

INSPECTION REPORT

OLDFIELDS HALL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Uttoxeter

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124492

Headteacher: Mr Nicholas Brown

Lead inspector: Dr Pauline Buzing OBE

Dates of inspection: March 8 - 11 2004

Inspection number: 262109

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are at **Key Stage 2**, having transferred in most cases from their first schools in the middle of Key **Stage 2** after Year 4. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are at **Key Stage 3** of their education, and will transfer to a high school for the start of Year 9.*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 – 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	550
School address:	Stone Road Uttoxeter Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST14 7PL
Telephone number:	01889 562770
Fax number:	01889 568472
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G.W. Robertson
Date of previous inspection:	November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Oldfields Hall Middle School is a larger than average middle, deemed secondary, school situated close to the centre of the market town of Uttoxeter. The school draws approximately half of its intake from the southern area of the town, and the other half from rural areas to the south of that, with some pupils from nearby Derbyshire. There are 550 pupils on roll: approximately the same as at the time of the previous inspection. The school gained the Sportsmark award in 2000.

The pupils are from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and circumstances, although the socio-economic characteristics of the area served by the school compare favourably with the national situation and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (3.8 per cent) is below the national average. Pupils from the full range of attainment attend the school, and standards on entry are average overall, though they are now above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, having risen to this level in recent years. Boys outnumber girls in the school as a whole and, whereas Years 6 and 8 show an approximate balance between the sexes, boys outnumber girls by three to two in Year 5 and in Year 7. Few of the pupils have a cultural heritage that is other than white and British, and there are very few who do not have English as their mother tongue; even fewer are at an early stage of learning the language. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs (8.6 per cent) is well below average, though that for pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need (4.5 per cent) is above average. Most of these pupils have specific learning difficulties, and small numbers have a range of other needs from emotional and behavioural difficulties to problems with speech and language. The school is a stable community: very few pupils join or leave other than at the normal times of entry and exit, and nearly all pupils go on to the local comprehensive high school at the start of Year 9. The school has come through a period of some difficulty in recruiting staff in recent terms.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15849	Pauline Buzzing	Lead inspector	Music
11575	Catherine Fish	Lay inspector	
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics Science
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
10859	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History Religious education Citizenship
3174	John Powell	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
21975	Ann King	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (French)
20395	Carolyn Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Standards at all levels are above average and achievement is good. Teaching, learning and leadership are also good. The ethos of the school is very good. Bearing in mind the below average funding the school receives, it provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The harmonious ethos of the school promotes very good attitudes to learning and all aspects of the pupils' personal development are also very good.
- Good leadership at all levels has created a positive framework, within which good teaching and learning result in good achievement as pupils move through the school.
- Standards are above average in almost all subjects by the end of Year 8, and are well above average in music and in religious education.
- Relationships with other schools and colleges are very good: those with parents and the wider community are good.
- Assessment is still not used as effectively as it might be to set targets and to enable the pupils to make even more progress.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Despite a difficult period in terms of staff absence and change, standards are still above average, and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced so that it is now very small. Most aspects of the key issues have been resolved; however, the use of assessment still remains inconsistent.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Achievement is good overall. Standards of work seen were above average in English, mathematics and science. Achievement is particularly good in music and in religious education because of very good teaching, and standards are well above average. In art and design, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship, achievement is good. All groups of pupils achieve equally well.

The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good overall. The pupils' attendance, attitudes, and behaviour, are all very good, and they take part enthusiastically in all that the school has to offer.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well in almost all subjects in all years. The curriculum is satisfactory and promotes equality of opportunity appropriately. The pupils receive good advice and guidance, and arrangements for their care, welfare, health and safety are good. Links with parents and with the wider community are good; partnership with other schools and colleges is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher's leadership of the school is good, supported by a good governing body, and a team of effective middle and senior managers. However, the governing body does not provide all the required information in the annual report to parents and in the prospectus. Management in the school is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils regard this as a good school. Both groups appreciate that the school expects pupils to work hard, and agree that pupils make good progress. They are also impressed by the school's work in helping the younger pupils to settle in. Parents are concerned that there is some bullying in the school, as are pupils, but the inspection team found that the isolated incidents have been dealt with effectively. Parents would like more information about their children's progress, and a minority feels that the views of parents are not taken into account sufficiently. The inspection team did not find evidence of this. Pupils think they are taught well, but a minority feels that there is no adult to whom they can turn to talk about problems, and the school's own peer counsellor system means that they often turn, initially to one of these. Some pupils were concerned that behaviour is not always good but inspectors saw no evidence of this during the inspection. Overall, they found that staff and pupils get on very well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the use of assessment, and promote greater consistency of practice, making better use of comparative national data, especially on value added.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is better than good, by ensuring that all staff and pupils know individuals' targets, and monitor their progress towards them.

and, in order to meet statutory requirements in full:

- Ensure that the information provided to parents contains all of the information detailed in the most recent guidance.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Inspection evidence shows that, at all levels of the school, standards are **above average** and achievement is **good**, with no significant differences between the standards reached by boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach higher standards than would be expected from their standards on entry to the school, and achievement is therefore good.
- Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2003 are above the national average in the core subjects of English and science, and the results of higher attaining pupils are well above average in English and above average in mathematics.
- In work seen, standards by the end of Year 8 are well above average in music and in religious education, and above average in most other subjects.

Commentary

1. When the pupils enter the school at the start of Year 5, standards are broadly average. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, standards on entry are now higher than this: they are above average for the current Year 5, though evidence shows average standards for most pupils before this year in most subjects.
2. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 6, results since 1998 have been above average, rising at a similar rate to the national trend. In 2003, results are above average in English and science, compared to all schools, and average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools, the results are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. There is no significant difference between the results of girls and boys now, and the steady improvement in the boys' English results over the past four years shows how results are rising as a consequence of the school's focus on raising standards in this area. There are no significant patterns of results by ethnicity of the pupils.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.6 (27.3)	26.8 (27.8)
Mathematics	27.5 (27.7)	26.8 (26.7)
Science	29.7 (29.8)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 162 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Overall, the test results were better than would have been expected from the pupils' standards at entry to the school, and from their previous test results, taken at the end of Year 2. Girls still do better than boys in English, but the gap has been closing steadily, and is now only half of what it was four years ago. In 2003, boys did better than boys nationally by the same margin as girls who exceeded the average score for girls in national terms. In comparison to similar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. This reflects the school's work in recent years to raise standards.

4. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards are above average overall by the end of Year 6 and this represents good achievement for the pupils concerned. The good teaching they receive consolidates and extends their knowledge and understanding, and helps them to develop new skills. Standards are above average in all subjects, apart from physical education and French, where they are average. Staffing turbulence, caused by long-term staff illness, has affected both subjects, and the school's accommodation for physical education also restricts standards and achievement, despite teachers' best efforts. In all subjects, standards and achievement are enhanced by the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and willingness to apply themselves to the tasks they are set.
5. Standards of work seen are above average overall by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8. Pupils have deepened and broadened their skills well, maintaining momentum in learning; achievement is good in relation to the earlier standards of this group. In music and in religious education, standards are well above average by this point. In French and in physical education the pupils sustain their average standards, and standards are above average in all other subjects. In some subjects, there are aspects that are better than this: in history, for example, the pupils' skills in enquiry and in extended writing often reach well above average standards, and in technology, the work in food technology and in resistant materials is particularly strong. Pupils who have English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in achieving their individual targets, and in improving their reading and spelling. Their progress is closely monitored and they achieve as well as their peers in all subjects. All reach appropriate National Curriculum levels in the core subjects in Year 6, with many matching the national average in mathematics and science.
7. Gifted and talented pupils show satisfactory achievement: the school has identified who these pupils are, but plans to foster their special talents are not yet well developed in most subjects. The exceptions are music and drama, where the pupils have opportunities to be entered for external examinations to challenge them, and to take part in a variety of activities associated with the performing arts.
8. Literacy standards are above average. The school does not have a detailed literacy policy, but reading and, particularly, writing are well developed by subjects; for example, there are some very good opportunities for extended writing in history and in religious education. Standards of numeracy are also above average, subjects like design and technology, science and geography, in particular, are making good contributions to the consolidation and extension of the pupils' mathematical skills. Standards of ICT use are also above average, all subjects show in their planning how ICT can be used well to enable the pupils to learn more effectively.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The pupils' attitudes and values are **very good**. Pupils' attendance is very good and they behave very well. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects, is very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance levels are well above average with nearly all absences accounted for.
- The pupils' very positive attitudes to school help them to achieve well.
- The pupils are very positive and confident about the role of the peer counsellors.
- The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the pupils' overall personal development is very good as a result.
- There were no exclusions last year.

