

INSPECTION REPORT

Brewood C of E Middle School
Brewood

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number: 124452
Inspection Number: 184270

Headteacher: Mrs C A Robotham

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Cosway
2734

Dates of inspection: 18th - 22nd October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708255

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

© Crown Copyright 1999

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated. Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school.

Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the appropriate authority must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. Every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school should receive a free copy of the summary of the report within ten working days of receipt of the summary by the appropriate authority. A charge not exceeding the cost of supply may be made by the appropriate authority for any other copies of the report and/or its summary provided to any person who asks for one. The appropriate authority should make a copy of the report and the summary available for inspection by members of the public at such times and at such a place as may be reasonable. Any enquiries about this legislation should be addressed to the OFSTED Compliance Helpline
Tel. 0171 421 6567

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle Deemed Secondary
Type of control:	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	School Road Brewood Stafford ST19 9DS
Telephone number:	01902 580 266
Fax number:	01902 851 332
Appropriate authority:	Staffordshire County Council
Name of chair of governors:	Reverend T Green
Date of previous inspection:	March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P. Cosway (Registered Inspector)	Equal opportunities.	Attainment and progress; Teaching; Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development; Leadership and management.
D. Granville-Hastings (Lay Inspector)		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Support, guidance and pupils' welfare; Partnerships with parents and the community.
V. Brandford (Team Member)	Modern foreign languages.	
R. Brown (Team Member)	Science.	Efficiency of the school.
B. Fletcher (Team Member)	Music; Religious education.	
C. Humphreys (Team Member)	Design and technology; Information technology; Art.	
V. Jenkins (Team Member)	English;	Curriculum and assessment.
R. Parry (Team Member)	History; Geography; Special educational needs.	
G. Salter-Smith (Team Member)	Physical education.	
D. Tracey (Team Member)	Mathematics.	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.

The inspection contractor was:

*Westminster Education Consultants
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
London
SW11 3AD
0171 924 1093*

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints which are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well
Where the school has weaknesses
How the school has improved since the last inspection
Standards in subjects
Quality of teaching
Other aspects of the school
The parents' views of the school

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school 1-3
Key indicators 4

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress 5-22
Attitudes, behaviour and personal development 23-28
Attendance 29-30

Quality of education provided

Teaching 31-42
The curriculum and assessment 43-52
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 53-61
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare 62-67
Partnership with parents and the community 68-75

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management 76-83
Staffing, accommodation and learning resources 84-89
The efficiency of the school 90-97

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

English, mathematics and science

98-137

Other subjects or courses

138-203

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

204-206

Data and indicators

207

MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils are very well behaved, relate very well to each other and their teachers and have very positive attitudes to work. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are excellent.
- Pupils make good progress and attain above average standards overall.
- Attendance is very good.
- The ethos for learning in the school is very good.
- Teaching is good overall, with very good teaching in a fifth of lessons.
- There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development.
- Leadership and management are very good and the school gives good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. There is insufficient support for some pupils with learning difficulties.
- II. The curriculum time for pupils in Years 7 and 8 is below recommendations and this restricts the balance and breadth of the curriculum.

This is a good school, which has many very good features, and its strengths greatly outweigh its weaknesses. The areas for development that have been identified, will form the basis of the governors' action plan, a copy of which will be sent to every parent and carer.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has addressed all the key issues identified in the last inspection report and has made good progress. Two of the items that were key issues in the last report, the systems for monitoring and the quality of development planning, are now strengths of the school. It is very well placed to continue development in future, because of the effectiveness of the governors, headteacher and senior management team, the commitment of the whole staff and the good systems for monitoring the work of the school.

The last report was critical of the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are now strong and effective. Long term planning was criticised because it failed to identify priorities effectively. The new procedures for this are very effective and the school's 'millennium plan' is well produced and comprehensive. Standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have both improved as a result.

The planning to meet the learning needs of all pupils, especially the more able, was a key issue. Good progress has been made on this: an able pupil co-ordinator has been

appointed and the setting or banding of pupils has helped to ensure that pupils are set work at an appropriate level in some subjects, such as English and mathematics. There is still an issue, however, in a small minority of lessons with the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils and the pupils on the lower levels of the special educational needs register do not always get sufficient support to improve their basic skills. The school now has a clear statement of its aims. Assessment, which was criticised previously, is now firmly in place and generally contributes effectively to teachers' planning.

Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		<i>Ke</i>
			<i>y</i>	
			<i>Well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
			<i>Above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
			<i>Below average</i>	<i>D</i>
			<i>Well below average</i>	<i>E</i>
English	C	E		
Mathematics	B	D		
Science	C	E		

The 1998 results were unusually low for this school, affected by a below average cohort and the building work in the school that adversely affected accommodation and resourcing. Taking the last four years overall, National Curriculum test results have been consistently above the national average and are rising.

In the National Curriculum tests at the end of 1998, Year 6 pupils attained average results in English and science compared with the country as a whole. Their results were well below average compared with those from schools with similar intakes. The results in mathematics were above average, but below average compared with similar schools. The main reason why the school was underachieving compared to similar schools was the low proportion of its pupils who were reaching above average grades for their age, Levels 5 and 6.

The school recognised this as a problem and responded appropriately. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999, attainment in English and mathematics improved significantly. The proportion at Level 4 and above has risen in English from 64 to 76 per cent and in mathematics from 66 to 74 per cent. These are above the provisional average national figures of 70 per cent for English and 69 per cent for mathematics. In both subjects, the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Levels 5 and 6, also increased. In English the increase is from 7 per cent in 1998 to 25 per cent in 1999. In mathematics, the rise is from 21 per cent to 39 per cent. These results correspond much better with the average trend in attainment in the school over the last four years than do the results for 1998.

The finding of the inspection is that attainment is above average in the school at the end of Key Stage 2, in line with that indicated by the National Curriculum test results for 1999. At the end of Year 8, overall, pupils are attaining above the expectations for pupils of their age.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in	9 – 11 years	11 – 13 years
English	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good
Science	Good	Good
Information technology	Insufficient evidence	Very good
Religious education	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Good	Good

Teaching is good overall across the school, with much that is very good. Teaching is excellent in 2 per cent of lessons, very good in 19 per cent and good in 46 per cent. There is hardly any unsatisfactory teaching, just under 2 per cent. All teachers plan well, have very good control and management of their classes and have high expectations. Subject knowledge and expertise are generally very good, largely because of very good subject teaching from subject specialists. The teaching by specialists is often very good in information technology, design and technology and French. It was not possible to observe teaching in Key Stage 2 in information technology during the week of the inspection.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	The behaviour of pupils in class and around the school is very good. Pupils respond well to their teachers.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is above average and the level of unauthorised absences is well below average. Punctuality is good.
Ethos*	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to work. Relationships are very good throughout the school and expectations consistently high.
Leadership and management	Very good overall, with very good leadership from the headteacher and generally good management from the subject co-ordinators.
Curriculum	Satisfactory: the curriculum meets statutory requirements. It is planned well to enable pupils to progress in their learning and provides equality of opportunity. The total amount of weekly teaching time is below recommended guidelines.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, except in Key Stage 2. Those with full statements are supported well, but there is sometimes insufficient support for younger pupils with learning difficulties.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall: satisfactory for spiritual and cultural development and very good for moral and social development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good overall: the school is resourced well. The adequacy of teaching staff is very good and accommodation is good. Numbers of support staff are satisfactory.
Value for money	The school gives good value for money

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<p>The responses to the questionnaires were very positive. Almost all parents agree and around a quarter of the parents agree strongly that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> III. the school is approachable; IV. standards of work are high; V. there is good involvement of parents; VI. behaviour is good; VII. parents are well informed; VIII. their children like going to school; IX. the school promotes good values and attitudes; X. the homework the school sets is sufficient and useful. 	<p>The main points made by the very small number of parents who expressed a negative view on any point were that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> XI. almost 7 per cent of parents would like to see more progress; XII. 4 per cent did not have a clear view of the school's progress; XIII. 4 per cent of parents would like to see more opportunities for their children to take part in extra-curricular activities; XIV. 5 per cent of parents are not satisfied with the school's performance in some areas.

There were many written comments praising the work of the school.

The inspection team found that the parents' praise for the school is justified. The quality of information provided for parents is good overall and the school deals well with the few complaints it receives. The amount, quality and regularity of homework are strengths; the tasks are generally appropriate and extend learning opportunities for the pupils. There are ways in which parents could be more involved in the life of the school, however.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to maintain the standards already achieved and to continue to improve them, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

XV. ensure that pupils who enter the school with special educational needs, not yet deemed serious enough to be fully statemented, receive sufficient support until their learning difficulties are resolved. This will entail the provision of more learning support assistants in Year 5 classes;
(Paragraphs: 19, 41, 46, 52, 85, 155, 158, 161, 164)

XVI. increase the curriculum time, especially for pupils in Years 7 and 8. It is below the government's recommendations for pupils of this age and this is squeezing the amount of time available, especially for the non-core subjects. This is restricting the balance and breadth of the curriculum.
(Paragraphs: 15, 43, 44, 45, 133, 145, 191, 196)

There are other issues in the report that the governing body should include in their action plan, although they were not considered serious enough to be included as key issues. They are:

*.Improve the quality of written work across the school, by providing more opportunities for sustained original writing of different kinds, for a range of purposes and audiences, and sharing the best practice on the teaching and development of drafting skills;
(Paragraphs: 10, 103, 109, 179)

*. Extend the good work already done in the core subjects to improve the teaching of the higher-attaining pupils. In many lessons in the core subjects, higher-attaining pupils are challenged sufficiently by their work to make good progress. This is not true of all subjects, however, and the work set for them in mixed ability classes is sometimes too easy to extend their knowledge and skills. It is necessary for teachers in their planning to identify these pupils and to include more demanding tasks or extension opportunities for them
(Paragraphs: 21, 35, 46, 192)

*.Improve library provision and the use pupils make of the library. Although the library is well managed and an attractive learning area, the book stock is inadequate in quantity and quality for the size of the school and the ages of the pupils. The use of the library for almost all of the week as a teaching room makes it difficult for teachers and pupils to use it as a valuable resource for developing independent learning and research skills.
(Paragraphs: 94, 95, 137)

*.Develop further the opportunities for spiritual and cultural development, so that these areas are as strong as those for the moral and social development of pupils. The school needs to develop a greater awareness of multi-cultural issues, so that pupils are introduced to the richness and variety of cultures in modern society. Teachers need to plan more systematically for moments of spirituality in their teaching across the curriculum, creating time and opportunity for pupils to reflect and wonder.
(Paragraphs: 54, 60)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Brewood Middle School educates boys and girls from the ages of nine to thirteen. The pupils come from a range of first schools and overall are average in their attainment on entry to the middle school. It is about average in size for a middle school, with 427 pupils on roll. The large majority of the intake is white, which reflects the ethnic composition of the local area, but the school does have the advantage of a small number of pupils who represent the rich diversity of cultures that make up our society. The proportion of children who are eligible for free school meals is below average, at 7 per cent. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational need is below average, at 12.5 per cent. There are 25 pupils on Stages 3 to 5 of the special educational needs register.

2. The school is situated on an attractive site, near the centre of the village of Brewood, opposite the village church. The housing in the villages around the school is mixed. Some is rented, mainly from housing associations, but most houses are privately owned.

3. The school aims to provide a secure, happy and stimulating environment in which learning can flourish. It aims to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, to develop lively and enquiring minds, to challenge every child to succeed, to develop every pupil to his or her full potential, and to make them responsible members of a caring, ordered community. There is also a mission statement, which establishes the Christian values underlying the work of the school and the promotion of the spiritual development of the pupils, alongside strong links between home, school and parish. It has set itself the target of 84 per cent of pupils attaining at least Level 4 (the national expectation) in English at the end of Year 6 by the year 2000 and 76 per cent of pupils actually attained this level or above it in 1999. This is a realistic target, taking into account the proportion of pupils in the cohort with special educational needs.

4.Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2

for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	49	51	100

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils At NC Level 4 or above	Boys	29	37	34
	Girls	36	30	34
	Total	65	67	68
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	64	66	67
	National	65	59	69

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils At NC Level 4 or above	Boys	32	37	36
	Girls	37	31	39
	Total	69	68	75
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	68	67	74
	National	65	65	72

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised	School	4.7
Absence	National comparative data	6.1
Unauthorised	School	0.1
Absence	National comparative data	0.4

4.

