that are expected nationally. However, although mathematics is used extensively in some subjects to enhance learning, there is not a rigorous, planned curricular response to the use of number. In science, mathematical vocabulary and skills are used in calculations, reading scales, measuring techniques, and interpretation of data from graphs. Fractions, decimals and percentages are frequently used. Lack of competence in algebra impairs the effectiveness of the use of spreadsheets in ICT. Currency conversions, correct dates, telling the time and interpreting timetables are successfully used in French. Although the school has a policy on the use of mathematics across the curriculum, outcomes show extensive, but incidental, use within subject areas, rather than the more structured response expected by the National Numeracy Strategy.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are consistently above those usually found nationally, and achievement in all years is good.
- Good teaching engages pupils' interest.
- Leadership and management are good and science has a positive and stimulating image.

Commentary

65. Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests were above the national average in 2003, compared with those of all schools and those of similar schools. Performance has been at this level for the last four years. Although there was little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in the lessons seen, recently, girls have gained a much greater proportion of higher grades in the national tests than boys.

66. Pupils from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds achieve well during their first two years in the school and reach standards above those usually seen nationally. Girls and boys with SEN, and also those with the highest potential for the subject, achieve well. Pupils in Year 5 develop good observational skills and speak confidently about their conclusions and deductions from practical experiments.

67. Standards by the end of Year 8 are also above those of pupils of their age group nationally. Pupils achieve well and those transferring to the high school at the end of Year 8 often do very well in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests. However, many pupils have difficulty in working independently and do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. This was very apparent among Year 7 pupils in their work on electrical circuits.

68. The quality of teaching and learning in science is good overall, and there is some very good practice. The clear explanation of learning objectives and the successful use of starter and plenary activities are strong features of many lessons, and well developed from the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Thorough and detailed planning of lessons and effective and illustrated presentations with focused questioning help pupils to learn well. They respond with energy and enthusiasm. Their attitudes are positive and their behaviour in lessons is generally good. The discussion of moral and environmental issues in science contributes to pupils' personal development.

69. The leadership and management of science are good. Documentation is clear and helpful and subject organisation is very effective and supportive. The head of department handles people with sensitivity, and the team of teachers and other colleagues feel very well supported. There is a keen sense of purpose among the staff and their knowledge and understanding of science is very good. However, the monitoring and sharing of good practice are not well developed. Technical support is shared with other subjects and is very good.

70. Since the last inspection, improvement has been substantial. The subject curriculum is better organised. Refurbished accommodation and recently enhanced ICT resources give good support to new courses and encourage more varied styles of teaching, learning and assessment. Liaison with the high school and feeder schools is well developed. There are exciting extra-curricular activities for young scientists, and science club members are currently investigating the strength of supermarket shopping bags. Other activities such as trips, speakers and visits from an interactive theatre group have been enjoyed in the recent past. Science has a popular and positive image and is enjoyed by all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching is supporting good achievement.
- Planning of lessons does not ensure that literacy and numeracy strategies are fully applied.

Commentary

71. Girls and boys achieve well by the end of Year 6, irrespective of their social, religious or ethnic backgrounds. Standards are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils enjoy a good range of subject experiences and use software to communicate ideas and handle information competently. The introduction of ICT resources from the National Key Stage 3 strategy has further increased the range of experiences of pupils in Years 5 and 6.

72. Pupils continue to achieve well by the end of Year 8, where standards are above those typical nationally. They independently use the computer system to store and retrieve their work and to find information from the Internet. Pupils handle information well, and use spreadsheets competently to make calculations automatically. However, they do not currently understand how to use the computer to model. Pupils also use presentation, web creation and word processing software effectively. Their capacity to reflect on and evaluate their work is insufficient and they do

not, therefore, understand how to improve it further. They do not reflect enough on the work that they do, and their evaluation of it is inadequate. Consequently, pupils do not develop sufficient understanding of how to improve their work further. In particular, their skills of note-making and writing at length are not well enough developed.

73. The teaching and learning are good overall. One lesson was of outstanding quality - see paragraph 14. Pupils achieve well because teachers plan lessons well. They make clear to pupils what is to be done, and use a good range of resources to support learning. Although pupils are not clear about how to reach higher National Curriculum Levels, they learn well because their teachers give them good guidance in class. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well; those with SEN are supported well and make good progress because the teachers make good use of pupils' individual education plans to guide learning.