Commentary

9. The pupils enjoy school very much and this is reflected in the very good level of attendance. The school enjoys the support of parents, and thus the level of unauthorised absence is very low. The school has very good weekly support from the educational welfare officer based at the school, who is able to help in the small number of cases where problems may arise. The level of attendance would be higher except for the number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time. The school is careful to discourage this.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2002/3

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0%	School data	0.1%
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 pupils show very positive attitudes to school, working hard in most lessons and participating enthusiastically in its life, including activities outside the classroom. Of particular note during the inspection were the excellent attitudes shown by all the pupils in Year 5 throughout the 'Rainforest Day'. The pupils are unfailingly polite to visitors; they are friendly and initiate conversations and take a lively interest in what is going on. They are happy to take on responsibilities, such as becoming a member of the school council or taking part in those activities that help the school to run smoothly. In lessons, they are attentive, work together well and are eager to ask and answer questions. This is usually the case even in the small number of lessons that are judged to be sound, rather than good or better. Because the pupils put a lot into school life, they achieve well, both in their academic and personal development.
11. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is almost always very good; the pupils report that there are occasions when a few pupils will try to disrupt the learning of others, but this is not seen as a major concern. However, when the whole class is expected to take the blame, they, rightly, consider this to be unfair. The school takes a very strong line on any form of racial harassment and reports matters to the appropriate authorities as well as taking action in school. The school is very keen to ensure that any pupils from any minority group is fully included and monitors, for example, the representation of pupils from minority ethnic groups in merit awards, where they do very well. The incidence of bullying is low, although there have been cases where action has been slow to work. However, the pupils spoken to did not consider it a problem, and speak very highly of the excellent support they receive from peer counsellors.
12. Pupils with special educational needs are very positive about their learning. They work hard in lessons and take pride in their success. Those with behaviour difficulties respond well to firm behaviour management and high expectations for their behaviour. In a few instances, where behaviour management is less effective, some do not respond as well. Pupils who have English as an additional language, and those who have minority ethnic heritages are fully integrated, and racial harmony in the school is very good.

Example of outstanding practice

How Year 8 pupils have been trained to give support to other pupils

The school has adopted a peer counselling service manned by some Year 8 pupils. The counsellors, identified readily by their red sweatshirts in an otherwise blue-clad school, are selected from volunteers and cover a wide variety of personalities, so there should be one amongst them to whom every pupil can relate. They are fully and suitably trained in school. Their role is to provide general support and a friendly face primarily, but not exclusively, to the new pupils in Year 5. They do not give advice or act as a go between, but they may act as a mediator. The counsellors also run a successful friendship group to help those pupils, usually in Year 5, who are experiencing difficulties in making new friends. Discussions with pupils across all year groups say that their first port of call if they were being bullied would probably be the peer counsellors, who are seen as providing an excellent support service. Their work has been acknowledged as doing much to promote the very calm and purposeful atmosphere in school that allows the pupils to get on with their work, achieve well, and to enjoy their time in school.

13. The school clearly values the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the effect of its provision on their behaviour and attitudes, as well as the overall ethos of the school, is very good. During their time in school, pupils' understanding of themselves and other people develops very well. They are beginning to explore their principles and beliefs and show a developing respect for others and their different cultures and beliefs. Year 5 pupils, for example, learn how to treat the Qur'an with respect and understand why this is important. They also spend a day looking at the peoples of the rainforest, examining themes such as fair trade and conservation and the importance of respect for different ways of life.
14. The high standards of personal development achieved by pupils in the school are due in large measure to the recognition the school gives to educating the whole child. The school particularly values the performing arts under the umbrella of culture, and the pupils have many opportunities to take part in performances and to develop the artistic side of their talents: for example, over a third of the school has instrumental lessons, and all pupils in Year 5 learn to play the recorder. Teachers place much emphasis on fostering pupils' self-confidence and esteem. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect, to consider others and to ask questions. As a result, pupils are genuinely reflective, can think beyond the material world and show consideration and tolerance for all members of their community.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good** overall. Teaching and learning are good, whilst the school's curriculum is satisfactory. Links with parents and with the wider community are good, and those with other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching in the school is **good**; learning is also good, and unsatisfactory teaching is very rare. The quality of assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall throughout the school, so that pupils show good achievement.
- The teaching in music and in religious education is very good.
- The school's procedures for assessment are satisfactory overall, but inconsistencies still exist in the way assessment is used in different subjects.
- Links to national benchmarks remain underdeveloped, despite criticism in the previous report, so that the pupils' understanding of how their work compares to national standards is limited.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 93 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	13 (14%)	56 (60%)	22 (24%)	1 (1%)	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.

15. The proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or better is higher than at the previous inspection; that which is good or better is about the same, but there is not such a high percentage of very good or excellent teaching. Examples of good teaching were seen in every year group and in all subjects. Most of the very good teaching observed was in Years 7 and 8, but two very good lessons were observed in Year 6: one in English and one in mathematics, and one excellent music lesson was taught in Year 5.
16. Teaching is very good overall in music throughout the school, and in religious education in Years 7 and 8. It is satisfactory in French and in physical education and good in all other subjects.
17. Particular strengths in teaching throughout the school are the high expectations teachers have of pupils, and the element of challenge in much of the teaching, so that the pupils are interested in their lessons, and achieve well. Pupils apply themselves and concentrate on their learning. This is a major factor in their learning, and there were many examples of pupils becoming thoroughly involved in their learning: for example, in a Year 7 history lesson, where they made good use of ICT and of books to create reports on life in Norman Britain. Individuals worked well on their own, and then were eager to share with the rest of the class what they had learned.
18. In the very good lessons, teachers plan lessons particularly well and pitch the lesson at just the right level, so that it meets the needs of all the pupils in the class or set. Questioning techniques are sharp, and assessment is used well. In these lessons, pupils are well informed and know the skills required for the next level up from where they are, so that they are certain what they have to do to improve the standard of their work. Introductions are well judged, crisp and to the point, tasks demand that the pupils have to think hard, and teachers insist that the pupils use correct technical vocabulary. Pace is another strong feature in the very good lessons, together with a good variety of activities. In an outstanding music lesson for Year 5, the pupils listened, sang, played instruments, and watched part of a video. The entire class joined in an ensemble that the teacher had written, the various parts being created at different levels of difficulty for each pupil. This involved knowing what each individual was capable of and building systematically on previous learning.
19. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or very good, the pace may drop, especially if introductions are too long or teachers talk too much, so that the pupils become passive. Tasks are not always designed to meet the full range of learning needs of the pupils, so that the very highest attainers are not always challenged by the work they are set, or they are given extension tasks that involve more of the same kind of work, rather than demanding that they go on to work of a higher order. In a few lessons, teachers were almost too helpful – by telling pupils what they had learned in the previous lesson, rather than drawing out the information through question and answer, by reading aloud passages the pupils could have read, or by doing too much for individuals instead of encouraging independence.
20. In the unsatisfactory lesson that was observed, the work was not clearly matched to the range of pupils' needs in the class, and the pace was slow, so that pupils lost interest and did not concentrate fully on their tasks.

21. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Individual learning needs are well known and teachers use a range of methods to match work to these needs. Teaching assistants provide good support. One example of this was in a Year 6 English lesson, where the assistant worked with a small group to provide extra support as the class learned to use skimming and scanning techniques to help them in their note taking. The group benefited from the extra support and made very good progress in the lesson. Specialist teaching provides skilled individual guidance. Lessons are extremely well planned to meet individual learning requirements. Classroom relationships are very good and pupils learn confidently in a very good learning atmosphere. Pupils' progress is assessed systematically and their progress is tracked closely
22. The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment are satisfactory overall. Good procedures are in place to assess and record pupils' achievements at whole-school level. The school fulfils statutory requirements to assess and report on pupils' achievements at the end of Year 6. The senior management team draws well on this and on the supplementary information, which the local education authority provides, to analyse data and value-added factors in relation to other middle schools in the county. However, comparisons with the national picture and target setting procedures are in their infancy. Marking is usually regular, but few subject teachers relate school grades to national benchmarks. The school's policy on assessment is currently being rewritten and, in the absence of systematic directives, a variety of methods operates, including some very good practice which exists in ICT and religious education, and which could usefully prompt developments in several other curriculum areas. To date, monitoring to promote coherence and consistency across the school lacks rigour.
23. The use of assessment to respond to individual needs is satisfactory overall. Appropriate statutory and optional tests provide teachers with relevant information about individuals' achievements. However, some subject departments need training on how to tailor work that matches, subsequently, the needs of different boys and girls as they move through the school. Effective procedures and practices ensure that the assessment of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is very good. However, the use of assessment information to determine whether gifted and talented pupils are progressing as well as they should is at a very early stage of development in most subject departments and at whole-school level.
24. Pupils' understanding of how they can improve is unsatisfactory because they receive insufficiently detailed feedback on the standard of their work and what they need to do next. Whilst some subject departments link learning, marking, feedback and pupils' self-assessments closely to national criteria, this has yet to become a consistent pattern across the school, where a reluctance to refer to National Curriculum levels persists. Improvement since the last inspection is thus unsatisfactory.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory** overall; enrichment is good. The quality of accommodation and other resources is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum in Years 5 and 6 is designed to allow the full range of subjects to flourish, yet in a way that provides high quality development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Personal, social and health education are good; there has been good progress in introducing citizenship.
- In Years 7 and 8, a period of staffing difficulty has meant the implementation of the National Strategy has been slower than in most schools.