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	1
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	21
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

4. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

5. Attainment on entry is close to the national average overall. The proportion of pupils on the school's roll with special educational needs is below average, though the numbers are rising gradually. There are 25 pupils on Stages 3 to 5 of the special educational needs register, which is close to average at six per cent of the total. In order to reach the levels of attainment that they do at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make sound progress overall, with much that is good. It is never unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in 45 per cent of their lessons. Attainment is in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in science. It is above average in English and mathematics.

6. Pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average at the end of their time in the school and they make good progress overall through Years 7 and 8. Progress is good overall across the curriculum, with satisfactory progress in 39 per cent of lessons, good progress in almost 52 per cent and very good progress in 9 per cent. Progress is unsatisfactory in less than one per cent of lessons. Progress in some subjects, especially design and technology, art and information technology, has been constrained by problems with new building and refurbishment, which has taken some equipment out of use. Progress over time, as a result, has not been as good as progress is currently, and with the new design and technology facilities about to be opened, there is evidence that progress in this subject will improve further as new facilities become available. There have also been constraints on progress in some subjects over time because of the limited time available to them in the curriculum. Progress in individual lessons in these subjects, physical education, for example, is higher than it is overall because not all skills are developed.

6. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests

7. Levels of attainment, measured by the results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, have been above the national average taking the last four years as a whole, but dipped in English and science to be in line with the average in 1998. This was a relatively weaker cohort and their education suffered some disruptions from major building work in the school. In English, 64 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or above, which was close to the national average of 65 per cent. The proportion that gained higher levels, however, was well below average, at 9 per cent as against 17 per cent nationally. These results were well below average compared with those from schools with a similar intake to the one at Brewood and were disappointing for the school. There was a similar picture in science. The proportion that gained a Level 4 or above, 67 per cent, was close to the national average of 69 per cent. Only 10 per cent, however, reached the higher levels, below the national average of 16 per cent. Again, performance overall was well

below that in similar schools. In mathematics, pupils attained better. The percentage reaching Level 4 or above, 66 per cent was above the national average. The proportion gaining higher grades, 21 per cent, was also above average. Again, however, these results were below average for similar schools.

8. Attainment rose in English and science in 1999, to levels close to or slightly above those reached in 1996 and 1997. The proportions gaining Level 4 were 76 per cent in English and 74 per cent in mathematics. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades rose significantly, to 25 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. This in part reflects the higher attainment of a more typical cohort, but also reflects the seriousness with which the school viewed the dip in performance and the measures it took to counter it. An able pupil co-ordinator has been appointed; an able pupils' policy has been written, and pupils' progress is now much more closely monitored and clear targets set.

9. Over the last three years up to 1998, the performance of both boys and girls has been above the average for boys and girls nationally. Taking all the core subjects together, the performance of boys has exceeded the national average for their age group by 0.26 of a level and is well above average. Girls' performance exceeded the average for their age group by 0.15 of a level and is above average. The finding of the inspection is that both boys and girls make good progress in the school and there is no significant difference in their attainment.

9. *Attainment and progress across the curriculum*

10. Pupils' attainment in **English** is above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 8. Pupils make good progress through both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 2, they are confident, fluent speakers and good listeners. They are reading at a standard above average for their age, but their writing skills are average. They write expressively for a range of purposes and in a range of styles, but have relatively few opportunities for sustained writing, or to develop their writing skills. Drafting skills are developed well in some classes, but not consistently across the school.

11. The **literacy** hour has been adapted and managed appropriately to meet the needs of the pupils and staff. Time in lessons other than English, such as history, is devoted to purposeful writing tasks, but there is insufficient time to produce written work of any length. Additional time has been given to reading elsewhere in the curriculum, and this is helping to raise attainment in literacy throughout the school.

12. Attainment in **mathematics** is above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 8. Numeracy skills are good at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have a good understanding of the language of mathematics and use it well. Their mental mathematics skills are good through the school. All pupils make good progress in mathematics, as a result of the pace of the lessons and the requirement that teachers place on them to think things out for themselves. Another important feature that helps pupils to make such good progress is the emphasis throughout the school, both in mathematics

lessons and across the curriculum, on the development of mental mathematics skills. Pupils make good progress in learning equations and how to use them, such as that for computing the volume of a cylinder.

13. In **science**, pupils' attainment is average at the end of Key Stage 2 and above expectations at the end of Year 8. There are strengths in all aspects of investigational science, fair testing, prediction and recording, and in scientific knowledge. There are no significant weaknesses, except that pupils have limited opportunities to develop information technology skills in science and to use them to enhance their understanding and performance. Pupils make good progress in lessons because of their good attitudes to learning, the good teaching and the quality of the provision within the school. Over time, their progress has been satisfactory, which reflects the improvements in the school's provision for science over the past year.

14. Attainment in **information technology** is above expectations at the end of Year 8. Pupils know how to use spreadsheets and use a range of hardware and software confidently and well to help them in their work across the curriculum. At the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is in line with expectations. They use information and communication technology well to organise and present their work and understand how to control equipment and use software programs. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, where the lessons are taken by their class teachers, and very good progress in Key Stage 3, where the lessons are taught by subject specialists, because of their good learning skills and very good, focused teaching. In **religious education**, pupils attain in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 2 and Year 8. Pupils know about the major religions of the world and the impact religious beliefs have on people's every day lives. They make satisfactory progress in both key stages in understanding themselves and their relationship with the society in which they live.

15. In **design and technology**, pupils attain in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 2, but their attainment is below expectations at the end of Year 8. Not all skills have been developed consistently and progressively across the school as a result of a lack of curriculum time and the temporary lack of specialist facilities. Attainment in designing is satisfactory, but making skills are underdeveloped.

16. Strengths in **history** are the knowledge and understanding of events and people from the past. In addition, pupils use and further develop their literacy skills well in finding information from a wide range of sources, including parish registers. Their attainment is in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and Year 8. Pupils make good progress. There are no weaknesses in **geography** and the pupils' knowledge of the local area and their abilities to identify the characteristics of a geographical area, such as that around Cairo, from a range of evidence sources, are good. They are well able to compare and contrast an area they know, such as Birmingham, with other parts of the world. Again, pupils make good progress.

17. Attainment in modern foreign languages is above expectations at the end of Key Stage

2 because of the good teaching of **French** to pupils in Years 5 and 6 and the specialist teaching and resources which the school provides, beyond those normally available to Key Stage 2 pupils. Attainment is above expectations at the end of Year 8 and progress is good for all pupils.

18. Attainment in **art** is in line with expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8. The ability of pupils to understand and appreciate the styles and techniques of major artists is satisfactory. Almost all pupils are able to adapt their own styles to reflect many of the qualities they recognise in the work of established artists. Almost all make sound progress, including the low and mid-attaining pupils. They learn to recognise and use a range of media and develop an artistic vocabulary. In **music**, pupils exceed the national expectations for pupils of their age at both key stages. Almost all pupils sing tunefully. There is some good work in composition in Year 6 and above. They listen well to a wide range of music. Overall, progress is good and pupils develop confidence in performance skills and their understanding of music. Strengths in attainment in **physical education** include games skills and gymnastics. Attainment is above expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and in line at the end of Year 8, although pupils continue to perform well in gymnastics. They have a good knowledge of technical language and use it well, but in Key Stage 3 their knowledge of health-related fitness is insecure. Progress is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3.

19. Pupils with statements of **special educational needs** make good progress overall, as a result of the effective provision for them. Those further down the register make unsatisfactory progress, however, because there is insufficient support for them, especially in Key Stage 2. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress.

19. *Progress*

20. The good progress in English, mathematics and science is the result of a number of factors, but chiefly the good teaching and the very good ethos for learning in the school. The work is planned very thoroughly in these subjects to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum. Teachers ensure in their planning that they are setting work that is appropriate for pupils of all abilities in their classes and the setting by ability in English and mathematics is effective in ensuring that all pupils work at an appropriate level. The provision for these subjects is good. Well-targeted professional development has ensured that teachers have good subject knowledge and expertise. As a result, they teach with a confidence and depth of understanding that instils similar confidence in their pupils, helping them to progress well in their learning. A relatively great amount of curriculum time is devoted to these subjects, which gives pupils more opportunities to consolidate and extend their learning. Over 50 per cent of curriculum time is devoted to English, mathematics and science.

21. Across the other subjects of the curriculum, progress is good or satisfactory, as detailed above. The ethos for learning is as good in these subjects as it is in English, mathematics and science, but there are a number of factors that impact adversely on progress. In some subjects, such as design and technology, the coverage of the principal aspects of the subject is uneven and the key skills are not developed consistently. The subject knowledge and expertise of some teachers is less strong when they are not teaching their specialist subject; a problem more marked in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3 because of the way teachers are deployed. Not all are confident, therefore, in extending the skills of the higher-attaining pupils. An important factor which occasionally restricts the progress of the higher attainers, in some lessons of English and physical education, for example, is the lack of extension opportunities in some teachers' planning to challenge the more able and take them further forward in their skills, knowledge and understanding.

21. *Improvement since the last report*

22. In the last report, it was found that standards in the school were good overall. Attainment in design and technology and religious education was below expectations, however, and though the pupils with special educational needs attained good standards of work, the most able pupils were under-achieving. Pupils' standards of writing and their numerical skills were sound, though the range of writing in science was criticised. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last report. Attainment is above average in most subjects by the end of Year 8 and pupils make good progress in most subjects. Around 94 per cent of parents who responded to the parent questionnaire are satisfied with the attainment and progress that their children achieve in the school. Attainment in numeracy is now above average. The school's new policies and strategies for improving the progress made by higher attaining pupils are beginning to be successful. As the school grows and becomes more popular, the proportion of pupils entering with special needs, especially in numeracy and literacy, is growing and the pupils without full statements in Key Stage 2 require additional support if they are to make satisfactory progress consistently.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

23. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are very good and a strength of the school. Over 98 per cent of parents are satisfied that the school achieves high standards of behaviour.

24. Attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils show interest in their work, sustain concentration and are willing to apply themselves to the tasks set. Pupils ask and answer questions readily, join in discussions and are enthusiastic in contributing during lessons. Most pupils are confident, good humoured and relaxed. They listen carefully and follow instructions promptly. Their written work is neat and well presented and pupils take pride in their finished work. They work well together in groups, discussing problems and arriving at joint decisions. They also work well independently, particularly in physical

education and history. They show a desire to improve their work by asking questions and checking their own work. In French, they correct themselves when speaking and in music pupils evaluate their work and performances quite critically. Throughout the school, posters remind and encourage pupils to work hard, to persevere and to try their best. A strong learning ethos pervades every classroom and corridor through attractive displays of pupils' work.

25. Behaviour in the school is very good. Good behaviour and achievement are rewarded through 'well done' stickers and certificates for younger pupils and by house points for all pupils. Pupils clearly understand and enjoy the system and weekly house point totals are greeted enthusiastically when announced in assemblies. All staff consistently apply the positive discipline policy and pupils are expected to meet high standards and expectations. Movement around the school is sensible, and pupils mix and socialise well together. Pupils report there is little bullying and that, when it arises, it is generally dealt with quickly and sensitively. Pupils have a sense of ownership of the school. There is very little litter, graffiti or vandalism and pupils have a strong loyalty towards the school. There have been no exclusions in recent times.

26. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils themselves, are of a high quality and create a supportive and caring atmosphere in which pupils feel secure and comfortable. Pupils are valued both as individuals and for their contribution to the daily life of school. They respect other people's feelings, values and beliefs; show enthusiastic support for each other and are accepting of personal weaknesses in others. All pupils welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively and do so well. Pupils with special educational needs are hard working, have positive attitudes to work and show the same high standards of good behaviour and co-operation as the rest of the children in the school.

27. Pupils' personal development is also very good. Pupils are extremely polite and interested in visitors. They offer help readily and without prompting. They are encouraged to take responsibilities in the classroom and the whole school. Each form has a captain and vice captain elected every term and Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to become prefects. They must apply for the position and demonstrate a good understanding of the qualities needed to be a prefect. Pupils take the role of prefect very seriously and play an important part in ensuring the school runs smoothly. The head boy and girl are selected after an interview process and act as ambassadors for the school. Pupils' sense of responsibility towards each other is strong, illustrated by the way in which the older pupils act as a source of help and assurance for younger pupils. All pupils have the chance to go on residential visits (Year 5 to Standon Bowers and Year 8 to France) where the emphasis is on teamwork and raising self-esteem and confidence, whilst linking directly with a school-based project. There are many visits and extra-curricular activities to support pupils' studies and broaden their experiences. Pupils are learning to organise their work through use of their personal organisers. They record and monitor their homework, and each week they identify something new they have learned and set themselves targets for the week to come.

28.The high standards reported in the last report have been sustained and improved.