74. The leadership and management of the department are good. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching are good, and the evaluation of subject performance is very good. High aspirations for the development of the department ensure that pupils' learning is well planned. However, whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy are not well enough implemented. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Better teaching, a broader curriculum and improved resources are bringing about higher achievement.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Computers are used well within the mathematics department, where the teaching of subject skills, with use of ICT for testing and as a diagnostic tool, is well established. Computer-aided manufacture is used enthusiastically in design and technology to create, automatically, complicated embroidery patterns. Data-logging is used in science lessons to sense a range of atmospheric conditions over time and pupils are able to present the information gathered in graphical form. In a number of subjects, pupils use the Internet for research and they are able to select and edit information for different purposes. ICT is used effectively as a teaching tool in French and science lessons to engage and stimulate pupils' learning.

HUMANITIES

76. The focus was on history and religious education. Geography was sampled. Two Year 8 geography lessons were seen in which the pupils studied aspects of Brazil. The teaching and learning were good and satisfactory in the two lessons. The pupils extended their knowledge of the topic successfully in both lessons, but in one, the teaching did not fully draw out ideas from the pupils to reinforce their learning.

History

Provision in history is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The teaching and learning are good, but the many teachers involved dilute subject expertise and some do not teach enough history to develop their expertise further.
- National Curriculum Levels are not used enough to assess performance.

Commentary

77. All girls and boys from different social, religious and ethnic backgrounds achieve satisfactorily. Their standards are typical of those found nationally at the end of Year 6, and when they leave in Year 8. Pupils gain knowledge and adequate understanding of topics. They research past events actively from books and, occasionally, from the Internet, although ICT is not generally

used enough. Those with special educational learning needs read the texts well. Pupils generally speak well in response to questions, although these rarely require them to make extended answers. Pupils produce a good amount of written work, but most is in response to questions that require brief, factual answers and they do not write many extended pieces. More analysis and some evaluation and interpretation of evidence now take place. However, pupils do not generally analyse subject terms to the extent that they should.

78. The teaching and learning in the lessons seen were good. Pupils respond and behave well. Topics chosen contribute well to pupils' personal development. Three of the six teachers of the subject had timetabled lessons during the days of the inspection and these teachers were seen teaching. The teaching of lessons by the other three teachers of the subject could not be observed. However, the work of pupils from all classes showed considerable variation in the quality of teaching. Where teachers were timetabled to teach very few lessons in the subject, the quality of their teaching was inferior to that of those with a more substantial timetabled commitment. In the lessons seen, teachers managed pupils very well and relationships were very good. Lessons were generally well planned, although the learning objectives were sometimes too general. Teaching assistants were deployed to very good effect. Pupils' work is not regularly assessed to National Curriculum levels; consequently, pupils lack enough direction to enable them to focus on key areas for improvement. The quality of marking of pupils' work varies greatly in quality.

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed subject leader is active and is developing better assessment practice. However, the difficulty of ensuring consistent quality of teaching and learning is made acute by the deployment of six teachers who teach 12 classes between them. Teachers with few lessons cannot build up subject expertise. Since the last inspection, standards have declined in Years 5 and 6. Latterly there has been an improvement, especially in the use of sources of evidence by all year groups.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teachers' planning of lessons is very good and occasionally excellent.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to express feelings and views.
- Religious education is very well led and managed.
- The use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

80. Pupils' standards, by Year 6 and by Year 8, meet the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Girls and boys from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds, including those who have SEN, make good progress and achieve well, given their capabilities and prior attainment. Pupils frequently relate their work to their everyday lives and feelings. For example, Year 8 wrote their own versions of the commandments, which included helping other people and not dropping litter.

81. The quality of teaching and learning is generally good, with some that is very good. A strong feature of teaching is some excellent planning. High expectations of pupils to behave well and to work hard are conveyed with humour and down-to-earth explanations. Consequently, pupils respond very well and are very well motivated to learn. Lessons provide a very good challenge, and homework is used well to reinforce learning. For example, pupils learning about David and Goliath were asked to research and find instances of people prepared to fight for their own cause.