Commentary

25. The curriculum range is good in Years 5 and 6, and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. In all years, arrangements meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education. The length of the working week is typical of that in schools of this type. Although the proportion of time allocated to English in Years 5 and 6 is only two-thirds of that seen in an average primary school, there is now a good programme of development of literacy skills, especially of extended writing across a number of other subjects of the curriculum. As a result, standards have improved in the recent past. In Years 7 and 8, this is less evident, and there is no clear policy to guide the development of literacy across the curriculum. In contrast, mathematics and ICT are better planned. Overall, the school has been relatively slow to implement the Key Stage 3 Strategy, although in part, this reflects substantial staffing difficulties in key areas.
26. Overall, pupils get more science teaching than average during their time at the school; this is reflected in the higher than average standards seen. A significant strength of the curriculum is that it seeks to develop the whole person, and does not over-emphasise literacy and numeracy at the expense of other subjects. Thus art, drama and music thrive in Years 5 and 6, and this is reflected in the achievement of the pupils in these subjects at all levels of the school. The humanities are also well grounded in the first two years.
27. The school is not afraid to set aside the usual timetable from time to time to allow pupils to experience different styles of learning to those usually seen in the classroom. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 5 spent a day working with a visitor on subjects linked to South American rainforests.

Example of outstanding practice

An example of a cross-curricular day for Year 5 pupils

During the inspection week, Year 5 pupils experienced Rainforest Day. Normal classroom lessons were suspended and everything that went on was based around a rainforest theme. An enthusiastic and highly knowledgeable visiting speaker amazed and entranced pupils with a display of South American wildlife, including 'Rebecca', a large spider that provided the basis for a question and answer session on conservation and animal life. Later sessions were based on South American arts and crafts and pupils spent time examining some of these and then making their own versions. They also sketched scorpions, butterflies and rhino beetles and made feather necklaces and headdresses. A few dared to have a closer look at Rebecca and one of her companions (a large scorpion). All pupils visibly enjoyed every minute of their day. During the lunch break, for example, many could be seen wandering around the school proudly wearing the fruits of their labour. They talked enthusiastically and at considerable length, particularly about the spider.

During this very effective enrichment day, pupils had excellent opportunities to consider issues of fair trade, conservation and different ways of life. The school provided an excellent experience for the children who benefited enormously in terms of personal, as well as academic, development.

28. There are good arrangements to provide for the personal, social and health education of the pupils, which cover the required elements of sex education and drugs awareness. The school has made good progress with its plans for introducing citizenship at all levels, and has been experimenting with different styles of delivery to ensure that the impact of this new subject is maximised. It is also experimenting with a weekly thinking skills course in Year 7. The grouping arrangements used are appropriate and have a positive effect on standards overall. In several subjects, the form groups, which are sometimes large, are broken down into smaller classes for some subjects such as art and design, design and technology or ICT. This means that, although the time allocated for the subjects is sometimes below average, as in Year 7, the positive effect of smaller class sizes means that standards are not compromised.
29. There is good equality of opportunity; for the most part, pupils have full access to the whole curriculum, although the lack of lift access to upper floors would prevent disabled pupils from reaching certain specialist facilities, including ICT rooms. Otherwise, provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They have full access to the curriculum. In addition, very detailed curriculum planning takes full account of pupils' specific learning requirements and is

adapted to meet these at different stages of pupils' learning. Individual learning programmes focus strongly on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Subject teachers are well informed about pupils' learning requirements, including those of pupils whose first language is not English.

30. Gifted and talented pupils have been identified, and their details circulated to teachers, but beyond this, the school has not provided guidance on how these pupils might then be stretched appropriately in lessons. However, there are opportunities for good further work during holidays. Overall, provision is no more than satisfactory because it is inconsistent. As one able Year 6 pupil put it: "People like us want *different* work when we finish faster than the others, not just more of the same sort of work, or worse, nothing extra at all." The most able pupils are identified in most subjects and in many they are given opportunities to extend and broaden their learning. But provision is not systematically planned and monitored. It is largely dependent on the initiative of individual subjects resulting in excellent opportunities for enrichment in music for instance, but generally in uneven provision across subjects.
31. The pupils and their parents are positive about the enrichment opportunities provided by the school; inspectors agree that these are good. The longer than average lunch time means that there are good opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of cultural, academic and sporting activities. There are also opportunities after school, although the demands of school transport mean that pupils living in more rural areas may not be able to attend. The creative and performing arts are cultivated well; the piles of instruments in the hallway of the school's old building, and the sounds of music-making throughout the school day and well beyond, show how very popular this policy is. Numerous visits and visitors enhance learning; the area's many facilities and historical connections are drawn upon to advantage.
32. The accommodation and other resources to support learning are satisfactory overall. Some larger classes are constrained within cramped teaching rooms and the accommodation for physical education has a negative impact on the standards pupils reach. However, the accommodation for science, for drama and for ICT has been improved. Resources have been improved since the previous inspection: those for ICT, the library and for drama, for example.
33. Staffing is also satisfactory. There are sufficient, suitably qualified teachers to ensure that the curriculum is delivered satisfactorily. The turnover of teaching staff has been high in recent years, but the school has managed this well, despite some recruitment difficulties, taking care when appointing new staff to identify potential and to maintain levels of qualifications and experience. The match of support staff to the needs of the curriculum is good; weaknesses in certain areas at the time of the last inspection have been fully addressed. The learning support staff provide well for pupils with special educational needs.

Care, guidance and support

The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils' health, safety and welfare. Overall, **good** quality support and guidance is provided. The pupils' views are taken into account well. The good provision observed in the previous inspection report has been maintained.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Induction procedures for the pupils new to the school are very good.
- The support, guidance and advice that pupils receive is good overall, although that for their academic progress is not as good as it should be.
- The school ensures that the pupils are well cared for and protected.
- The pupils' views are sought well; they feel their views are valued.

Commentary

34. Both parents and pupils are very happy with the way in which pupils are introduced to the school during Year 4. A programme of meetings between teachers and the pupils and their parents, and between teachers from Oldfields and the first schools, helps to ensure that all relevant information is obtained. During the day the pupils spend in their new school they are taught by their new teachers; this gives them the opportunity to see if there are any difficulties and seek more information, if necessary. A very good idea is the use of Oldfields exercise books during the last term in the first school. This means that the teachers can quickly spot if there is any lack of progress when they move schools, and take action. At the time of induction, the new pupils are introduced to the peer counsellors who provide an invaluable support service for them. Both parents and pupils are continually reminded of the need to bring any problems to the attention of the school. The transfer of pupils to the next phase of their education at the end of Year 8 is also good.
35. Teachers and other staff know the pupils well; this is well illustrated in the annual reports to parents where the details about the pupils' personal development are good and show a good knowledge of the pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. However, although academic assessment data are collected, the school does not yet use them sufficiently well to target support to those groups of pupils who most need it, except in the case of those pupils with identified special educational needs. These pupils with special educational needs are well supported and guided. Their learning and personal development needs are clearly identified, and their progress checked through systematic monitoring, assessment and testing. The requirements for the annual review of the progress of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Need are fully met, and pupils who have English as an additional language are monitored and supported well.
36. The policies and procedures for child protection and for promoting the pupils' health, safety and welfare are good. The headteacher has recently discussed child protection with all staff, but is seeking further training from an outside agency to reinforce this discussion. All necessary risk assessments are undertaken; alarms, appliances and equipment are tested as required. The evacuation of the school during the lunch hour after a false fire alarm was carried out promptly and without fuss. Pupils with specific medical conditions are well cared for; all staff are trained to provide necessary emergency treatment.
37. The school council is an effective way of taking the pupils' views into account. Representatives from each class meet each month and discuss ideas made via the suggestion boxes; time is allocated for representatives to discuss with and report back to their classes. Two school councillors attend the governors' building committee meetings, so that the pupils' views are taken into account about aspects, such as providing drinking water.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents are **good** overall, as are those with the wider community. The quality of partnerships with other schools is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of general information provided for parents is good, but some statutory information is not provided.
- The parents support the school very well through the parent teacher association.
- The school enjoys very good partnerships with other schools in the area.

Commentary

38. Parents receive good quality information about general matters such as policies, trips and events through letters and by accessing the school's web site. However, the statutory

information they receive is not always complete, thus not giving parents the information to which they are entitled. For instance, the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus both have omissions, making this not quite as good as at the time of the previous inspection.