Attendance

29.Attendance (95.3 per cent) at the school is very good and well above the national average. Authorised absences are few (4.7 per cent) and unauthorised absences extremely rare. The school actively promotes good attendance by informing parents of the importance of regular attendance and the positive effect this has on learning. Procedures are in place to identify patterns of non-attendance and the education welfare service is used when appropriate. Registers are completed accurately and attendance figures are reported via the prospectus and governors' annual report.

30.Punctuality is very good. Pupils are registered at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and lessons begin on time. Registration periods are used efficiently and create a purposeful start to the school day.

30. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

31.The school has overcome the weaknesses in teaching identified in the 1995 report. It is well placed to continue to improve in the future, because of the effectiveness of the leadership in the school, the quality of the professional development and development planning and the rigour and thoroughness of the monitoring of teaching and learning across the school. The quality of teaching has improved. In the last report it is stated that teaching was good overall, but there was unsatisfactory teaching in 15 per cent of lessons. In few lessons was teaching outstanding. Teaching is now satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. There is excellent teaching in 2 per cent of lessons overall and very good teaching in 19 per cent. Teaching is good in 43 per cent of lessons, with 34 per cent being sound. There is unsatisfactory teaching in only 2 per cent of lessons.

32.Looking at the two key stages separately, teaching is better overall in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 2. It is good in both key stages, however. It is the effectiveness of the specialist teaching and the increasingly strong relationships and ethos for learning that lead to the improvement as pupils get older.

33.There is no unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 3 and all the excellent teaching that was observed is in this key stage. Teaching is very good or excellent in 28 per cent of lessons, good in 40 per cent and sound in 32 per cent. In Key Stage 2 teaching is good in almost 50 per cent of lessons, very good in 13 per cent and satisfactory in almost 35 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in 4 per cent of lessons. In the very few lessons seen that were unsatisfactory, the teachers did not enable the pupils to make progress with their learning.

Although the lessons were planned in detail and resourced well, the teachers did not pitch the lesson at the correct level for the pupils. They did not explain the tasks well, and so the aim of the lesson had to be modified or the purpose of the lesson explained again, well into the lesson time.

34. Overall, there are many strengths in teaching. Teachers almost always have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last report, when subject knowledge was insecure in mathematics, art, design and technology, geography, history and religious education. All teachers now have at least sound knowledge of the subjects they teach. Where there is good understanding, as in information technology and mathematics, this is a strength and gives the teachers the confidence to extend and challenge the pupils. There are good examples of teachers using specialist expertise well. In an excellent lesson on 'Macbeth' with a middle set in Year 8, for example, the teacher used her knowledge and expertise well to enthral the class, to explain the nuances of the scene very effectively, and to help them to appreciate the drama and the poetry.

35. It is a strong feature of teaching throughout the school that lessons are well-prepared and well-planned. As a result, no time is wasted because all resources are readily to hand, and this helps to ensure that pupils make good progress. Since the last report, effective work has been done on teaching and learning styles, and this has resulted in a consistency of approach across the school which has contributed to the overall improvement in teaching quality throughout the school and the virtual elimination of unsatisfactory teaching. Nowhere is this more evident than in the consistently good quality of lesson planning. All teachers set out their short-term learning objectives on the board before the lesson begins. These are explained and discussed with the pupils at the beginning of every lesson, so that ownership of them is shared and expectations are made clear. During the lesson, the teaching strategies adopted by the teachers relate closely to the learning objectives, and at the end, in valuable plenary sessions, teachers discuss with pupils what they have learnt, returning to the objectives written on the board at the start. The teaching methods employed are varied and matched well both to the needs of the pupils and to the anticipated outcomes of the lessons. Whole-class teaching, small group work, individual research and practical work are arranged so that the pupils can be best enabled to learn and apply the skills they need to achieve the objectives set by the teachers. In the best lessons, teachers' high expectations are matched to tasks and teaching strategies that challenge all pupils appropriately. In about ten per cent of lessons, however, this aspect of planning is insufficiently detailed. Not all teachers in mixed-ability lessons plan a range of tasks to match the different levels of attainment and varied needs of all the pupils. Teachers in general use time and resources effectively, begin lessons on time and sustain a brisk pace.

36. All teachers manage and control their classes well. They achieve at least sound and normally good standards of discipline. This ensures a very good ethos for learning in almost all classes. Teachers are not distracted from their task by the need to correct disruptive pupils and the classrooms are calm and quiet places where pupils can

concentrate and learn. The very good learning environment that the teachers create and sustain is a significant factor in the school's success. Teachers motivate pupils to learn, and pupils make good progress because they are enthusiastic and interested.

37. Work is marked and helpful comments are often given, either in writing or orally, directly to the pupil. This enables the pupils to learn from their mistakes and improve. Homework is provided regularly across the school and it enhances the learning opportunities available in class, helping pupils to improve and extend their work. Of the many parents who responded to the questionnaire, a very high proportion, 90 per cent, are satisfied with the work the school sets for their children to do at home.

38. Teaching is good in both key stages in **mathematics, science, music, French, history and geography**. Teaching in music is good with many very good features. Lessons are well planned and taught sequentially so that skills and knowledge are developed progressively. In science, teaching is good at Key Stage 2 even though it is not all taught by specialists, because of high expectations and a good grounding for pupils in scientific techniques and the correct procedures for working in science laboratories. In Key Stage 3, all science teaching is by specialist teachers. They have very good knowledge of the subject and their very well planned lessons and effective use of homework ensure that pupils make good progress. There is no unsatisfactory teaching of either history or geography and teaching is good overall in both. Again, the structure of lessons is good, expectations are generally high, and teachers make very effective use of sharply focused questions to assess pupils' understanding and extend their thinking. The good teaching in mathematics is characterised by very good subject knowledge, very good management of pupils and good relationships that motivate pupils to learn. In French lessons, teachers succeed in motivating and interesting the pupils and have consistently high expectations.

39. In **physical education**, teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Teachers make good use of demonstrations to set high expectations in both key stages and insist on good quality performances from all pupils. They encourage pupils to evaluate their own performance and try to improve. The range of approaches they use to teach skills is the main difference between the two key stages: the range is wider and used more effectively in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Teaching in **religious education** is satisfactory in both key stages. Lessons are planned and managed well. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to study and compare the practices and beliefs of major religions. In **art** and in **English**, teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3. At the earlier key stage in art, lessons are planned well and teachers make good use of questioning to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. The pace of work is slower than in Key Stage 3 and the teaching less rigorous. Resources are appropriate, but not always sufficient in Key Stage 2. In English, teachers plan interesting tasks for the literacy hour and their teaching is lively with good use of questioning. Time is not always managed well, with too little time for the group activities in some classes. There are no such problems in Key Stage 3, where the teaching of literature is a particular strength.

40. In **design and technology**, teaching is good in Key Stage 2 and very good in Key

Stage 3. The teaching to the younger pupils is characterised by clear explanations. Teachers are adept at helping pupils to know what they have to do raise the standard of their work. They cope very well with the safe management of pupils in a temporary teaching area that is more cramped than is really appropriate for a practical subject. In the later key stage, teaching is very good because of teachers' good, detailed planning, clear teaching objectives and their very good use of assessment. They have very good knowledge of the individual strengths and weaknesses of pupils and give them appropriate help and guidance. No teaching was seen of **information technology** to Key Stage 2 pupils, but teaching in Key Stage 3 is very good overall. The subject knowledge and expertise of the teachers are excellent. Questioning is used very effectively to reinforce and clarify the teaching points being made, and teachers are particularly skilful at motivating pupils by exciting their interest. In two lessons, the quality of teaching was judged to be excellent.

41. The teaching of special educational needs is good to pupils on Stages 3 to 5 of the special needs register. It is planned to help pupils to meet the targets they have been set, and is sensitive and responsive to their needs. Support assistants work with individuals or small groups and give effective help in class. There is, however, insufficient support available for pupils on the lower stages of the register and, as a result of this, they do not always make satisfactory progress. There are no learning support assistants to help the growing number of pupils in Year 5 who enter the school with below average reading ages. The individual education plans are too general and do not provide enough specific information to help class teachers plan effectively to meet these pupils' needs.

42. Overall, the good quality of teaching, so consistent across the school, is a significant strength and a key factor in the good progress that almost all pupils make.

The curriculum and assessment

43. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. At the time of the last inspection, it was judged to be broad and to meet national requirements. This remains so, although the balance has been affected by the introduction of the literacy and numeracy hours. The governing body has endorsed the local education authority's curriculum statement, but has not considered the balance of the curriculum as a whole. There is no overarching philosophy to guide decisions about subjects taught and the time allocated to them. At present, in response to government guidelines, Key Stage 2 pupils spend over half the week studying English and mathematics. The way the school has structured its timetable has led to serious time restraints in the foundation subjects, particularly in the creative subjects such as art, design and technology and dance. Very little drama is taught, despite its place in the English statutory curriculum, but French is taught to all pupils in Key Stage 2 and this is a broadening of the curriculum. Positive aspects of the curriculum include the provision for personal development and religious education. A strong personal and social education programme is taught at both key stages, and incorporates both sex,

health and drugs education. The Agreed Syllabus for religious education is covered thoroughly in both key stages.

44. In Key Stage 3, English and mathematics continue to receive generous time allocations, above those in most secondary schools. Science has less time than the other two core subjects, although the time available is used well. The balance of the art and physical education programmes has been affected adversely, however, and important aspects are not taught. All these issues are exacerbated by the fact that the school teaches pupils for less than the recommended time each week. In Key Stage 3, the teaching week is short by over an hour. The new National Curriculum will provide an ideal time for re-evaluation of the whole programme.

45. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to standards of attainment in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and religious education at both key stages because of the time devoted to these subjects, but standards in some subjects of the National Curriculum, principally physical education and art, are suffering. On the positive side, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in music and sport, which enriches the curriculum. All but two of the 200 parents who replied to the questionnaire are satisfied that the school encourages children to become involved in more than just their daily lessons.

46. Overall, all pupils have equal access to the curriculum. No pupils are disadvantaged from the National Curriculum. Pupils with special needs are well supported when they have a full statement and receive additional adult support either in lessons or by limited withdrawal from lessons. However, those at the earlier stages of the special educational needs register do not have adequate help from qualified staff to improve their standards of literacy. Although Individual Education Plans are available, produced by the co-ordinator for special educational needs, they are not used in planning because teachers do not have separate copies for the pupils they teach and the plans are not always specific enough about the learning needs of the pupils. As a result of this lack of guidance and the shortage of learning assistants to give individual help, the support the pupils with special educational needs in Year 5 receive to help them to access the curriculum is inadequate. The setting arrangements in English and mathematics were criticised in the last inspection but these no longer cause problems and pupils are making good progress. The highest-attaining pupils do not always receive enough challenge, and need more stimulating tasks in some English lessons and in some mixed ability lessons across the curriculum.

47. The new literacy and numeracy schemes are planned to ensure pupils progress at a steady rate. In most other subjects, careful planning ensures that there are planned opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Across the curriculum as a whole, there is good overall subject planning to ensure that each cohort of pupils makes progress in learning from year to year and that the development of knowledge and skills is continuous. Overall, the curriculum prepares pupils for the next

stage of their education satisfactorily.

48. Assessment was criticised in the last report for its lack of focus. Marking was inconsistent with limited guidance to pupils on how to improve. There was little data analysis and the use of statement banks for report writing was considered unsuccessful.

49. There has been much progress, the most significant development being the introduction and use of a wide range of sophisticated performance data, using information from standardised tests. All teachers have this information and most use it well. In English, it is used more to determine ability sets than to plan the curriculum and the use of on-going assessment is a weakness. Marking has improved in most subjects and teachers do now follow the whole-school system, which aims at positive statements and encouragement. In some subjects, such as English, pupils are not always given sufficient guidance about the standard of their work and how to improve it. In physical education the results of assessment are not always shared with pupils, nor is the information gained used to inform curriculum planning. There is good practice in mathematics, where effective use of the information gained from regular and accurate assessment of pupils' attainment is used to ensure that pupils are placed in the correct set for mathematics and that the work is correctly targeted at their needs.

50. Pupils' confidential files do not contain up-to-date information about progress. Such data is kept elsewhere and the files of pupils with special educational needs are kept elsewhere. This is not helpful in gaining an all-round picture of a pupil's attainment and progress. The school works hard to ensure good information is passed on to the next schools, but make insufficient use of that from the first schools, other than test data.