82. The subject is very well led and managed by a confident and very able co-ordinator. She is very well aware of how to take the subject forward and injects her enthusiasm into it. Self-evaluation is very good and monitoring is effective. Targets to be achieved are stated in all exercise books are shared with the pupils. The schemes of work are successfully linked to the local Agreed Syllabus and the co-ordinator has worked hard to do this. The subject is well liked by pupils and the profile of

the subject has been raised successfully. It contributes well to pupils' personal development. Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' learning. The subject co-ordinator is aware of this, but funding limits what can be done to remedy the problem. Improvement since the last inspection has been substantial because the quality of teaching has further improved, and pupils' positive interest in the subject has strengthened. Standards remain similar to those reported in 1998.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching ensures good learning and achievement in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers' planning of work does not balance well enough design-and-make practical tasks with investigation and research into familiar products.

Commentary

83. Girls and boys from all social, ethnic and religious backgrounds achieve well by the end of Year 6. They enter Year 5 with standards below those generally expected at age nine, but reach standards typical of those found nationally by the end of Year 6. Pupils work with a good degree of independence and gain a good range of knowledge and understanding of textiles, food and resistant materials. They develop their technological skills of designing and making well in Years 5 and 6, through effective use of the design process.

84. By the end of Year 8, pupils achieve satisfactorily. Their standards are generally in line with those expected nationally when they leave the school at the end of Year 8. Pupils discuss the design process well and have a good knowledge of specification. Their graphic skills improve, but insufficiently precise tasks prevent them from reaching higher standards in graphical work. Pupils use computer-aided manufacturing equipment competently. However, they neither evaluate their work enough, nor use annotation and extended writing sufficiently to describe their evaluations.

85. The teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' high aspirations ensure that pupils' experiences are well planned. They make learning objectives clear to pupils and use a good range of resources to assist learning. Pupils with SEN are supported well, and their individual education plans guide teachers in organising learning. In general, pupils are not clear enough about how to reach a higher National Curriculum Level. However, they learn successfully because they are supported individually by teachers in how to improve their work. In one lesson, the pace of work was slowed unnecessarily by whole-class teaching, when work with individual pupils was called for. Pupils are supported well by teaching assistants, who work both with individuals and whole classes. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development. Teachers' commitment beyond the school day ensures that pupils successfully complete projects, and that the Young Engineers Club is successful in the designing and making of robots.

86. The leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers work well as a team across the different material areas. However, not enough attention is given to the implementations of the school's policies for literacy and numeracy. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

87. The focus was on art and design. Music was sampled. Two lessons in music in Years 6 and 7 were seen, in which standards were typical of those expected nationally. The pupils achieved well because the quality of teaching and learning in these lessons was very good. The lessons were well planned and had clear learning objectives. The relationships between teacher and pupils were very good and the pupils benefited from very good levels of personal tuition and guidance. Assessment practice is thorough. Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The use of sketch books for research and development in all years is good and enhances learning.
- Assessment procedures are not linked to National Curriculum Levels.
- The range of media used restricts pupils' work in Years 7 and 8. They do not work enough with ICT or with three-dimensional media.

Commentary

88. Boys and girls from a wide range of ethnic, social and religious backgrounds achieve well by the end of Year 6. When they enter the school, their subject knowledge, understanding and skills are below those generally expected nationally at age nine, and they make good progress through Years 5 and 6. Standards by the end of Year 6 are at the nationally expected level. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with SEN, achieve well. All pupils explore ideas and gain access to visual information. They use line, tone and texture effectively in their drawings. When pupils use first-hand observation as a basis for their work – as they often do - they achieve greater perceptual depth. However, little creative use is made of ICT.

89. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 8 is satisfactory. They reach standards in line with those expected of pupils of their age group when they leave the school in Year 8. They can develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work, and they make good connections with artists and different cultures. However, more competent pupils are not consistently challenged to achieve higher standards by, for example, use of a wider range of media or more use of ICT. All pupils are able to use their knowledge and understanding of materials and processes to communicate ideas and meanings. They create images and artifacts successfully. Their personal development is good.

90. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. The pace of lessons in all years is often brisk, and pupils' interest is maintained by a good variety of activities. Good use is made of praise to encourage the participation of all pupils. Active support with the development of reading and writing skills is evident in well-annotated sketch books. However, clear assessment objectives based on National Curriculum Levels are not shared with pupils.