39. The annual reports provided for parents about how their children are getting on are good in part. However, they do not provide them with sufficient information to know how their children are doing in relation to their peers in school or nationally; nor do they identify clearly areas that require improvement. Sometimes, these are implied rather than stated. However, parents' evenings help to counteract these deficiencies, together with the ready availability of staff to talk to parents if they have any concerns. The good use made by parents and teachers of the 'student organiser' provides an easy means of communication between home and school.
40. The school's recent request for parents to help in school has met with some success. A few parents now come in regularly to help with displays and other tasks that relieve the teachers. Requests for parents to accompany children on trips out, for example, to a museum, are generally productive. The parent teacher association is very supportive of the school. It organises social and fund raising events that raise several thousand pounds each year which is spent well to improve the provision for the pupils, including a tarmac picnic area and solar powered fountain to commemorate the life and work of a recent member of staff. The new chair and the committee of the parent teacher association have exciting plans to raise money to make further provision for the pupils.
41. There are very close links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are fully involved in monitoring their child's progress and target setting for improvement. There are also very close links with first schools in identifying pupils' learning needs on transfer.
42. The school enjoys very good partnerships with the other first, middle and high schools in the area and this is an improvement on the good partnerships reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils and parents speak positively about the care that is taken over induction arrangements to ensure as smooth a transfer as possible between schools at the end of Year 4. For example, pupils visit the school towards the end of Year 4, and are taught by their Year 5 teachers. There are regular visits to first schools by the headteacher and older pupils, such as peer counsellors. The already well-established pastoral links are now being supplemented by work on curriculum transition projects. Joint planning of courses and activities with other middle schools also takes place, whilst there is also a common approach to assessment matters.
43. Partnership with the local high school is well established. For example, there is close analysis of the national test scores of pupils at the end of the high school's first year, to help to improve provision in Years 7 and 8. As a formal specialist school partner, the school enjoys valuable support from the high school, for example in ICT and design and technology. Work on transition projects between Years 8 and 9 is now under way.
44. The school works well with its wider community. On a day-to-day level, it benefits from being able to use some of the accommodation in the co-located youth centre, whilst a number of local companies and organisations provide valuable support and sponsorship for activities and events. The school's location, towards the edge of the town, and its relatively limited parking, reduce its appeal for wider community use, but its site is used by a local football team, and by the Army Cadet Force, and concerts occasionally take place in the school hall. Pupils also perform in concerts in the surrounding area. The wider community is used well to support learning, both in terms of a wide range of visits, and visitors. For example, during the first two days of the inspection, Year 5 pupils visited a museum in Derby, and took part in a rainforest day organised at the school, drawing upon a visitor's experiences of working in the tropics. These events fired the enthusiasm of the pupils concerned, they are far from being isolated events across the school, and learning is greatly enhanced by them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance and leadership are **good**; management is **satisfactory**. The information supplied to parents does not meet the latest statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher leads well, ably supported by the senior management team and a good team of middle managers.
- The governors are knowledgeable and play an important role in strategic planning for the school.
- Some statutory information is missing from the annual report to parents and from the school prospectus.

Commentary

45. The school is well governed. The governing body contains a good mix of experience of governorship; some of its members were previously governors in first schools, which helps the school's transition arrangements. Governors also bring a wide range of occupational expertise to its meetings. In almost all respects, the school meets statutory requirements, but the information for parents in the annual report and prospectus does not meet the most recent requirements. The governors acknowledge their oversight and the matter will be put right quickly. All governors are members of one or more committees, designed to share the detailed work across all members. Overall, governors are well informed about the school and the wider educational scene because the committees provide good summaries of their work to all other members of the governing body.
46. Governors play an active part in checking that the school has the right guidance for its work. The required policies are in place, including those dealing with disability and race awareness. The governors obtain the required annual reports on how effective these policies have been, although many areas of the site remain inaccessible to wheelchair users because the works needed to install lifts are beyond the reach of the school budget. Arrangements for pupils who have English as an additional language are good.
47. Governors are well briefed on the school's strengths and weaknesses, and in addition to receiving reports from the headteacher, they also have more direct contact with other members of staff, for example by visiting the school to see its work at first hand. It is clear that governors are willing to, and do, challenge the school's senior staff over key decisions. The school development plan is approved by governors, although they play relatively little part in its drafting. However, progress towards the plan's targets is a key area of review at governors' meetings.
48. The school is well led at all levels. The headteacher shows good leadership in terms of shaping the balance of education; whilst academic achievement is important, so too is the wider development of pupils as future citizens. Thus the school shows a healthy balance between the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and those that are often squeezed into Years 5 and 6, such as the humanities, art and design and music.
49. Together with the other senior staff, the school's middle managers also show good leadership overall. In some subjects, such as physical education and modern foreign languages, temporary leaders are in post, covering extended absences. There has been a significant change of middle and senior managers in the recent past, brought about by long-serving staff reaching retirement age or, in some cases, having to leave because of ill health. The benefits of these changes are still being developed, but the recent improvement in English results, particularly at higher attainment levels, is an example of their effects.
50. The school development plan has been improved since the previous inspection, and now contains more detail of how targets are to be reached. There is better linkage between the

whole school and the subject plans, although this could still be sharper, mainly because too few targets focus enough on what benefits *pupils* will see from proposals. Many are more concerned with procedures and resourcing matters. Overall, the school's own assessment of its work, prepared for the inspection, reflected inspector's findings. In general, where there was mismatch, it was the school that was being the more cautious judge.

51. The management of the school is satisfactory. At a day-to-day level, routines work well, and the teachers are assisted successfully by non-teaching colleagues, for example classroom assistants or technical staff. The school has fewer administrative staff than average for its size and thus, in spite of larger classes and a higher than average teaching load, teachers are still having to deal with more low-level tasks than usual.
52. Whilst the school has a suitable range of policies, and reviews them regularly, it sometimes allows rather too much flexibility, resulting in too much variability between and, sometimes, within departments. The school's assessment arrangements are a good example, where some staff use National Curriculum levels or personal targets very openly in dealing with pupils, whilst others use more indirect indicators of progress. This causes confusion to pupils and their parents.
53. Progress on the various key issues raised at the previous inspection has been variable. The action plan was appropriate, but the fact that many senior staff have changed meant that initial progress was slow. Some key managers have also been seriously ill, further slowing the pace of improvements. However, there is now a more rigorous system of monitoring the work of subjects, on a half-yearly cycle by senior staff, and also as needed by middle managers, who are provided with cover to allow them to observe the work of their colleagues. Managers' normal classroom workloads usually prevent such observation during the working week.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,440,325	Balance from previous year	77,110
Total expenditure	1,470,742	Balance carried forward to the next	46,694
Expenditure per pupil	2,549		

54. The school receives significantly less money per pupil than average for schools of this type. This means that governors have very little flexibility as to how funds are deployed. There have been some significant areas of improvement since the previous inspection, for example in upgrading ICT and some science and design and technology facilities. Overall, however, much of the spending has to be on teachers, even though there are fewer of them, working for longer than average, for a school of this size. Given the good achievement and good quality of education delivered, and the very good personal development of the pupils, it shows very good value for money from its below average funding.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 and 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The overall provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and achievement is good.
- There is a significant amount of good teaching, especially when adapting methods from the National Literacy Strategy.
- The department is well managed with effective self-evaluation procedures.
- The implementation of more widespread best practice in teaching and assessment needs to be accelerated.

Commentary

55. Current standards on entry are above average, although the standards of older pupils, when they entered the school, were closer to average. The results in the 2003 national tests, taken at the end of Year 6, were above average and better than would have been expected given the pupils' results in their tests at the end of Year 2. The proportion attaining the higher Level 5 was significantly higher than anticipated.
56. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 6 and 8 are above average and the pupils' achievement is good, including that of pupils who have special educational needs and English as an additional language. In each year, pupils of all attainments give extended spoken answers and are confident speakers. Reading skills are above average. Middle to lower attaining pupils in Year 6 were very effective in the use of skimming and scanning skills to identify key points. Year 8 higher attaining pupils analyse texts such as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" closely. Pupils make the biggest gains in writing skills. In both Years 6 and 8 most pupils write extended pieces accurately and in a well-organised way. Paragraphing is well established by Year 6. Handwriting is assured.
57. A few pupils reach below average standards with weaknesses in accuracy and in the clarity of their letter formation. In Year 8, the best pupils are developing some very assured writing skills, modifying their style confidently from analytical to, for example, a successful stream of consciousness register. Pupils in middle sets are achieving above average standards through assured and clearly expressed extended pieces.
58. Teaching and learning are good but very seldom better than good. The best lessons included methods adapted from the National Literacy Strategy. Very good planning led to hard working, fast-paced lessons with a clear sense of direction. Pupils focused sharply on improving their reading and writing. Teachers made sure all knew the learning objectives and how the tasks related to them. High expectations drove the lessons, such as when Year 8 higher attainers aimed at adopting features of advanced language skills in their descriptive writing. In Years 7 and 8 higher attaining pupils are very well challenged by extended writing assignments on demanding texts. In less effective lessons, the pace was slower and the learning purpose less clear. Time was not effectively managed: some pupils did not do as much as they could and concentration suffered. Expectations were not clear enough, especially with regard to the standards required at different National Curriculum levels. A tendency for teachers to overuse a

closed form of questioning limited the range of responses pupils could make, even in good lessons.