51. Annual reports to parents have been changed following consultation with them. They are now much briefer, and simpler, and they contain pupils' self-assessments; a practice carried on from the weekly task entered in their excellent organisers. Questionnaires show strong parental approval. Interim reports and pupils' termly records indicate their effort, homework and organisation but omit attainment information, although targets are set. Parents receive helpful guidance on the end of key stage National Curriculum tests to help them prepare their children; they are also told predicted grades and given the final ones subsequently.

52. Subject co-ordinators are beginning to scrutinise pupils' books and observe one another's teaching. They have identified able pupils and planned specific activities for them. This is having a positive effect on pupils' progress in many subjects, although this is not consistent across the whole curriculum and similar attention is not yet given to the lower attaining pupils.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

53. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with many areas of strength. The school has made a clear commitment to developing the knowledge and understanding necessary for spiritual and moral development through all the subjects of the curriculum. This is a similar finding to that in the last report. In the other aspects there is evidence of improvement since the last report, especially in the provision for multi-cultural education through art and dance, though it is still developed insufficiently in other areas of the curriculum.

54. The school's provision for spiritual development is satisfactory, with some areas of strength. There are good examples of teaching to develop pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge in personal and social education lessons, especially in religious education. The school complies with the statutory requirement to hold an act of collective worship for all every day and this is an important part of the daily life of the pupils and members of staff. It successfully promotes insights into values and beliefs and spiritual awareness. All assemblies provide good opportunities for reflection on moral or spiritual issues. One of the aims of the school is to develop to the full the spiritual potential of every child and its mission statement emphasises Christian values, together with the need to develop an appreciation and respect for other world religions. The main vehicle for this is religious education and the programme for religious education follows the locally agreed syllabus. The study of major religions has been extended this year to include organised visits to a mosque and a gurdwara. There are policy statements in department files on the importance of spiritual development, but this is not always evident in practice and teachers do not plan sufficiently for reflection and moments of spirituality across the curriculum.

55. The school's provision for moral development is very good. The school has a statement of values, which includes taking personal responsibility for actions and the creation of an ordered community. The moral code within the school is strongly in place. There is an acceptance of the need for honesty and a refusal to tolerate anti-social behaviour, both being deeply entrenched in the culture of the school. Many older pupils become prefects and they then model good behaviour and strong moral attitudes to the younger pupils. The younger pupils seek to emulate them so that they in turn can become prefects. Pupils are involved in the discussion of moral issues in many lessons. They study human relationships and ethics in personal and social education, environmental issues in science, and moral responsibility in religious education. They learn the importance of following rules and fair play in physical education. Moral development is also fostered through the process of forming rules. When, for example, the home/school contract was being drawn up, it was discussed by governors, parents and the pupils before it was finalised. Giving pupils real responsibility in this way has proved to be a very effective method for developing children's understanding of the need for a moral code.

56. Pupils not only understand the moral code that is the basis for behaviour in the school, but also see it consistently applied and reinforced by all adults. Except on very rare occasions, such as when a whole class is 'punished' for the misbehaviour of a few, they recognise that the rules are interpreted fairly and in the same way by all. As a result they feel happy and secure in their school and they learn to recognise the value of everyone operating within an agreed code.

57. The school's provision for social development is very good. There are many good opportunities for pupils to take on roles of responsibility as prefects and as form captains. The form captains, a boy and girl for every form, change every term so that as many pupils as possible can experience the role. Through their prefects and form representatives, pupils can and do challenge decisions that they do not understand, and make suggestions

about the way their school operates. As a direct result of this, a number of recent changes have been made, including the provision of picnic benches outside because they had nowhere to sit, and a change in the rule on girls' uniform so that girls can wear trousers if they wish to do so. There is strong involvement in the community. Pupils take responsibility for senior citizens, who are invited to lunch weekly. They are greeted by pupils and cared for by them in a way that very successfully nurtures social awareness and social development. The school band plays at the switching on of the Christmas lights in neighbouring villages, and the school choir regularly visits and entertains the elderly. Pupils welcome visitors to the school and take them, including inspectors, on tours of the school.

58. Many subjects of the curriculum support pupils well in the development of their social skills. In physical education, pupils are encouraged to support and relate to each other. Friendship groups are established to support skill development and to help pupils to evaluate their own and other's performances. In English, science and music, amongst others, collaborative working supports pupils' developing social skills. Small group work to help to develop social skills is a regular part of every teacher's planning.

59. The school encourages pupils to extend their social experiences through a range of opportunities. They are given the autonomy to follow up their own interests and concerns, which has led to initiatives being taken to raise funds for a large range of charities. The ideas come from the pupils themselves and they are given the freedom to develop them. Similarly, they have worked with the community police to develop good relations and trust with the elderly in the local area. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities and residential visits, which contribute to the social development of pupils, including trips abroad, and the funds from the school's charitable foundation are used well to ensure that these opportunities are available to all.

60. The school's provision for cultural development is satisfactory, with good practice in some areas. Music makes a significant contribution through the study of music from a range of cultures. Musicians come into the school to interest and involve the pupils in performance, including the drummer from a leading rock band and annual performances by a military band. Pupils respond well and benefit significantly from opportunities such as these. Work in English introduces pupils successfully to significant works of English literature, but from a restricted range of cultures. Work in art has been handicapped temporarily by restricted facilities and difficult access to resources, but a good range of European artists is studied. There is a good programme of visits to museums and art galleries, along with regular visits into school by drama companies. The provision for the development of cultural awareness is good overall for most aspects of Western European culture, but the school is not yet developing a full awareness and appreciation of the rich range of cultures that pupils will experience in the country as a whole.

61. There has been good progress since the last inspection. Despite some remaining areas for improvement in the provision for the spiritual and cultural development of pupils, the provision is better than was reported in the last inspection. More than 95 per cent of parents are satisfied that the values and attitudes that the school promotes are having a positive effect on their children. The provision for the social and moral development of pupils has improved from good to very good.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

62. The school provides a very good level of support and guidance for its pupils that is appreciated by pupils and parents. It is a strength of the school.

63. The school is a caring place where pupils feel secure and valued. Staff and pupils work well together both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers have an in-depth knowledge of all their pupils. They are interested in and responsive to their needs, which makes pupils confident and able to cope with every-day school life. Pupils are happy and enjoy being at school. There are good arrangements in place to facilitate the transfer of pupils from their previous school to Brewood and on, eventually, to their senior school. Almost all parents report that their children enjoy school.

64. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are good. Subject teachers regularly assess pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils receive grades each half term for effort, homework and attitudes towards learning, and they record these in their organisers. Each week, pupils identify something new that they have learned and set themselves a target for the following week. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented a new personal, social and health education programme. Form tutors and pupils have one lesson a week together. They follow a programme of topics that includes relationships, feelings, health and drugs awareness. These lessons provide valuable time for tutors and pupils to develop a good relationship. This time is also used very effectively by form tutors to monitor each and every pupil, in order to ensure that they are happy and settled.

65. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are excellent. The school successfully promotes self-discipline through the code of conduct, the consistently high expectations of all staff, and the effective role models in school, supplied by adults and the older pupils. The moral code of the school encompasses concern for others, self-respect, honesty and fairness. As a result, behaviour is very good and pupils are tolerant and respectful of others' feelings and property. Pupils report that there are hardly instances of bullying and, when they occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff.

66.Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Certificates for 100 per cent attendance are presented to classes on a weekly basis and are highly prized. Pupils who achieve 100 per cent attendance over the whole year are also rewarded. Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance through letters and are urged not to take pupils out of school for holidays. Form tutors monitor attendance closely and identify problems quickly. An overview of the performance of the whole school is obtained through half-termly checks.

67.There is an effective child protection policy. The designated officer has attended relevant training and all members of staff are made aware of the procedures and their responsibilities. Good use is made of outside agencies and lines of communication are clear. The personal and social education programme is well structured and effectively delivered. A health and safety policy provides guidance on the respective roles and responsibilities of staff and the school is beginning to carry out systematic risk assessments of the site and activities. Safe practice is stressed to pupils in practical lessons, particularly in science and design and technology. There is a qualified first-aider on site and medical supplies are adequate. Accidents and illness are dealt with effectively and recorded, and regular fire drills take place. The general condition of the school premises and site is very good and the accommodation overall provides a clean and safe environment that is conducive to learning.

Partnership with parents and the community

68.The partnership with parents and the community is good.

69.Parents are very positive about the school. They find the staff approachable, friendly and welcoming. They feel they can discuss problems with the school easily and that the school's values have a positive effect on their children.

70.Parents receive good information about school life through the prospectus, the annual report from governors, newsletters and letters home. Links have been established with the local newspapers to ensure that the achievements of pupils receive the recognition they deserve. The many attractive displays around the school give parents and visitors an indication of what is happening in school and what pupils can do.

71.Formal reporting to parents is through two parents' evenings, an interim report and full written report each year. The interim report is issued before the parents' evening in the spring term. It gives teachers' assessments of how pupils are performing in relation to national averages. The full written report has been amended twice recently after consultation with parents and is of good quality. The reports comment on pupils' behaviour, organisation, punctuality and community effort. Pupils comment on what they are proud of, the highlight of their year, how they can improve and what they have been involved in over the year. Subject reports indicate whether pupils are in line, above or below national expectations. Comments are individualised rather than general and usually

indicate areas of strengths and targets for improvement. Parents say that they are happy with the level of information now contained in the reports. Pupils' half-termly grades indicating effort, homework and attitude are recorded in the organisers for parents to see. However, parents feel they would like more information on the curriculum and the current new initiatives in schools.

72.The school is keen to encourage parents to take an active part in their child's education. Parents' views were sought when drawing up the home-school agreement. Parents were asked to comment on the draft version, which was then amended to include many of their suggestions. Parents have been asked to complete questionnaires after meetings to give the school information on what has been useful and valuable, and how things may be changed. Parents like the personal organisers that pupils use. These are well organised and useful, helping pupils to organise themselves and their time and promoting home/school links that benefit progress. The organisers contain notes encouraging parents to check the organisers regularly, and to discuss and be involved in pupils' work. Some parents use the organisers as a means of useful communication with teachers. Parents' help is sought in the classroom, around school and on the various trips and visits. Family and friends always enthusiastically support concerts, events and competitions.

73.Links with the other schools in the area are good. Transfer arrangements for pupils coming from the first schools and going to the high school are good. Staff and pupils from all the schools work well together to ensure that pupils are confident and well-prepared for their next school. Subject staff liaise closely with each other to ensure that provision across key stages is continuous. For example, Year 8 pupils begin a topic during their induction day at the high school. They continue the topic at their middle school and take this work to complete at the high school.

74.Links with business and commerce were reported as limited in the last inspection. Since then, the school has appointed a community co-ordinator who has established a policy, undertaken an audit of the current community work and developed links with local initiatives, such as the Staffordshire Partnership. Whilst the business and commerce links are still limited and their effects on the attainment and personal development of pupils is limited, there is now a clear structure in place on which to build those links in the very near future.

75.The school is in the heart of the village and uses its surroundings and many friends to good advantage. There is a close relationship with the local church. Local vicars often take assemblies in school and the village church is used for special services to celebrate Christmas, Harvest Festival and school events. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the village and are keen to help in keeping it tidy. Senior citizens have lunch in the school once a week, during which pupils look after them. A variety of local services, such as the police and medical services, are invited into personal and social education lessons and to take assemblies. There are numerous visits throughout the year to farms,

museums, galleries and theatres to support lessons. Pupils are involved in many charity fund-raising events and raise money for local, national and international charities. Most of the ideas come from the pupils themselves, they have a good awareness of the misfortunes of others and a genuine desire to help.

75. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

76. In the last report, it was stated that the school did not have clear aims to guide its work and development. There were problems with the full implementation of policies at the time of the last inspection, partly because the school had just been amalgamated onto a single site. The review and monitoring of teaching and the curriculum was unsatisfactory. There has been significant improvement in all these areas.

77. The quality of leadership is very good in the school overall, with strong and very effective leadership from the headteacher, ably supported by the senior management team. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the work of the school. She has demonstrated a direct and sustained concern for the improvement of quality and standards and has a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve. In the two years since her appointment, she has identified appropriate areas for development and carried them through rigorously and successfully, including the close monitoring of teaching and learning and the raising of expectations of pupils, parents and teachers. The senior management team has been enlarged in order to improve communication with the rest of the staff and increase their involvement in the decision making process. Further involvement comes through the open invitation to teachers to join working groups, some of which have decision-making powers through staff meetings. There are working groups on, for example, the provision for able pupils and the revision of reports. There is a strong sense of commitment to the teachers and the non-teaching staff from the senior management team, and this is reciprocated in the high regard that is evident in the staff as a whole for the headteacher and senior team.