91. The leadership and management are satisfactory. Schemes of work ensure continuity and progression of learning. Extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive impact on the quality and range of pupils' work. The full potential of three-dimensional experience has not yet developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with improvements to accommodation, the use of sketch books and the display of pupils' work around the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education and games

Provision in physical education and games is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well throughout Years 5 to 8.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Assessment is not used enough to support learning.
- There is very good extra-curricular provision and take-up by pupils.

Commentary

92. By the end of Year 6, pupils achieve well. They enter the school in Year 5 with standards below those usually expected at age nine. Pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 to reach standards that are typical nationally by the end of Year 6. In athletics, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of pace in middle-distance running. Some pupils are able to apply this knowledge and understanding successfully when running an 800 metre race.

93. By the end of Year 8, standards are above those usually found in most schools. Pupils achieve well by Year 8 because they develop good basic techniques in most activities. In athletics, they have a good understanding of the rhythm required when performing the triple jump. However, teachers who are not specialists in the subject lack the knowledge and skills to improve pupils' performance further; this restricts the achievement of some pupils.

94. Across all years, the standards of girls' work are the same as those of boys. Pupils from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds reach similar standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at the same rate as others.

95. Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 5 and 6, pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers. Staff adapt the work well to the standards pupils have reached. Pupils are often set to work with different equipment and on different tasks. Where teaching is not as good, pupils are not given time to consolidate their learning of basic techniques. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are given a good variety of interesting and challenging activities, which motivates them, keeps them on the work in hand and ensures their good personal development. The pupils develop good skills of problem-solving and decision-making. Where learning is less successful, pupils are not guided enough in what they are set to do, or how they can improve their performance. Most pupils improve their performance in sport through the very good extra-curricular programme that the teachers provide.

96. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader has a clear vision for raising standards more quickly. She works hard to support the non-specialist teachers of the subject. However, she does not have a secure knowledge of how effectively the curriculum is provided for all pupils, because formal monitoring of teaching and learning is restricted. Nevertheless, good progress has been made since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

97. The focus was on citizenship, and PSHE was sampled. All pupils have PSHE lessons. Two lessons were seen during the inspection, in Years 6 and 8. The Year 6 lesson was on citizenship, which is reported below. The focus was on how people can make a difference in a community. The pupils achieved well and the teaching and learning were good. In the Year 8 lesson, good teaching and learning helped pupils to prepare effectively for transfer to the high school.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils achieve well when they study specific citizenship units of work.
- Subjects do not contribute well enough to enhance pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to participate as active citizens within the school.

Commentary

98. In Years 7 and 8, pupils' achievement and the standards that they attain are typical of those reached nationally. Where citizenship is taught in discrete PSHE lessons, standards are above those often found nationally. However, where citizenship is provided as part of the work of other subjects, standards are below those expected. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in lessons specifically allocated to citizenship and, overall, their achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 8.

99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good when lessons are specifically designated for citizenship. These lessons are well planned and have clear aims, which are explained to the pupils, and teachers discuss controversial issues with much sensitivity. They enable pupils to extend their communication skills. Pupils from all social, religious and ethnic backgrounds are given equal opportunity to work well together and their personal development is good. In one lesson observed, pupils worked well, as individuals and in small groups, by identifying strategies for effecting change within an organisation or a community. However, the teaching and learning are unsatisfactory when citizenship is provided through other subjects. Teaching does not generally identify the implications for citizenship in the learning that is done. There is very little assessment of pupils' progress in the subject.

100. The school is very effective in providing opportunities for pupils to participate as active citizens. Pupils learn social and moral responsibility as citizens, by participating in the life of the school. The process of working together to produce a better environment encourages pupils to work positively on activities involving the local community.

101. The citizenship curriculum is still being developed. Citizenship is currently provided mainly through discrete units of work as part of PSHCE. Other aspects are planned to be provided by subjects across the curriculum. The school has produced an effective policy and is beginning to implement a development plan. It has carried out an audit of provision to identify opportunities for curriculum subjects to teach aspects of citizenship but recognises that not all subject departments are including citizenship enough in their planning.

102. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good progress has been made in the planning and writing of units of work which meet many of the National Curriculum requirements. Some lesson plans in some subjects recognise the relevance of the topic to citizenship. However, much more must be done to ensure full provision for citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
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).