59. Marking is usually precise about strengths and weaknesses. However, despite good monitoring of writing skills in Years 5 and 6, too many pupils throughout the school are unsure about their current levels and how to proceed to the next stage. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of ICT and numeracy skills.
60. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. There is a clear vision of how the department needs to improve in achieving a greater consistency in the implementation of the best practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The management of the department is good. Evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate and informs teaching well in Year 5. There are good monitoring procedures. Progress has been satisfactory since the previous inspection. It has accelerated after an initially slow response following a period of staffing difficulties.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

61. Standards are above average. Despite pupils in Years 5 and 6 having less time allocated to English lessons than in most schools, they receive many opportunities to develop extended writing skills. Subjects specifically plan to enhance literacy. For example, persuasive language formed a key part of pupils' work on advertising in art and design. In religious education there are many opportunities for extended writing, supported by specific teaching of the conventions of different types of writing. This concerted level of provision is less evident in Years 7 and 8. There is no whole-school policy to guide the development of literacy provision or to evaluate its effectiveness. Nevertheless there has been a thorough evaluation of the types of writing required in different subjects enhanced by appropriate in service training.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils' very good attitudes to learning languages, allied to sound teaching, which conveys an enthusiasm for French, have, a positive effect on learning.
- The highest attainers are not always given work that will challenge them sufficiently, so they underachieve in some lessons.
- The school has not ensured the monitoring of teaching and learning in French, so that any weaknesses have not been detected and remedied.

Commentary

62. The French department has undergone significant staffing turbulence over the last year, which has meant that many pupils, particularly those in Year 8, have suffered a lack of continuity in their learning of French.
63. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 8. This represents satisfactory achievement overall, given the pupils' general standards at the start of the course. Standards are not high enough, however, amongst higher attainers in some lessons in Year 8, where there is not enough challenge to extend them sufficiently.
64. It is not possible to report fully on teaching and learning in Year 6 because no lessons could be observed during the inspection. The pupils' books show that they have a sound introduction to learning the language and reach average standards in their writing.

65. By the end of Year 8, most pupils speak and write with a satisfactory level of accuracy, and are beginning to show the ability to use past and future tenses. They speak relatively fluently in simple French, although they need some support to do this. They read extended passages of fairly complex French for gist understanding, and some higher attainers are able to be more precise in their understanding. Lower attainers learn their work well, and therefore understand and respond with some confidence. They write in simple French largely accurately, using a model to help them. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, and achieve equally as well as other pupils, including those who have English as an additional language.
66. Teaching and learning in French are satisfactory. There is a small proportion of lessons with unsatisfactory features. For example, when teachers do not provide enough opportunities for the pupils to practise new language thoroughly before they have to use it independently, they do not learn well; and when the lesson proceeds at a moderate pace and the work is not demanding enough, the higher attainers are not fully challenged. The teachers' competence in French is broadly satisfactory, but they do make some errors so that the pupils do not always hear a perfect model of the language. On the whole, however, the teachers show an infectious enthusiasm for French and France, which encourages the pupils to want to learn. The pupils are co-operative and hard working, and their very good behaviour and attitudes to learning are significant factors in the satisfactory progress they make.
67. Some instances of imaginative teaching encourage pupils in Years 7 and 8 to re-use the French they have learned, and to do extended writing; for example, many of them have produced lively, well illustrated story books, either hand-written, or word-processed. As a result, they have been able to learn more complex French, to draft and redraft their work, and to take pleasure and pride in being creative with the language.
68. Aspects of literacy are developed well in many of the linguistic activities the pupils undertake. Opportunities to use computers are planned for in the scheme of work, but are not yet taken with sufficient regularity. The marking of the pupils' work is not always done carefully enough by all teachers. Regular assessments tell the teachers how well the pupils are learning, but assessment is not yet fully used to monitor the work of the department as a whole, to track pupils' progress and to set realistic targets to help them to improve.
69. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The acting head of department is committed to ensuring that the pupils achieve well, and supports temporary and non-specialist teachers well. As a result, the teaching and learning of French have been kept on track. Nevertheless, in the absence of the permanent head of department, important aspects of management, such as the monitoring of teaching and learning, and the analysis of assessment data, have been allowed to lapse by the school. Overall, however, the subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and areas of weakness

- Good leadership of the subject has developed a well-structured curriculum.
- There is good use of data to set department targets.
- The use of computers extends learning opportunities.
- There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and marking.
- The marking of pupils' work does not provide enough suggestions about how to improve.

Commentary

70. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are now above average, although when the current Year 8 and Year 6 entered the school, standards were closer to average. In the national tests in Year 6 in 2003, standards, based on average points scores, were average (but almost qualified for the above average category). Boys and girls performed equally well. Compared with the results of pupils in schools with similar standards at the beginning of Year 2, standards were above average. Overall achievement was, therefore, good. However, results were slightly below those gained in English and science.
71. In work seen during the inspection, standards were above average in Year 6 and Year 8. Pupils are placed in sets by attainment from Year 5 onwards. All pupils, including those who have English as an additional language, are provided with work that challenges them to think. They are often required to explain how they arrived at their answers, and this develops their understanding. They have a positive attitude to their work, and concentrate well to the end of each lesson. They achieve well as a result. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 6 enjoy problem solving; and in Year 7 they become very absorbed in lessons on transformations. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, also enjoy mathematics, and achieve well. In common with other pupils, they benefit from a broad curriculum. An enjoyable Year 7 lesson, for instance, included a starter exercise to practise multiplication tables; this led on to consideration of the symmetry of two-dimensional shapes. Teaching assistants are very attentive to pupils' needs, but occasionally are too helpful, so that pupils do not have to think for themselves.
72. Teaching in mathematics is good throughout the school, and occasionally, it is very good. All teachers demonstrate good command of their subject. Lesson planning is very thorough, with very good guidance provided by the scheme of work. Lessons are well structured, although too often there is insufficient time devoted to lesson summaries. There is very good progression in the work, and increasing use of computers to extend opportunities for learning, and to reinforce important concepts.
73. In all lessons observed, there was a particularly good relationship between teachers and pupils, so that pupils are not afraid to use their initiative or to make mistakes, and they readily ask for help. Teachers generally provide work at the appropriate level. Higher attaining pupils in each class are challenged by the work. Homework is set regularly; although it consolidates work done in class, it does not always extend pupils' understanding. The monitoring of pupils' work is regular. Pupils complete key objective tests, but the grading of their work is not closely related to national levels. It is unclear to pupils whether they are performing at their full potential, or what they should do in order to improve.
74. The curriculum leadership in mathematics is good. The subject is well organised, and the head of department clearly enjoys mathematics. There is a sense of purpose in lessons. Management is also good. There is increasing use of data from Key Stage 1 onwards to record the achievement of pupils, but this is not yet fully used to identify any under-performance, or to develop strategies for improvement. There is a thorough review of examination papers to identify strengths in pupils' knowledge, and areas for improvement. These are used when reviewing the curriculum in order to improve provision. The monitoring of the work of teachers, including non-specialists, is not yet given sufficient priority. There is little sharing of good practice, so that there are some inconsistencies in standards.
75. Since the previous inspection, there has been good progress in mathematics. Pupils' achievements are now good throughout the school, and they enjoy the subject. The department has responded positively to the national priority given to mathematics in Years 3 to 6, and teaching methods are now more varied and, therefore, more interesting. There is good pace in the one-hour lessons. Teachers are much more confident in the use of computers, and pupils respond well to the opportunities to use these at lunchtime and after school. These sessions provide good reinforcement and encouragement for pupils.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Since the previous inspection, the school has formulated a policy for the development of mathematics across the curriculum. Furthermore, training has been provided for teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, there is now much greater awareness across all subjects of how to contribute to the development of pupils' number skills, and of the importance of consistency in the use of key words such as mean/average, and share/divide.
77. Pupils' standards and confidence in the use of mathematics are above average. Even lower attaining pupils readily attempt to overcome any problems they encounter, and show persistence in their endeavours. Pupils are not over-reliant on the use of a calculator, and can manipulate numbers well. They are able to explain logically how they have arrived at their answers. When it is sensible to use calculators, they are generally used accurately.
78. There is regular and effective use of mathematical processes in a number of subjects. In geography, for instance, pupils use scales and grid references accurately. In design and technology, there is effective consideration of space and shapes, although in art, there is little reinforcement of these topics. Spreadsheets are effectively used in ICT, and in science, there is very regular use of graphs to analyse data.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and areas of weakness

- Curriculum leadership is good, and provides good guidance for teachers.
- Teaching is good, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils are interested in science and its applications.
- There is effective use of computers to extend learning opportunities.
- There is inconsistency in the marking and assessment of pupils' work.
- There is a shortage of laboratories; too many lessons take place in classrooms.

Commentary

79. Pupils' standards in science on entry to the school are now above average, although the standards of older pupils, when they entered the school, were closer to average. Results in science in the national tests in Year 6 in 2003 were above average, and were slightly better than in English and mathematics. Compared with pupils in schools with similar standards at the beginning of Year 3, results were well above average. There are no consistent differences in the results obtained by boys and girls.
80. In work seen during the inspection, including scrutiny of the pupils' work, the overall standards were also above average in Year 6 and Year 8, although work seen in lessons was average in Years 5 and 6. The pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are taught in mixed-ability groups throughout the school. This is very effective in Years 7 and 8 when they are in relatively small groups. However, it is less effective in Years 5 and 6 when class sizes are often 30 or more. Pupils with special educational needs, and who have English as an additional language, are given appropriate support when they are in smaller groups, but this is more difficult in larger classes, even with help from teaching assistants. In a relatively small Year 8 class, for instance, the teacher was able to provide help for pupils having difficulty with analysing results by using graphs to show changes in resistance. This was more difficult in a larger Year 6 class when plotting graphs of input and output variables, and the overall quality of work suffered.