78. Development planning is good and detailed, and has identified the correct priorities for the school. The governors and teachers were involved in the preparation of the 'millennium plan', which represents a great improvement on the long-term planning in the school at the time of the last report. They have made good progress in the implementation of the school's development plan and have attained many of their management targets. One of the targets is the improvement of teaching and learning strategies and this is a good example of how the policies of the school are now implemented successfully. There is now a clear teaching style that all teachers adopt, especially in their management of pupils, the sharing of aims and the structure of their lessons. This is a direct result of well planned and targeted professional development arising from shared perceptions of appropriate priorities and the successful implementation of the school development plan.

79. There are very good systems in place for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum development. These are rigorous and effective. They include regular observations of teachers by the headteacher. There is useful and swift feedback to the teachers concerned. This has been a part of the appraisal process and the focus has followed the school development plan priority of improving teaching and learning strategies. Pupils are asked regularly about the quality of education they are receiving and this provides very useful evidence on the success of lessons and courses. The emphasis has been on spreading good practice, and trying and testing old and new approaches to teaching and learning. Subject leaders monitor work in their subject areas and have regular opportunities to observe their colleagues teach and to team-teach with them to share skills. They also scan a sample of exercise books termly and write a report on their findings for the senior management team. Results of standardised tests are monitored and analysed carefully to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the results of this scrutiny are fed back to teachers. There is evidence that the cumulative effect of the process is an overall improvement in the quality and consistency of teaching and an increase in overall levels of attainment.

80. Governors are supportive, know the school well and give readily of their time for the benefit of the school. They liaise effectively with the senior management team of the school and have, over recent years, come to an understanding of the complexity of the role and responsibilities. They now participate in the setting of the school development plan as well as the budget and seek to link the two effectively. The finance committee helps to monitor the budget and they have begun to monitor the effectiveness of major budget decisions. Some of the governors have specific strengths and skills to bring to their work. Overall the governors fulfil their role well, helping the senior management team in finding a strategic view of the school's future development and acting as a critical friend. Not all their visits to the school are sufficiently focused and in order to monitor the curriculum effectively they need to plan and implement a more systematic monitoring process.

81. Subject leaders and year heads give effective leadership, capably directing the work of teachers in their charge. Policies and schemes of work provide generally good guidance for teaching. The organisation and administration of departments and year teams are generally areas of strength and help to ensure that the work of the school runs smoothly.

82. The management of provision for special educational needs is sound overall. The special educational needs policy meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. The register of special educational needs is accurate and the records of identified pupils are well kept. Statutory requirements for the statemented pupils are fully met.

83. The school complies with all statutory requirements. Overall, the very good leadership and management of the school, along with very effective monitoring systems and very effective planning, have helped to create and sustain a very good ethos for learning with a strong emphasis on high expectations and high standards and ensure that the school is well placed to continue to improve.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

84. The number, qualifications and experience of teaching staff are very well matched to the needs of the curriculum. Deficiencies in subject expertise identified in the previous inspection report have been overcome by the school's policy to appoint only specialist staff at Key Stage 3, who then teach their subject at Key Stage 2 as far as possible. The subject co-ordinators give good support to non-specialist teachers in Key Stage 2.

85. The number of support staff in the school is satisfactory, although the provision of special educational needs support staff for pupils on the lower stages of the register of special educational need is low.

86. The arrangements for the professional development of staff are good. These arrangements are linked to the school's development plan. Funds from the delegated budget have boosted provision for in-service training in the present year. The subject co-ordinators highlight staff training needs; priorities are linked to the departmental development plans and the process is co-ordinated well by the deputy head. A mechanism is in place to provide assistance with the funding of further professional development of individual teachers. Improving and up-dating subject knowledge and expertise, particularly for subject co-ordinators, has been targeted as the main aspect for this additional training.

87. The head teacher has appraised all staff in the school in the last school year. The appraisal process has focused on classroom teaching and professional development. and has been successful in raising standards. An effective induction policy is in place both for newly qualified teachers and for other new teachers.

88. Overall the standard of accommodation is good. A recent capital building programme has resulted in a range of modern, well-serviced classrooms. Specialist accommodation has been improved. This includes an extra science laboratory, improved information technology facilities and science preparation area. A design and technology room will become available in the near future. There are good outdoor facilities. The accommodation overall is well maintained. The school provides a stimulating learning environment, in spite of the restrictions imposed on development by part of the school being a listed building. Generally, the good quality of the accommodation is having a

positive effect on standards in the school, except where the building programme is behind schedule. This leads to cramped conditions in some areas, such as art, and difficulty of access to equipment in design and technology because electricity had not yet been connected, at the time of the inspection, to the new technology room.

89. The school is well resourced. The allocation for resources in the school's budget has doubled in the present year. The school has targeted funds at providing high quality resources for the departments. A development fund for innovation in the curriculum is available, for which departments can bid for additional resources. Implementation of national numeracy and literacy strategies has been a recent priority. They have been well resourced and this is having a positive effect on standards. Resources are allocated fairly to departments by means of formula-led capitation. However at the present time the library is under-resourced in terms of both the number and quality of books available to pupils.

The efficiency of the school

90. The previous inspection in 1995 found that the school was generally using its resources efficiently. However, that report identified some weaknesses; in particular, it drew attention to insufficient detail in school development planning and the relative lack of procedures that would enable the school to monitor and evaluate its own effectiveness. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully addressed these issues.

91. School development planning now more clearly relates expenditure to improving outcomes, especially in terms of educational standards. Expenditure related to the plans is clearly indicated and focused well on providing the resources needed to improve specific aspects of teaching and learning. Clear procedures for monitoring and evaluating outcomes are included in the most recent plan and are now beginning to be implemented.

92. Funding is fairly typical for a school of this type, although below the levels typical in full secondary schools. Until recently, the proportion of the budget spent on learning resources has been low compared with other similar schools. However, through prudent financial planning and management, the school has recently increased significantly the amount it is spending on materials to support pupils' learning.

93. The governing body is clear about priorities and ensures that the school has suitable strategies for managing expenditure. The governors' finance sub-committee contributes to effective oversight of budgetary matters. The sub-committee has a clear remit and provides information to the full governing body, effectively helping governors to fulfil their strategic responsibilities for planning and the use of resources.

94. Immediately after the previous inspection, difficulties in managing the overall budget led to reductions in the allocations of funds to subjects. This situation has now been reversed and a better balance in funding the curriculum has been achieved. The new

system is well understood by the teachers responsible for leading in different areas of the curriculum. It is an efficient and effective process, based on a combination of formula funding and departmental bids related to specific needs. Resulting allocations appropriately reflect changing needs and the emphasis is clearly on areas indicated in the recent 'millennium plan'. The proportion allocated for learning resources is now more than double the previous amount. However, the amount spent on securing and maintaining a suitable balance of library books is comparatively low and a constraint on learning in some subjects.

95. The school generally makes good use of its accommodation, except that the use of the library as a teaching room restricts access and constrains pupils' research using reference books. Good use is made of staff expertise and teaching staff are generally deployed to maximum effect, for example in the use of specialist teachers for science, French and physical education. There is also efficient deployment of the staff supporting pupils with statements of special educational needs. The allocated funding is used effectively, but the school will need to increase the funding if the needs of all pupils are to be met effectively.

96. Routine administration is carried out well and day to day organisation is good. The school uses an appropriate range of procedures and systems to ensure very effective financial administration and control. The school operates within its budget and the headteacher works closely with the school administrator, using a computerised financial management system to monitor expenditure. The most recent audit of the school (1997) made a small number of recommendations for improvements. Most of these have been implemented very suitably, with one minor matter outstanding.

97. Financial resources are generally well used. Although the school supplements some aspects of its work with funds from a charitable foundation, the comparatively low levels of spending in the basic budget are used to good effect. In particular, many pupils make good progress, achieve standards that are in line with or higher than the expectation for their ages, and have very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development. The quality of education the school provides is good overall, with many very good features. Overall, the school is run very efficiently and provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

97. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

98. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was in line with the national average in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests. In 1996 and 1997, results rose, but in 1998, although results still matched national ones, they fell well below those of similar schools. The 1999 results show a significant improvement on 1998, particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels. Boys attain above national levels, although well below those of the girls in the school overall. The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above average overall. Attainment is higher in speaking, listening and reading, all of which are above average, than in writing, where it is average.

99. In Key Stage 3, especially in Year 8, attainment is above the levels expected for pupils of this age in speaking and listening, reading and in writing. The work becomes increasingly demanding and the excellent 'Macbeth' unit challenges and stimulates pupils.

100. At the end of both key stages, pupils are lively, confident speakers and listen attentively to teachers and their peers. They respond enthusiastically to questions and seek clarification readily. In group work, they discuss sensibly and articulately, listening to their teachers or their friends carefully and treating the views and opinions of others with respect. Many, especially at the end of Year 8, read aloud well and with expression, using their voices skilfully for pupils of their age to attract and hold the attention of the listener. Year 5 pupils enjoyed performing 'The Owl and the Pussycat', and the way they spoke the lines conveyed a feeling of humour and a sense of rhythm. Year 8 pupils, including those in lower sets, performed Macbeth's 'Is this a dagger?' speech with conviction. Pupils are not taught drama as a separate discipline and therefore make limited progress in developing skills of improvisation, role-play, movement and voice projection. They are offered opportunities to enter public speaking examinations, however, and do so successfully. Most pupils can speak well in both formal and informal situations at the end of Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 8 pupils can speak confidently, articulately and in appropriate registers in a wide range of situations. They are accustomed to being responsible for meeting and accompanying adult visitors to the school, for example, and do so with speaking and listening skills that are mature and above average for their age.

101. Most pupils read at a level appropriate to their age on entry. At the end of Key Stage 2, reading levels are generally above average, as they are by the end of Year 8, when the vast majority of pupils can read independently and well. Most pupils towards the end of Key Stage 2 have favourite books and authors, and they read widely because they are encouraged to try a wide range of different types of books by their teachers. They can locate information effectively at the end of Key Stage 2 and use scanning skills to help them to find information

quickly, although there are restrictions in their use of the library because of its use as a teaching room. Almost all pupils can read a large number of common words at sight and demonstrate a wide range of strategies for working out how to read and understand words they have not met before. They make good use of letter sounds, clues from illustrations in the book and the sense of the rest of the sentence.

102. At the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils are fluent and expressive readers and can discuss characterisation and predict outcomes with considerable sophistication. The Reading Challenge supports them with well-chosen books and activities. Lower attaining readers read less expressively and have fewer opinions about books and authors, but still read with enjoyment and understanding.

103. Overall, pupils' writing is of an average standard at the end of Key Stage 2. Handwriting is of at least average quality and often above. They write neatly with fountain pens in legible cursive script. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to write at length or in a sufficiently wide range of styles. They become proficient at completing successfully short exercises, often focused on the development of grammatical skills and not reinforced by original writing. The skills learnt in the literacy hour are not practised consistently in other lessons. Work on vocabulary development is often unrelated to the text being studied, which means that the words pupils learn cannot be practised or understood in context. Because of restrictions of time, there is very little personal or imaginative writing, or writing from direct observation or for audiences other than the teacher. Little drafting is done. Technical accuracy, especially spelling, is poor for low-attaining pupils. Factual writing is sound.

104. In Key Stage 3 the quality of written work is much better and by Year 8 it is above age-related expectations. The well-planned units on 'The Crystal of Seven Dimensions' in Year 7 and 'Macbeth' in Year 8 are producing much longer and more varied writing. Drafting and proof-reading are taught and practised, and research skills are developed in the study of Shakespeare's life and theatre. Pupils have a good awareness of style and can write fluently and expressively. There are many examples of good writing as a result. One pupil wrote, *'The second witch crawled slowly up the heath at the call of her accomplice ¼ every so often the outer sole of her shoe would glimmer in the moonlight.'*

105. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have made good progress in speaking and listening, and satisfactory progress in reading, and writing. The structured literacy hour is improving reading but the most and least able are sometimes inappropriately challenged by group tasks. Teachers do not keep ongoing diagnostic records of the progress of individuals in each attainment target, although test scores are listed. They plan for whole class and group activities, with individual needs neglected unless a pupil has a statement of special needs. Such pupils make progress, although individual help is sometimes difficult in the literacy hour because of lengthy teacher exposition.

106. By Year 8, pupils of all abilities have made good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing, helped by the carefully planned units of work with texts matched to their varying abilities. Through Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in improving their knowledge and skills in English. There are many opportunities to develop further their speaking and listening skills and pupils grow in confidence and aptitude. Pupils become increasingly skilled at expressing themselves clearly and at length, using standard English with increasing accuracy. Their reading skills progress well, so that, by the end of the key stage, they have developed an understanding of character, motive and some of the complexity of human relationships as a result of sensitive and committed teaching of literature.