81. Teaching skills are good across the school, but teaching is more effective in Years 7 and 8, partly because classes are smaller. A higher percentage of good teaching was seen in these year groups during the inspection. A minority of teaching is very good, challenging pupils to think about both the scientific content of the lesson, and the accuracy of their writing. Teachers plan their lessons well, and there are frequent opportunities for pupils to undertake practical work. There is effective emphasis on investigative work; this encourages pupils to think about scientific processes, and the accuracy of their results. There has been a significant improvement in the use of computers and technology to improve opportunities for learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and most pupils use lesson time effectively.
82. Teaching is less effective when, because of a shortage of laboratories, lessons are held in classrooms. The policy for the marking and assessment of pupils' work has been reviewed, but practice remains inconsistent, with insufficient references to national levels. However, there is increasing use of constructive comments to inform pupils how to improve their standards. There is good liaison with the technician so that lessons start promptly, and with purpose. The National Strategy for improving the structure of lessons has been readily adopted, resulting in good consolidation of work from previous lessons, more stimulating teaching, and good reinforcement of keywords and scientific concepts in lesson summaries.
83. Curriculum leadership of the science department is good. There is a good scheme of work, subject to regular review, which guides the work of teachers. Liaison with other local schools is very good, resulting in good progression in work when pupils move between schools. There is good vision for the future, and the department handbook is under review in order to develop consistent application of agreed policies. The impact of some long-term teacher absence has been largely overcome. Management on a day-to-day basis is also good, with good organisation of the work of the department. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the monitoring of teaching and marking, and this results in inconsistencies in practice.
84. Since the previous inspection, the science department has made satisfactory progress. Standards remain above average in tests in Year 6, and in Years 7 and 8. There has been an increase in the use of ICT, both for research, and in practical work in class, for example when using dataloggers. There has also been a significant increase in technician hours. This provides additional help for teachers, and supports the increasing opportunities for pupils to be involved in investigative work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses.

- Pupils in Year 5 show particularly good achievement, reaching above average standards by the end of the year.
- Assessment is a major strength of the subject; pupils know very clearly how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Achievement is good overall because of good teaching; lower attainers are supported well.
- Although there are now many more computers than at the time of the previous inspection, other subjects still find it hard to gain access to them.

Commentary

85. When pupils enter the school, standards in the subject are broadly average, although the range of competence is wide. During Year 5, pupils make particularly rapid progress in acquiring new skills and consolidating existing ones. This process continues through Year 6, so that by the

end of that year, standards are above average. Achievement overall is good across Years 5 and 6. Prior lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, often achieve very well; for example, the standard of their work with text and images is often broadly average. Their spreadsheet work is less confident because of weaker underlying numeracy skills. Higher attainers demonstrate a keen awareness of audience and purpose in their work, some of which is more typical of pupils one or two years older. They speak knowledgeably about what they are doing, and why.

86. Standards are above average by the end of Year 8, and achievement is good. The improved provision in the recent past has allowed pupils to show good achievement overall. They broaden their skills, and deepen their understanding. They also make greater use of ICT in a wider range of contexts, and lower attainers become more confident in matching what they do to the intended purpose. Overall, lower attainers, once again, progress well across the various areas of the course. In contrast, higher attainers, whilst demonstrating satisfactory achievement, are capable of more demanding work than that contained in some of the tasks; discussion shows that they are capable of more.
87. A measure of how well pupils across the ability range have secure knowledge and understanding is seen when they evaluate their work, and that of others, or give confident demonstrations to the rest of the class. There is no marked difference in the relative performances of boys and girls at any stage of the school. For example, apart from the subject matter chosen by the pupils - tractors for many boys and horses for girls in one example - their writing is of similar quality.
88. Teaching is good overall; the pupils learn well at all levels. Most teaching is characterised by a detailed knowledge of the subject and its requirements; this is seen in the very good use of open questions to make pupils of all ages think about what they are doing. For the most part, the pace of learning is high because expectations of what can be done are also demanding. Teaching of new skills is done confidently and at a good pace. Pupils also know what they are to learn. The good range of methods used allows pupils to get on and try things for themselves; only rarely are pupils other than fully absorbed in what they do. A major strength lies in the very good use of assessment to raise standards. Pupils know where they stand; they assess their own work with confidence, and record their personal progress against National Curriculum requirements. For example, Year 6 pupils used national criteria very well when assessing a colleague's work on Victorian child labour. They did so with humanity, but with rigour; their suggestions helped all in the group to improve.
89. The teachers' marking is accurate, and whilst it is encouraging in tone, it leaves pupils in no doubt what they need to do to make things even better. This is not a complacent department. The occasional lack of challenge for the highest attainers reflects the fact that a new scheme of work is being used for the first time; the gaps are being identified and covered for the future. In the short term, the strengths in questioning are used to promote deeper and wider thinking about what is being done.
90. Curriculum leadership is good. There is a clear vision of the power of ICT to raise standards in the school, and this is now being shared by a wider range of staff across the curriculum. The adoption of the new scheme of work has provided the basis for securing standards across the ability range, and to develop better links with subject programmes. At present, one gap in coverage of requirements is that pupils do not use e-mail at school to communicate with others. Suitable software to allow this to be done safely has now been obtained and is to be installed quickly.
91. Management of the subject is good, with clear documentation that sets out what is expected of those working in the subject. Their work is monitored at regular intervals, including by observation of their teaching. The school benefits from its partnership with a nearby specialist technology college, for example in obtaining regular support from a technician, and in covering aspects of the programmes of study using the other school's staff and equipment. Some of the

hardware now being used to enhance learning in a good manner has been funded by this partnership.

92. Progress since the previous inspection has been good. There are now more computers, although still fewer than average for a school of this size and type. For example, the two main computer rooms still have too few computers for the size of classes using them. Even with the reduced class sizes in the subjects, some pupils have to share, reducing achievement for those concerned. The need to use the rooms for the weekly specialist lesson for each group reduces access for other subjects. However, compared to 1998, other subjects now make much better use of ICT to promote learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

93. Overall, standards are above average. All subjects show where ICT could be used to enhance learning in their plans, and most now make good use of the ICT facilities. However, the need to use the two main rooms for core lessons in ICT reduces opportunities for other subjects to have enough access to computers. Overall, relevant use of ICT was seen in work in almost all subjects, but particularly so in mathematics, science, music, religious education and history. Work in design and technology and mathematics is planned to help fulfil National Curriculum requirements for ICT, as well as to develop the pupils' understanding of work in the subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The provision for geography is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is good but it does not always provide enough opportunity for pupils to discuss and explore issues in depth.
- Pupils' progress is systematically assessed but marking does not give enough guidance for improvement
- The curriculum is well planned and kept under review

Commentary

94. The results of the school's assessment of pupils' attainment in Year 6 are above average. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are above average both in Year 6 and Year 8.
95. Pupils have good geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. They make rapid progress. Already, Year 5 pupils have developed a range of key skills. Their written work, for example, shows accuracy in map work, locating places and tracing routes. Year 6 pupils' work shows the extension of these skills, and a very good understanding of environmental issues. By the time pupils reach Year 8, their knowledge and understanding is often mature and used well in investigation. They analyse and evaluate evidence with confidence as shown in a lesson comparing differences in climate in Britain, and in the conclusions drawn from well-planned geographical surveys.
96. Written work is of high quality reflecting a good grasp of factors such as the impact of human and physical features on the environment and the development of settlements. Literacy and ICT skills are good, and numeracy skills are well applied in measurement, and in the analysis and presentation of data. Evidence is well illustrated by clear maps, diagrams and photographs.

97. All pupils: boys and girls, the gifted and talented, and those with special educational needs, achieve well in comparison with their average attainment on entry. They are well motivated, work hard and respond very well to the teachers' high expectations.
98. Teaching is good. This is evident from the lessons seen, and the extensive range of work and planning documents scrutinised. Skilled planning ensures a very clear focus, challenge and a good range of activities. There is a strong emphasis on the development of geographical skills, and high expectations for the standards to be achieved. In lessons, clear authoritative presentations draw on good subject knowledge, and high expectations result in pupils working at full stretch. For example, the challenge for Year 8 pupils to be very accurate in their analysis of the climate in different regions of Britain caused them to make very good progress in being precise in their use of weather charts and maps, and the cross-referencing of data.
99. Class relationships are very good and lessons are brisk and purposeful. Group work is well supported and pupils' understanding is constantly checked. Questioning, however, does not always probe sufficiently to enable pupils to develop and extend their ideas. The teachers' anxiety to cover a substantial amount of work in relatively little time, results in not enough opportunity for pupils to work in depth independently.
100. Pupils' progress is assessed systematically and their work is marked regularly, but marking does not always provide clearly focused guidance for improvement. This was an issue identified for attention at the previous inspection. Also the use of assessment data to track progress and set targets needs to be more rigorous.
101. The head of humanities gives a very clear direction for teaching and learning in geography. Good curriculum management results in broad learning opportunities enriched by field work, making good use of the locality, and imaginative approaches such as the Rain Forest Road Show. Provision is kept under constant review. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in improving achievement, raising standards in Year 8 and sustaining good teaching. The great majority of the issues identified for improvement have been addressed.