107. In Year 7, pupils explore how to use a library, learning how to find information, broadening their knowledge of literature and have good opportunities to improve their creative writing skills. By Year 8, pupils are learning to understand and write about one of Shakespeare's plays in full and in its original language; reading some pre-twentieth century poetry and writing for a wider range of audiences and purposes. Higher attaining pupils make sound progress through the key stage. However, the additional reading periods, which have been introduced this year, are more effective at ensuring progress in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Practice is better in Years 5 and 6, where the form tutor is also the English teacher. In other years, not all teachers know individual pupils' reading ability well enough to extend their skills successfully and there is no scheme of work to support teachers in the process. The new 'intervention programme' in Key Stage 3 concentrates on improving pupils' comprehension and deductive skills and is generally effective, but teachers need to guard against a diet of routine exercises. These sessions are not always focused sufficiently on the specific difficulties which pupils are encountering with language.

108. Pupils are diligent, well-behaved and courteous. They take pride in the presentation of their work. They show respect for their teachers and one another, often spontaneously volunteering praise. They work well in pairs and groups and maintain concentration well. Some Year 5 boys find it difficult to sustain interest after 40 minutes of teacher exposition, but are disengaged, not naughty. Pupils are given few opportunities to show initiative but respond well to responsibility. Attitudes to learning are equally good in all groups and some of the liveliest responses came from the lowest sets.

109. Teaching is satisfactory overall at Key Stage 2. Almost half is good, with almost all the rest sound and a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching. It is better at Key Stage 3, where it is good overall. A third of the teaching is sound, with a third good and the rest very good or excellent. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced well and there is good evidence of literacy being developed elsewhere in the curriculum, in subjects such as history, geography and science. The additional reading sessions could be used more effectively, however, to provide opportunities for writing as well as reading. These sessions could be linked to other subject areas in order to provide time when pupils could develop their reading and writing skills in a range of subjects and the chance to produce more sustained pieces of writing, over time.

110. Teachers have prepared effective medium and long-term plans using well-chosen texts. Weekly plans provide a range of interesting activities with differentiated group tasks, but with limited attention to individual needs. Introductions seen were frequently of high quality: lively with good, open-ended questioning, often of named individuals. Pupils are generally managed skilfully and lessons proceed briskly. Homework is well used, both to prepare for topics and to reinforce learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge.

111. The most effective lessons challenge pupils to think for themselves, involve them actively and lead to spontaneous responses, as when a Year 8 girl showed excellent character appreciation. She said, in the role of Lady Macbeth after Duncan's murder, 'I'm devastated; I can't believe the guards did it!' Year 5 teachers help pupils understand rhythm by clapping or tapping leading to improved attainment when writing and performing their own or Edward Lear's verse. In the weaker lessons, teacher talk dominates, in one case taking all but five minutes of the literacy hour.

112. Marking is positive and detailed, but without grades, marks or levels. Pupils receive insufficient guidance on the standard of their written work, especially at Key Stage 2, and how it can be improved. Pupils' targets are sometimes too general and the annual numerical ones for Year 6 have not yet been prepared. Portfolios are supporting developments.

113. Progress in addressing the findings in the last report has been slow because of the lengthy illness of the post holder. Attainment in the various sets has improved, although there is little difference between middle groups. Monitoring of teaching and pupils' work is beginning. Current plans involve monitoring the Literacy Project and assessing its impact in Key Stage 3, developing information and communication technology and preparing a spelling programme. Information and communication technology and spelling were both featured in the last inspection. The co-ordinator appreciates what needs to be done and is now implementing change rapidly and effectively with good support from a strong professional team.

Mathematics

114. Pupils enter the department with attainment that is average for their age. Test results in the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests show that pupils' attainment is above the national average, with boys performing better than girls. Compared with similar schools, pupils' performance in the mathematics tests is below that of pupils with similar backgrounds. Pupils in the school do better in these tests than in both English and science. Over the past three years, results have been consistently above the national average and increased significantly in 1999, indicating that standards in mathematics over this key stage are improving. In Key Stage 3, lesson observations and work scrutiny indicate that attainment is above what would be expected for pupils of their age.

115. The range of inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is above average for their age. Over time and in lessons these pupils make good progress in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They are acquiring a thorough knowledge and understanding of number, algebra, shape and space and handling data. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are able to process a set of data in order to calculate the mean. Pupils of average ability can construct a tally chart in order to determine the median, whilst lower attaining pupils can identify the modal value from a set of data. The skills of mental mathematics are good for almost all pupils and numeracy is developed well across the curriculum, but especially in science, geography and information technology.

116. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are making good progress in mathematics. They build successfully on their achievements at the end of Key Stage 2. They work at a rapid pace, consolidating their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to derive the formula of a cylindrical prism from the area of a circle and the height of the cylinder. Pupils of average ability can express simple formulae in symbols and hence solve them, whilst lower attaining pupils correctly multiply numbers together by using the mental strategy of splitting the multiples up into suitable factors.

117. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in their lessons as a result of the setting used in the department and the individual attention given to these pupils by the class teacher. Calculator work throughout the school is good and mental arithmetic skills are improving, although not all pupils in the lower sets have a firm grasp of multiplication tables.

118. Pupils throughout the school are interested in their work and sustain concentration well. They are very courteous to adults and behave very well in class. Their very positive attitudes towards their work aid their progress in mathematics. They have increasing confidence in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics as they progress through the key stages, as is evidenced by their increasing willingness to offer answers and suggestions to problems. They work well together in groups and have a good relationship with the class teacher, both of which are conducive to a good ethos for learning. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work as evident in the quality of work displayed in the department.

119. Teaching is good overall. There were no instances of unsatisfactory teaching observed during the inspection. In Key Stage 2, more than three quarters of the teaching is good and the rest satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, half the teaching is satisfactory, just under a third good and the rest very good. Teachers have a very good command and understanding of their subject, and are therefore able to explain mathematics at a level well suited to the pupils' stages of development. They have good expectations of their pupils in terms of behaviour and attainment. This results in good discipline, pace and

rigour, helping pupils to progress well. Lessons are planned well in terms of objectives and learning. Most lessons provide pupils with a wide range of activities that stimulate them to learn and participate well. Work is well marked on a day-to-day basis, but opportunities are missed to highlight pupils' strengths and weaknesses and show them how to improve.

120. The mathematics curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned to meet statutory requirements. The schemes of work focus on learning objectives and are an effective means of delivering the mathematics curriculum. The department has made a good start in its implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and this is helping to raise attainment in Key Stage 2.

121. Management of the department both strategically and on a day-to-day basis, is good. There is good support for teaching and learning. Members of the department work well together as a team and are growing in confidence and proficiency in delivering the mathematics curriculum. Accommodation and learning resources are good. Non-specialist mathematics teachers get good curriculum support from the subject co-ordinator, making their teaching more effective.

122. Since the last report, the quality of teaching and learning in the department has improved. A range of curriculum developments has improved the delivery of the mathematics curriculum. Policies have been put in place, which are helping to raise pupils' achievement.

Science

123. Overall attainment, in science lessons and as demonstrated in the work of pupils, is close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. It is in line with the levels of attainment expected nationally for pupils of their age in Year 7 and Year 8. Some pupils demonstrate higher levels of attainment and this is particularly evident in the work of the higher-attaining band in Year 8. On the basis of national test results, attainment has been above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1996 and 1997 and only slightly below in 1998. In 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4, or higher, was close to the national average, but the proportion attaining Level 5 and above was below average. Although close to the average overall, pupils' performance in the 1998 science tests is well below average in comparison with pupils in other schools with similar intakes. In the 1999 science test results, the overall figures for science attainment are again close to the national average. Within the range of work observed during the inspection, most pupils attain the levels expected for their age.

124. Breadth and depth of knowledge, understanding and skills are satisfactorily developed in Key Stage 2. For example, pupils in Year 6 are beginning to show an understanding of classification. Pupils use their knowledge and understanding of earlier work to help them to construct 'keys' to the leaves of trees. Later, they demonstrate that they are able to use

standard keys to identify correctly various 'mini-beasts'. Pupils benefit from their early exposure to laboratory routines. In practical work in Year 5, they learn to handle equipment safely. For example, they follow laboratory rules when using Bunsen burners and use other equipment with appropriate care in their investigations on heating. They respond well by asking sensible questions, and they make testable predictions about heating and cooling. They observe changes carefully and measure temperatures with reasonable accuracy. When interpreting their results, they consider possible explanations for unexpected findings and they draw general conclusions about changes in temperature. They also begin to use correctly some scientific terminology, such as 'heat insulation', as well as simply naming apparatus.

125. In Key Stage 3 attainment is in line with or slightly higher than the expected levels. In Year 7 most pupils are showing appropriate understanding of 'fair testing'. For example, in an investigation on 'food as fuel', when comparing the energy content of biscuit and pasta, they can explain why other variables are kept the same. They make accurate observations and keep clear records, but at a more challenging level than in Key Stage 2. Other pupils, who are investigating energy transfers in mechanically driven models, consider a wider range of factors that affect their experiments, and several make modifications accordingly. These pupils are drawing on knowledge from earlier work about energy to help them reach conclusions. Their emerging understanding of potential and kinetic energy is well supported by the investigation and by their increasingly effective use of scientific vocabulary. In Year 8, most pupils studying digestion can use the names of relevant body systems and organs and can explain how structures, such as teeth of different kinds, are related to their functions. A significant proportion of pupils in the upper band in Year 8 have a very good grasp of details and an overview of living processes at a higher level than expected for their age.

126. In both key stages, pupils use scientific words appropriately in discussions and in written work explaining their findings and ideas. They use mathematical and graphical skills to display and analyse numerical data. Their use of bar charts and line graphs is matched well to the science work involved. Some use computers to display graphical information. For example, data from Year 5 temperature measurements are plotted as a 'cooling curve', using a spreadsheet. There are also some excellent examples of desktop publishing, greatly enhancing pupils' learning in Year 8. Although information and communication technology is used effectively in such projects, it does not enhance pupils' learning sufficiently throughout the whole science curriculum. Opportunities for data-logging have been missing until recently, delayed by repair to damaged equipment and software.

127. There is some variation in attainment between boys and girls in test results from year to year. However, little variation between boys and girls was noted in science lessons observed during this inspection.

128. Progress of pupils in science is never less than satisfactory and overall is good in lessons. During the inspection, it was good in over 80 per cent of lessons across both key stages. On the basis of scrutiny of a wider sample of pupils' work, overall progress in science is satisfactory across both key stages. Pupils use progressively more systematic and quantitative approaches to investigation through the years. They also develop and draw upon an increasing knowledge and understanding of science. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress in science. When additional support is provided in science lessons, it is of good quality. Learning support assistants directly support the pupils with special needs, but there are also benefits to other pupils. Pupils of lower and average prior attainment in science are generally making good progress towards reaching levels appropriate to their ages. In classes in the upper band of Year 8, there is particularly marked progress by about one third of the pupils, who display higher levels of attainment, especially when engaged on challenging extension tasks.

129. Most pupils respond very well to the opportunities for learning in the science laboratories. They co-operate in small groups in practical work. Their good behaviour contributes significantly to their own learning.

130. Overall, the quality of teaching is good and sometimes it is very good. It promotes work of an appropriate standard in all science lessons. In Years 6, 7 and 8, science is taught by specialist teachers. Year 5 teachers are not science specialists, but are supported by helpful materials provided by specialist colleagues. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science is generally sound and that of the specialists is good. All teachers pay particularly good attention to subject specific vocabulary in their teaching.

131. The previous inspection found that pupils, especially in Key Stage 3, were not always sufficiently challenged to reach higher levels of attainment. The school has addressed this issue by including more demanding work in teaching schemes, by monitoring pupils' progress, and by introducing bands for science classes in Year 8. The previous report also stated that pupils were often not clear about learning objectives in science. This has been addressed by in-service training to develop methods of teaching that share learning objectives with pupils, and by including these in teaching schemes and lesson plans. Learning objectives are now routinely made clear to the whole class at the start of a lesson, and it is usual for teachers to review pupils' learning towards the end of a session. These introductory and plenary sessions are often very effective. Teachers' expectations of pupils are generally high. The levels targeted vary between lessons, but most work is well pitched and suitably matched to the age and prior attainment of groups of pupils. When pupils all do the same task, learning resources are often matched to at least two levels of attainment within the class, or the tasks are designed to permit a range of different outcomes. Some major pieces of extension work very successfully challenge pupils capable of higher attainment, especially in the upper band in Year 8.