History

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers work hard to improve pupils' writing skills. This is having a positive impact on standards, particularly in enquiry work, where they are well above average.
- Pupils make very good use of ICT to improve their writing skills.
- Teaching is good and means that pupils enjoy their lessons and take pride in their work.
- Teachers do not currently provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their skills in speaking at length.
- Skills in the analysis and interpretation of historical sources are not as well developed as skills in enquiry work and extended writing.

Commentary

102. Pupils enter the school with average standards in history but, by the end of Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils have a good grasp of time-lines. They are beginning to develop a good knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts. They are developing skills of observation which they apply to a range of types of historical evidence. They have well above standards in enquiry work and research. Pupils in Year 6, for example, use a wide range of sources of evidence to find information on conditions on the *Golden Hinde*.

Although pupils of all abilities show confidence in writing at length, they are not so confident at speaking, especially when answers require explanation at length.

103. When pupils leave the school, at the end of Year 8, standards are well above average overall. Pupils work with a growing range of evidence to generate description and explanation. Pupils of all abilities are becoming more confident in writing at length and skills in enquiry work and organisation and communication are, in fact, well above average. Pupils throughout the age range make very good use of computers and the Internet to word process their work and to research topics. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
104. Pupils of all abilities achieve well during their time in the school. Skills in enquiry work and extended writing develop particularly well. In order to further improve standards, pupils need more opportunities to work with a range of primary and secondary sources so that they can improve their skills in analysis and interpretation of historical evidence.
105. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed and, as a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and take pride in their work. Teachers work hard to improve pupils' skills and confidence, and the emphasis on extended writing means that very weak writers, for example, are able to write at length, although they do not always provide an equally wide range of opportunities for speaking at length. Lessons are well planned, with a wide range of interesting activities. Teachers are beginning to make effective use of devices such as starter activities so that lessons begin crisply with clear aims and objectives. Classrooms are colourful and cheerful with a good range of pupils' work on display to provide motivation.
106. Curriculum leadership is good. The subject co-ordinator, who is a part-time teacher, has a clear view about how to monitor and develop the subject and departmental documentation helps this to happen. Teachers work well as a team. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils in Year 8, for example, study some local history (work on local villages at the time of the Domesday Book). Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good. As a result, standards have risen.
- Pupils make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding and enjoy their lessons because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Assessment procedures are very good and help pupils to understand how to improve their work.
- Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The school has done well to co-ordinate arrangements effectively despite a changing team of religious education staff.

Commentary

107. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. By the end of Year 8 standards are well above average. This represents a very good rate of achievement for all pupils, whose standards were average when they joined the school in Year 5. Boys and girls are making similar progress, as are the pupils who have special educational needs.
108. By Year 6, pupils have investigated elements of the major world faiths, including holy books such as the Qur'an and the Bible. Pupils in Year 5, for example, understand that Qur'anic verses are called *surah* and that someone who has memorised the whole Qur'an is called

hafiz. Opportunities for pupils to discuss and enquire are good. Writing standards are above average and pupils make very good use of ICT to produce some of their work.

109. By Year 8, pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the main beliefs and practices of some of the major world religions. They understand how these beliefs affect the lives of believers. Written responses are thoughtful, accurate and make very good use of subject vocabulary.
110. Teaching in the lessons observed during the inspection was judged as good, with many very good features. However, this was a very small sample, as not many lessons were being taught during the three days of the inspection. Work in the pupils' books, and discussions with them, show that teaching is better than this: thus, teaching overall is judged as very good, leading to very good achievement. This is why the standards by the end of Year 8 are much better than would be expected from the pupils' standards when they enter the school.
111. Although teachers, apart from the subject co-ordinator, are not specialists, the staff who are currently teaching the subject have a growing knowledge and understanding of the subject and a commitment to teaching it. Lesson planning, done by the co-ordinator, is very good and enables teachers to set out clearly what is to be learned and make links with previous learning that helps pupils to build systematically on their knowledge. Teachers work very hard at improving pupils' literacy skills and this is having a positive impact on standards in this area.
112. Teachers have very good skills in involving all pupils in the lessons and are able to make the subject interesting and relevant to pupils' own lives. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Work on 'rules', by pupils in Year 6, for example, includes the Five Pillars of Islam and the Buddhist Eight-Fold Path and compares these to the school rules and to pupils' own rules for living. Pupils in Year 7 compare their own stories with Christian parables and then write an updated version of the seed that fell on stony ground. As a consequence, pupils clearly enjoy their lessons, take a lot of pride in their work and behave very well.
113. Curriculum leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear vision of what needs to be done and procedures effectively support this vision. The co-ordinator supports her team very effectively despite the constraints of not knowing from year to year who will be teaching the subject. Assessment procedures have improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. The work of the department is now monitored very effectively; as a result standards have risen. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This contributes to pupils' general well being and helps to create a caring and enlightened school community. Although teachers make very good use of resources, particularly display of pupils' work and other materials, there is scope to develop the programme of visitors from different faith communities to enhance and support the curriculum.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average overall; attainment in food technology and in resistant materials is much better than standards in textiles.
- Pupils understand the design, realisation and evaluation processes effectively and achieve well
- Teaching is good overall and very good in food technology.
- Pupils enjoy all aspects of the subject.

- Issues from the previous inspection, relating to challenge for higher attaining pupils and to target setting, still require improvement.

Commentary

114. Pupils' skills in and understanding of design and technology are average when they come to the school. By Year 6, standards are above average. Pupils develop a good understanding about design and how this informs the making process in an appropriate range of materials. They also learn well that the modification and evaluation aspects of projects are important phases. In Year 6, for example, pupils investigating the properties of cycle helmets, understand well the effects of impact damage on different materials and what they need to do to modify their model designs for better safety. Designs are neat and drawing is good. Pupils use subject vocabulary properly and spell well. Pupils in Year 5 benefited from additional, useful design and technology opportunities connected with the Rain Forest day during the week of the inspection.
115. Achievement remains good in Years 7 and 8 and standards overall are above average Year 8 pupils consolidate their understanding of the design to final realisation "loop" well, particularly in the food technology and resistant materials elements of the curriculum. In the latter, a Year 8 project about model fairground rides combines aspects of electrics, mechanics and computer aided design (CAD/CAM) very effectively, and pupils of all abilities produce high quality products.
116. In food technology, Year 8 pupils also understand well aspects of food preparation, such as the effects of yeast in making dough. In making scones in a lesson seen, all could describe the process well, explaining safety and hygiene considerations effectively. In other curriculum areas such as textiles, standards are average, with pupils finding it more difficult to control equipment such as needles and threads. A good link with the high school enables elements such as CAD/CAM to be covered satisfactorily, with standards here being average for pupils' ages.
117. Teaching is good overall. A large team of staff teaches the subject in Years 5 and 6 with good support from the subject specialist. Food technology teaching is very good. Teachers enjoy teaching the subject and create enthusiasm for all aspects of design and technology amongst their pupils. Good question and answer sessions focus attention effectively on key elements of what is to be, or has been learned. Literacy and numeracy are well integrated into planning. Enthusiasm for "making and doing" is balanced with good emphasis on the need for pupils to plan, and later to evaluate their work properly.
118. Some lessons are rather short for a practical subject, but time is used very well, with pacy introductions and high expectations of behaviour. Pupils respond very well to these challenges and obey health and safety instructions with due regard. Consideration about how to stretch the ablest pupils would help them to achieve their full potential, but small class sizes enable teachers to devote more time than usual to one-to-one facilitation. Assessment at the end of projects is good, but assessment generally lacks the target-setting elements that would help higher and middle attaining pupils to understand how they can improve their standards in relation to National Curriculum criteria.
119. Subject leadership and management are good. Staff reduction has meant that the subject specialist has to cover a wide range of subject areas in Years 7 and 8, but high standards are maintained. Textiles takes less focus on pupils' experience than would be useful, so attainment here is not so high. Standards have improved generally since the previous report, particularly in Years 5 and 6. ICT provision has improved, but needs to be used more widely in the curriculum. Issues about stretching talented pupils and about target setting remain, but even so, the department has improved well since the previous report.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average overall and very good in drawing and painting.
- All pupils achieve well across the school, particularly in two-dimensional work.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.
- The range of pupils' curriculum could usefully be extended, particularly in three-dimensional media.
- Homework is used well and forms the basis of good peer assessments.
- Sketchbooks are good but could be more imaginatively used by higher attaining pupils.
- The department's ICT provision has improved and now needs to be used creatively in pupils' work.

Commentary

120. From an average range of art and design skills and understanding on entry to Year 5, pupils make good progress in a variety of media and standards are above average by the end of Year 6. They achieve very well in drawing. Standards are often very good in observational and imaginative pencil and colouring work. Pupils also do well in painting, learning to mix colours well and to be careful with mark making. Their understanding of artists' work is also good. Other aspects, for example three-dimensional work, develop satisfactorily and standards are in line with the range of expectations by Year 6 in these areas. Achievement is good overall and very good for pupils of all abilities in drawing and painting.
121. Standards are also above average by Year 8. The difference between boys' and girls' standards is less than usual when they enter Year 7 and continues to be so. Drawing remains a key strength because pupils have had a very good foundation in this skill and because teaching of this aspect, and of painting, are very good. High quality work on display around the school testifies to these achievements.
122. Pupils' knowledge of a range of mainly 20th century artists is good. They understand well how the styles and methods of artists studied link with their own practical work. Three-dimensional work, for instance ceramic reliefs, takes satisfactory focus in the curriculum and standards here are average. When pupils decorate and embellish this work, painting reflects the high standards described. Overall, pupils continue to make good progress and achieve well, taking significant strengths in drawing and painting to the next phase of their education.
123. Teaching and learning are consistently good across the school. Year 5 teachers have good support from the subject leader and place effective emphasis on the key skills described, and on linking famous artists' work into pupils' studies. They also ensure that the standard of pupils' artwork in other subjects, for example as illustrations, remains high. With specialist teaching and accommodation later on, pupils continue to learn well and become very confident in their drawing and painting skills.
124. An effective teaching method enables pupils to become involved in peer assessment at the start of most lessons, when homework is displayed for pupils to discuss, and to assess its quality. They respond very sensitively and maturely to these opportunities, which enable them to understand what is being assessed. Currently based on the school's "very good / good / needs improvement" gradings, this already effective system could usefully be improved to include understanding of National Curriculum criteria. Expectations and challenge are generally high. This is particularly evident in differently oriented help during the teachers' good one-to-one facilitation in lessons. With helpfully small groups, this is more effectively targeted than is possible in most schools. Sketchbooks are used well for most pupils, but more could be

expected from the ablest pupils' sketchbook presentations, to prepare them for later curriculum demands.

125. Leadership and subject management are good. Improvement has also been good since the previous inspection, with high standards maintained. ICT provision has improved, but is new, so needs to be used more widely in pupils' work. Year 7 curriculum issues have been resolved. Storage for two-dimensional work is better, but storage is still a constraint restricting three-dimensional developments.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in music is consistently very good, leading to very good achievement and resulting in well above average standards by the end of Year 8.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' personal development.
- Very good curriculum leadership ensures that music makes a very good contribution to the life of the school.
- A well above average number of pupils takes instrumental musical lessons.

Commentary

126. On entry to the school, pupils have had a variety of experiences in their music-making and standards range from below to well above average. Broadly speaking, standards are judged as average at the start of Year 5. By Year 6, standards are above average, and they have risen to well above average by the end of Year 8. Achievement overall is very good.
127. Pupils listen very well and use technical vocabulary confidently when they are discussing performances and composition. In their composing work, they experiment with sounds on the keyboard, or on their own orchestral instruments. Their own positive attitudes and willingness to focus on the tasks they are set contribute to the very good progress they make in lessons.
128. Teaching is consistently very good, and is sometimes excellent. Lessons are well planned, and contain an interesting mix of singing, listening, composing and improvising, with a good balance of whole class, pair and individual work. As a result, the pupils concentrate fully throughout their lessons and are always on task. Relationships are excellent, and the teachers' first rate musical skills are used expertly in tailoring tasks to the right level for each pupil. So, for example, when pupils play as an ensemble, there may be four or five different parts for them to play, each at a different level of difficulty. No-one is excluded from the playing, and there are high levels of satisfaction among the class as they play together.
129. Clear musical demonstrations, whether through singing, playing the piano or the guitar, or from a good range of CDs and videos ensure that pupils have good illustrations of important points, and a clear picture of what is required of them in practical work.
130. Curriculum leadership and the management of the subject are very good. Routines are well established, information on lesson times for instrumental work is clearly displayed, and there is a variety of instrumental groups which the pupils can join to further their practical work. Gifted and talented pupils are very well catered for, and many of the pupils take examinations on their instruments as well as having performance opportunities in the many concerts, shows and other activities that form part of the school's musical life.

131. The subject incorporates music from a wide range of cultures, and makes a first rate contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good: standards have remained high, teaching is as good as it was then, and the musical life of the school displays the same high quality as before.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and participation rates are usually very good.
- Good teaching promotes good achievement in cross-country running.
- The hard work of temporary staff maintains provision for extra-curricular sport well.
- Inadequate indoor accommodation limits standards and achievement in badminton.
- Time allocated to the aesthetic aspects of the subject is modest.

Commentary

132. When pupils enter the school, standards in the subject are average. In work seen, standards are average overall in games and health-related exercise by the end of Year 6, representing satisfactory achievement. Pupils know how to lead group exercises; most can use stop-watches for timing their peers in fitness work. In football, the highest attaining boys develop their skills well in practices and modified games. In netball, girls' performance is average and achievement is satisfactory, considering their limited experience of the game.
133. By the end of Year 8, standards are average overall in games, health-related exercise and cross-country running; most pupils achieve satisfactorily. Girls, including those with Statements of Special Educational Need, achieve well in cross-country running, improving markedly on their previous personal best times. However, standards and achievement are constrained in badminton when a class size leads to large numbers of boys having to share limited indoor accommodation. Oral work is consistently above average. Standards in competitive sport are good in athletics, cross-country running and orienteering. A few individuals compete at county level.
134. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8. Major illness and bereavement means that two temporary teachers are responsible for the subject during the current school year. Both have sound subject knowledge, enabling them to structure at least satisfactory lessons to fulfil the curriculum plans devised by the absent head of department. Their good class control and encouragement promote very good attitudes and behaviour amongst pupils.
135. Where teaching is good, clear instructions and relevant demonstrations engage the pupils' interest. Accordingly, they are keen to practise to develop their practical skills. Additionally, teachers' reference to technical terms helps to extend the pupils' knowledge, thereby enhancing their oral evaluations. In less effective lessons, organisation is not as efficient as it might be, or instructions are too complex, so pupils are unsure what they have to do. As a result, pace drops and time available for activity is modest. Informal assessment is mostly satisfactory. However, pupils receive insufficient feedback on how their work relates to national criteria, and what they have to do to improve.
136. Both curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. The acting head of department is to be commended on upholding the subject in difficult circumstances. However, references to the four strands and National Curriculum levels are underdeveloped in planning and assessment. Gymnastics and dance lessons are less regular than usual, particularly in Years

7 and 8. There is no swimming beyond Year 5, thus constraining continuity and progression, and limiting preparation for the high school.

137. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards remain average in lessons and good in competitive sport. Teaching continues to be at least satisfactory. Pupils display very positive attitudes. However, shortcomings in curriculum and assessment persist. There has been no improvement to cramped changing facilities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school runs no courses in this area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although citizenship is not a compulsory National Curriculum subject in Years 5 and 6, the school has effectively introduced it for pupils in these year groups. As a result, it is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development.
- Leadership and management are good with a clear view of how to improve provision.
- Schemes of work are very good and provide teachers with very clear support and guidance.
- Time in Years 7 and 8 is currently too low, although there are firm plans to increase this next year.

Commentary

138. The school has made a good start in introducing citizenship as a compulsory National Curriculum subject in Years 7 and 8.
139. As the subject was only formally introduced into the National Curriculum in September 2002 for pupils in Years 7 and 8, there is as yet no statistical basis for national comparison of standards. The subject is primarily taught through tutor periods with contributions from other subjects and extra-curricular activities. Provision is also supplemented because the school has taken the bold decision to provide pupils in Years 5 and 6 with lessons in citizenship. Evidence from the inspection suggests that standards are broadly above what might be expected from pupils from a similar age.
140. Teaching in citizenship involves all tutors as well as class teachers in Years 5 and 6. The quality of teaching and learning, therefore, mirrors what is found generally in the school as a whole. The evidence suggests that teachers take their responsibilities in citizenship seriously and accordingly teach their lessons well.
141. Curriculum leadership is good. The co-ordinator has a clear view of how to develop the subject and improve the provision. The decision to introduce citizenship into Years 5 and 6 is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development. Planning is good. There are very clear and detailed schemes of work that provide very effective guidance to teachers. The content of drama lessons also makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development and to their awareness of issues connected with citizenship.
142. Assessment procedures are in place. Having originally piloted a format of a carousel with religious education and personal, social and health education, the school is currently trialling provision through two 20-minute tutor periods per week. Although this means that time allocation is too low to permit National Curriculum coverage in much depth, provision is supplemented by additional lessons in Years 5 and 6 and by extra-curricular provision. There is already, for example, an active student council, and pupils have other very good opportunities to learn about democracy first-hand through the shadowing of national elections. Pupils are also involved in charity events. This means that statutory requirements are met. The co-ordinator is currently deciding on a new format for next year that will provide pupils in Years 7 and 8 with more curriculum time.

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	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	2
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
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	4

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