132. Teachers encourage pupils to use a range of methods to record and report on their work in science, including formal writing, creative pictorial work, displays, oral reports and some use of information technology. This is a wider range than at the time of the

previous inspection because of the attention teachers have given to developing varied approaches. Teachers have also introduced greater rigour into pupils' thinking about science, particularly by asking more probing questions. Homework is set in Years 7 and 8 to support pupils' learning. Tasks are suitably varied, including practical activities and research using scientific information as well as more typical written work.

133. The time allocated to science is adequate for Key Stage 2, but it is low in Key Stage 3, especially when Year 8 is compared with secondary schools. Nevertheless, good use is made of the time available. The school has a good range of science equipment and two purpose-built laboratories. Use of resources is well suited to the work and favourably supports learning. Preparation for science lessons is ably assisted by good quality technician support. Teachers have suitable awareness of safety regulations and there is good attention to safety in laboratory work. Planning and schemes of work are good and cover the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.

134. The previous inspection reported that planning for continuity and progression was well developed in Key Stage 3, but less so for Key Stage 2. The science co-ordinator attends regular planning meetings with teachers from other schools in the local partnership, and this greatly assists in promoting consistent quality of curriculum coverage in appropriate depth, breadth and sequence. The effect on continuity is good.

135. Assessment is based on an appropriate range of informal and formal methods and a wide range of evidence. Formal assessment is not now 'narrowly based', as described in the previous inspection report, but includes a variety of approaches and externally comparable measures. Assessment data is used to help improve the performance of individual pupils; to establish sets in Year 8, and to help the school set targets. Information about pupil performance in science is shared with the partner high school in the middle of Year 8.

136. The previous inspection report commented on the narrow range of books available for science. Additional books have been purchased to improve the range of reference material in the laboratories. However, books in the science section of the library still do not reflect the balance of science attainment targets in the National Curriculum. Some science information from CD-ROMs and the Internet is accessed in the computer suite or in the library, but there is scope for greater use in science lessons of the school's excellent computer facilities.

137. Leadership of science is efficient and effective and there is commitment to sound strategies in support of high standards. School monitoring and evaluation of science are developing well. Issues identified in the previous inspection have been addressed through implementation of a science action-plan and there is good progress with most of them. The science co-ordinator is providing support and managing change effectively. The department should continue to implement its development plan to effect further improvements. Additionally, it should review the provision of science books in the library and consider how to make more use of computers throughout science teaching.

137. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

138. Standards of attainment in art for pupils at the end of Year 8 are in line with the age related expectations for the majority of pupils. They can produce formal and informal relief prints through experimenting with textures using collographs. They use the vocabulary of the visual language appropriately, with increasing effectiveness in their work. Opportunities for three dimensional work are very limited and skills of visual analysis in recording images from observation are under developed. When learning about the handling properties of soft and oil pastels they use linear strokes and side strokes successfully to develop areas of texture and colour in different ways.

139. At Key Stage 2, there are a number of strengths in the pupils' work in art. Using and observing the works of Klimt imaginatively to inform their patterns, they draw and fill shapes well. From their visit to Shugborough Hall they have a good knowledge of William Morris and use his work well to inform their designs for tiles. The standard of drawing skills, however, is unsatisfactory in Year 5.

140. Progress at the end of Year 8 is satisfactory, but across a narrow range of media and experiences. The school's building programme continues to impact adversely on art, especially in Years 7 and 8 where the effect on pupils' progress over time is most significant. It is restricting the activities that bring together investigating and making, knowledge and understanding, and the range of media and materials that can be offered. Progress in lessons is good, however. Pupils develop their printing techniques and their understanding of symmetry and randomness, and analyse the results of using different materials for textured effects.

141. At Key Stage 2, progress is satisfactory, although the reduction in curriculum time for the subject in Key Stage 2 restricts the time spent on developing skills in the different strands of art. Pupils can develop simple drawings from cards of different patterns. From studying the works of other artists, they develop a better understanding of style. Progress in drawing skills is much better in Year 6 than in Year 5, as pupils become increasingly confident in the use of pencils and improve their observational skills. In lessons where the large number of pupils in a small area restricts the teaching styles, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

142. The quality of teaching in art in Years 7 and 8 is good in all lessons. Very clear lesson planning maintains momentum and focus. Teachers encourage quality work through self-assessment, and through encouraging and enabling pupils to refine their skills. They have a secure subject knowledge and use terms and art language precisely and accurately. Resources, though limited in range, are well used, including examples of

best practice to inform and set standards. Very good teaching is seen when key learning points are emphasised. Questioning is positive to ensure pupils' understanding and control are maintained through sequenced, focused tasks. Pupils' work is marked with selective use of praise and constructive comments.

143. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is very good in a quarter of lessons and satisfactory in half. Lesson planning is linked to topics with clear objectives for learning. Teachers advise and encourage the children to do well and question to check on their understanding of what to do. Resources can be limited in range and number but reference cards are well used. There is a small, but significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In Year 5, drawing skills are not taught consistently and poor practice is not corrected or pencils sharpened. When the teacher's planning does not break down the lesson content into sufficient manageable tasks for the pupils, they do not clearly understand what to do; their attention is not sustained and the progress is unsatisfactory as a result.

144. Pupils' response is satisfactory overall. They enjoy their art and waste no time in getting on to the tasks. They are attentive; ask and answer questions in extended sentences; eagerly move to activities with good organisation and management skills, especially in such a small area. They are considerably aware of the needs of other group members and give and accept praise and criticism in good faith. Even in unsatisfactory lessons, the standard of behaviour is good. Pupils are generally observant: one pupil recognised the Egyptian eye in one of Klimt's pictures and others the mirror image in one of the William Morris patterns.

145. The head of art and design works hard to provide the pupils with quality learning experiences in spite of the constraints of the accommodation and low curriculum time. Visits to art galleries, museums and local places of interest, together with visiting artists, including a past pupil, are used effectively to further resource the curriculum and extend pupils' range of experiences. She is a very good practitioner. She sets high standards and is very supportive of the teaching staff. Planning for the subject is thorough and provides a clear educational direction. Very good links are established with all link school through regular meetings. The quality of displays in the school is excellent and they are frequently used to inform pupils' learning and to celebrate achievements. Since the last inspection, under her guidance, standards at Key Stage 2 have been maintained and at the end of Year 8 they have improved. There is a clear overall plan to ensure that pupils' learning experiences lead to a progressive mastery of skills and knowledge. The department's capacity for improvement in the improved accommodation is good.

Design and technology

146. At the end of Year 8, standards of attainment in design and technology are unsatisfactory overall. Standards in designing, however, are age appropriate and frequently above expectation. Pupils can design simple products from a design brief and specifications for production. They can generate and communicate design ideas and plan for making to include limited information about the materials, tools and processes. Standards in making are below expectations for pupils of this age. They can use tools safely, but lack the necessary working knowledge and experiences, acquired over time, of a range of tools and materials to fully inform their designing. In the lessons on 'Automata', the pupils complete three-dimensional drawings for the carcass and write and improve the instructions for constructing. They take it in turns to measure, mark and cut their wood, but due to lack of experience the cutting skills are under developed and the quality of results is unsatisfactory. They know how cams work and use models to demonstrate their favourites. The department works hard to emphasise the interactive nature of designing and making. The lack of a specialist room for resistant materials, for some time, impacts negatively on pupils' levels of attainment in both attainment targets. The new accommodation was almost ready at the time of the inspection, but electrical work had not been completed.

147. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 2 are satisfactory. Pupils can design and make simple circuits, including a switch, and know how to use tools and equipment safely. In Year 5 they successfully design and make jig saws as part of the Victorians topic. Attainment is limited by the lack of specialist facilities and is not in line with pupils' abilities, which are higher.

148. Progress in the lessons seen in Year 8 is satisfactory, but over time it has been unsatisfactory. The school's building programme continues to impact negatively on pupils' progress when designing and making. The lack of availability of specialist accommodation limits the range and frequency of use of materials. Pupils make progress in drawing to scale and collating information to inform their designing, but progress in construction skills is slow and unsatisfactory over time.

149. At Key Stage 2, the progress is satisfactory. They develop their drawings for the circuits and transfer them to the circuit boards. Skills using the hand drill are developing. In Year 5 they develop designs for the jig-saws and mark them out for cutting. They do this accurately.

150. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is good, and very good in Years 7 and 8. Very clear lesson planning maintains momentum and focus. Teachers encourage quality work and self-assessment. They have a secure subject knowledge and make very good use of technical language. Planning takes account of the limited facilities and is linked to the programmes of study. Links are frequently made to mathematics, for example when discussing scale in the 'Automata' project with Year 8. Resources, though limited in range, are well used, including high quality displays and examples of best practice to

inform and set standards. Very good teaching is seen when the lesson is set into context and linked to other lessons, and when practical skills are well taught and supported by correct safety procedures. Pupils' work is marked with selective use of praise and formative comments.

151. At Key Stage 2, in a lesson with very good teaching, pupils were told what they need to do to gain higher levels. All teachers carefully re-cap previous work and give clear directions for the next stage of making. The management of large groups of pupils in a confined area is good. Resources can be limited in number and range but, together with reference cards and sheets to support learning, they are used well by the pupils.

152. Pupils' response is satisfactory. They enjoy designing and relish the opportunities to make and waste no time getting on to tasks. Pupils are good listeners who, despite the various constraints, work with enthusiasm on all tasks. They use the displays to stimulate ideas and clarify their understanding. They persevere with their cutting skills trying hard to be accurate. Considerate of one another, their thoughtfulness and helpfulness contribute a great deal to the smooth running of the classroom organisation.

153. The head of design and technology and staff work hard to provide the pupils with quality learning experiences, despite the constraints of the accommodation and shortage of curriculum time. Visits like the one to Rover are used to enrich pupils' knowledge of designers and designing. Displays are linked to specialist museums, like the one for 'Automata' in York. She is a very informed practitioner, who sets a very good standard for the subject. She recognises good practice, and planning is thorough and provides a clear educational direction for the subject. Very good links have been established with all partner schools through regular meetings. Since the last inspection, standards in designing have improved, but, because of the low standards in making, the overall attainment in design and technology at the end of Year 8 is still unsatisfactory. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are now satisfactory. The department's capacity for improvement in the improved accommodation is good.

153. **Geography**

154. By the time pupils leave for secondary school at the end of Year 8, they attain as expected for pupils of their age, with some pupils attaining above. The school maintains the standards reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils know how physical processes, such as river erosion, shape the land. They understand subject terms for parts of a river valley, such as flood plain and tributary, and the importance of rivers to people. From a study of Egypt, they know that the River Nile is crucial as a source of irrigation for farming, and that the Aswan Dam provides hydroelectric power. At the end of Key Stage 2, there are a number of strengths in attainment in the subject and no significant weaknesses. Most pupils are confident about the location of the continents and major countries of the world, and they use co-ordinates and their knowledge of symbols to find places on Ordnance Survey maps. They use information technology to prepare for lesson

topics, and to research and write assignments by downloading from the Internet and using a desktop publishing program. Pupils have a good understanding of rock formation and explain terms such as *sedimentary rocks* and *fossils* accurately. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs have less certain factual knowledge, and their writing and spelling are weak.

155. The majority of pupils make good progress but pupils with special educational needs make slower progress in written work than expected. Pupils gain insights into life in modern Egypt by selecting evidence from a film and photographs. They learn to compare evidence of wealth and poverty, and traditional and modern ways of life. Using knowledge of their home location and of British cities, they consider how they differ from settlements in Egypt. Such topics contribute to their cultural development, for they learn that while Muslim women cover their faces in the traditional areas of Cairo, in wealthier areas women use Western dress. Some higher attaining pupils develop their individual study skills, on the River Nile for example, and use mathematical skills to construct a graph showing the flow of the river when it floods. Pupils' map-work skills improve considerably and older pupils learn to pinpoint places precisely with six-figure grid references. As their knowledge and understanding improve, pupils begin to understand geographical processes and patterns on a global scale. They quickly learn, for example, a theory to explain how the continents moved to their present locations. They draw upon earlier knowledge of rock formation and fossils to help with understanding how Scotland was once part of North America.

156. Pupils show a good response to geography. They demonstrate interest in the subject through their keenness to answer questions and their high standards of presentation. All pupils, including those with weaknesses with writing, persevere with their work. Behaviour is always good, and pupils are respectful towards teachers. They listen to, and help each other, with spellings for example. Many develop the capacity to work independently and a number show initiative by asking questions to clarify their understanding.

157. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and this ensures that they deliver the essential ideas and skills of geography. Teachers develop topics through good questions that use pupils' knowledge and understanding to expose patterns and relationships. For example, in a lesson that included reference to fossils and rock types, a teacher asked, 'As a geologist, how could you prove landforms were joined?' Higher attaining pupils benefit from planned opportunities to tackle demanding work, and move on quickly. In some lessons, the tasks given to pupils with special educational needs do not match their literacy level, but overall planning is good. Teachers make effective use of resources, such as the overhead projector to show how the continents once fitted together. They skilfully use graphic description, of magma for example as 'like soup boiling', to aid pupils' understanding. They share lesson objectives with pupils, and check coverage in a plenary session; time is

evenly distributed, and these elements contribute to very good management of pupils. Work is thoughtfully marked, with encouraging comments to help pupils improve. Teachers test learning at the end of topics through assessed work. This helps them to check the quality of teaching and the suitability of the scheme of work.

158. The co-ordinator continues to give good leadership and effective management. She has fully addressed the matters raised in the last inspection. The co-ordinator continues to work closely with colleagues in other phases to provide subject links as pupils move between schools. Teachers continue to develop appropriate challenges for higher attaining pupils. They are aware of the special educational needs of pupils, and those who do not receive additional support rely on class teachers to provide for their requirements. A bank of special needs resources is available for geography, and teachers try to be inclusive with questioning. The basic skills of these pupils are weak and teachers need to provide clear short-term targets achievable through geography.

158. **History**

159. By the end of Key Stage 2 and when pupils move to secondary school at the end of Year 8, their attainment overall is that expected for their age. The school maintains the standard reported at the time of the last inspection. Lessons were observed in Years 5, 7 and 8, but history was not time-tabled in Year 6 and evidence came from an examination of pupils' earlier work and discussion with them.

160. Pupils in Year 5 study copies of Victorian paintings and photographs and use them appropriately to find evidence of wealth and poverty. They compose questions they would ask the children shown in the paintings and photographs to obtain further evidence. Higher attaining pupils successfully record evidence from their group discussions and report it to the class. Pupils use their writing and art skills well, for example to produce a pamphlet on *The Great Pyramid of Cheops* in Year 6, and use desk-top publishing skilfully to write a newspaper article with the headline, 'Carter Finds a Pharaoh's Tomb'. Older pupils use subject vocabulary confidently to show their understanding of topics, such as the role of the *patricians* and *plebeians* in the government of Ancient Rome. Year 8 pupils gather evidence from parish records of changes to a village church during the reigns of three Tudor monarchs. They confidently give the reasons for Henry VIII's break with the Roman Catholic Church. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs express their understanding reasonably, but writing and spelling skills are weak.

161. Progress is good overall. Younger pupils learn the importance of studying evidence carefully to understand how people lived in the past. They learn to question the evidence; see that groups studying the same sources make different interpretations, and understand how this happens. A visit to Shugborough Hall makes an impact on Year 5 pupils' understanding of the life of servants in a large Victorian house, especially when they learn

from first-hand experience, by dressing and acting as servants in the kitchen and laundry. From this and other source material, they begin to compare the lives of rich and poor in a past society. Pupils in Year 7 make links between modern government and that of Ancient Rome. By performing rôles in a public assembly debate, they discover that government is operated by power and obligation, and that democracy contains features of unfairness for some groups. Older pupils show good understanding of the effects of the Reformation on the religious life of ordinary citizens. They realise how change occurred gradually over several Tudor reigns. Most pupils gain knowledge and understanding quickly, and develop structured writing as they move through the key stages. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory gains in learning, but they make less progress with developing written work than expected.

162. There is a high level of interest in most lessons. Pupils enjoy learning about the past, especially when it involves a practical activity, such as a Roman assembly debate. Very occasionally, they become bored when the management of lesson time is uneven. Their response to sharp questioning is good and all levels of ability are keen to show what they know and understand. Behaviour is of a high standard. Pupils take pride in the appearance of their work.

163. Teaching is good overall. It is good in three lessons out of four and the remaining lessons are satisfactory. Teachers can ask questions that help pupils to understand and interpret different sources of historical evidence, because they have secure knowledge of the topics taught, for example the intricate structure of Roman government. They challenge pupils about evidence: *Do pictures and photographs give a complete view of Victorian life? Why should a painting in rich, warm colours lead you to a wrong conclusion about the scene depicted?* Teachers expect pupils to move into groups without fuss, and to accept responsibility, as when preparing a speech for a debate. Lessons are well prepared and resources used to illuminate the topic and develop historical skills. Teachers usually manage time effectively; sometimes it is misjudged, for example when too long is spent listing facts on a board. Pupils lose interest and the attention of some of them slips.

164. When they are present, support teachers or assistants enable pupils with statements of special needs to learn effectively. In some lessons teachers provide tasks that meet the special educational needs of other pupils, but not in all. The department is developing its resources to assist pupils with special needs. These pupils require materials that assist them to develop their reading and writing skills in history. In a number of lessons, teachers give extended work to higher-attaining pupils.

165. Teachers manage the great majority of lessons very well, creating relationships that encourage pupils to clarify their understanding. Teachers use questions and observations of pupils' work to assess progress in class. There is regular use of homework to set research tasks. Teachers use marked assessments at the end of topics and samples of pupils' work to inform lesson and subject planning.

166.The subject co-ordinator gives clear direction, and is supportive and enthusiastic. She has addressed satisfactorily the matters raised in the previous inspection.

Information technology

167.Standards of attainment in information communication technology for pupils at the end of Year 8 are above the age-related expectations in the knowledge, skills and understanding of Information communication technology, and also in its effective use. Pupils in Year 8 are studying to take The Royal Society of Arts accreditation, Level 1, in word processing, database and spreadsheets. This is a new initiative. Pupils can create spread sheets from their own data using simple formulae. They confidently and competently use the Internet along with a desktop publishing program, choosing lead stories from BBC news to create good quality presentations that integrate several forms of information. Pupils use their skills to good effect in science and mathematics. Although there is some data logging in design and technology and in the project linked to the Rover visit, the school recognises this area is underdeveloped.

168.Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are satisfactory. Pupils successfully use a good range of software with confidence to generate, amend and organise ideas. They can save data and access stored information. These skills are taught through topic work and there is abundant evidence in the individual subject folders, for example in mathematics and in science. In history and geography, pupils use data base programs for working on census material and for local studies. When studying 'Egyptians' in Year 6, they produce quality work incorporating text, graphs and pictures, after checking information and making informed selections linked to the topic. In design and technology, as part of the introduction to simple electronics, they can use the computer to control circuits.

169.Progress in Years 7 and 8 is very good. Pupils across a broad range of ability develop the skills of communicating and handling information. Using information communication technology, they organise, refine and present information that is factually correct and that arrests and informs. In a Year 8 lesson, surrounded by an excellent working environment, pupils are keen to say what they have learned to do better and to share new experiences.

170.Progress for pupils at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Taught by class teachers, pupils develop their abilities to combine different forms of information and begin to show an awareness of audience.

171.Teachers' planning builds on previous progress and is monitored in lessons and recorded by self-assessments and teacher evaluation. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

172. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection excellent teaching was seen by the subject co-ordinator, who rightly takes great pride in presenting the pupils with a real work situation for their learning. Introductions are brisk, purposeful, exciting and at times 'true theatre'. Pupils are informed, without time wasting, exactly what they need to achieve in the lesson. The approach is businesslike and supportive, with high expectations of work rate and application, and with careful reviewing, especially when multi-tasking between the spread sheet and the internet. Pupils are asked what they have learned in the lesson and told what to do to achieve the higher levels. An excellent practitioner, his proficient use of information and communication technology tools and materials makes the subject come alive for the pupils and increasingly relevant to their everyday lives in and out of school. In a Year 7 lesson, he left the classroom to return as a reporter, just as the 'news' was breaking and pupils had to think and act quickly to grasp key news words to research and prepare catch lines. No teaching was seen at Key Stage 2.

173. Pupils' response is very good. They enjoy the lessons, are enthusiastic and relish the range of teaching approaches. They work hard, persevering and concentrating, and showing very positive attitudes to the subject. In Year 8 lessons, there is a quiet buzz as pupils discuss ideas, many working in pairs. They stay on task totally, using appropriate technical vocabulary. Pupils are very attentive when watching demonstrations of researching and transferring information from the internet. Boys can be less responsive and slower to task, but all pupils realise the urgency and need to focus on key words.

174. Since the last inspection the reporting system has been put in place in line with all other subjects. Higher-attaining pupils are identified and their needs are addressed more successfully than at the time of the last report. Accommodation and resources have improved significantly. The information and communication technology suite has been equipped with the very latest hardware and software and the room is air-conditioned. The number of industry standard computers has been increased as part of a three-phase development. Desktop links to the Internet and e-mail are strategically situated round the school

175. Members of staff are continually monitored and supported by the curriculum leader, and training needs are identified and addressed. He sets very high standards for the subject, and is very informed and willing to share his expertise and support colleagues. Improvements in the provision of the subject are constantly sought; the Key Stage 2 scheme of work is under review at present. He works hard to ensure that all pupils have quality learning experiences and that all members of staff also have the chance to reach their potential in the subject.

Modern foreign languages

176. French is taught to all pupils in Years 5 and 6. This contributes significantly to their attainment and the rate of progress they make in Key Stage 3. Strengths at the end of Year 6 are in speaking and listening skills, as well as in the pupils' knowledge and understanding of modern European culture.

177. In Years 7 and 8, pupils' attainment is good in relation to national expectations of the age range. By the end of Year 8 there are clear gains made in terms of what pupils know, understand and can do in French and all pupils make good progress through these two years. Their knowledge of the grammatical structure of the language is good and they are able to apply this confidently and fairly accurately when speaking. They use the target language confidently and creatively when responding to the teachers' questions or instructions, their responses often based securely on material previously taught. Several pupils are able to produce full sentences and will self-correct when necessary. Accents and pronunciation are satisfactory. Pupils' retention of vocabulary and their comprehension skills are good. They copy accurately, with some able to write from memory. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 are making satisfactory progress in lessons. Their recall of lexis and structures is satisfactory, with a few pupils able to identify objects and use structures without prompts. Pupils' accents and pronunciation are generally satisfactory across all years.

178. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils appear interested and motivated and are willing to participate actively during lessons, accepting the use of French as the medium for classroom management and interaction. They settle down quickly to work and collaborate well with each other and the teacher.

179. Teaching in French lessons is good. The target language is used consistently throughout the lessons, as are resources such as flashcards and the overhead projector that provide effective supportive role in developing the pupils' comprehension skills. Delivery is dynamic, with a variety of strategies and resources employed to capture and retain pupils' attention. Tasks are appropriately challenging and all teachers consistently require the pupils to use the target language with increasingly complex structures. There is a variety of activities organised that capture and sustain the pupils' interest. 'Differentiated' homework, adapted to the needs and abilities of pupils, consolidates and extends classwork effectively. Classroom management and relationships are good, with praise and encouragement featuring strongly in lessons. The development of the reading and writing skills in lessons, and the supportive role they play in the language-learning process, are underdeveloped. The department has a useful and comprehensive assessment policy.

180. Leadership and management of the curriculum are good and colleagues work well as a team. Displays are attractive and used actively by pupils for reference purposes. A variety of resources is used effectively, although video and some other material require updating in line with National Curriculum requirements.

Music

181. Pupils make good progress in music in Key Stage 2. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 8, attainment exceeds that expected for pupils of their age. Pupils are given a good musical education and are well prepared for senior school. All aspects of the music curriculum are covered fully. Pupils progress well in all years because they are taught to understand that performing, composing and listening to music are all part of the same learning experience. Many pupils learn to play an instrument and are given extensive opportunities to perform in the school and in the community. The school has a windband, a choir and a recorder group. All three rehearse each week and produce music of very good quality. Pupils who are gaining experience as performers make very good progress.

182. All pupils are taught how to sing. They sing with clear diction and good expression. They phrase well and give meaning to the words they sing. The quality of singing was described in the last report as 'restrained'. This is no longer the case. Indeed, listening to the whole school sing the morning prayer in two-part harmony is a profoundly moving experience. Pupils sing hymns joyfully and emphasise key phrases with marked enthusiasm. All music lessons include vocal exercises and a wide repertoire of songs. Singing is now as strongly developed as all other musical activities. This is a significant improvement since the last report.

183. In Key Stage 2, pupils listen to the music of a wide range of classical composers and describe how the music makes them feel. They know that different effects are achieved by different instruments, which they name correctly. They act out their responses to the music and therefore understand the different moods created by Richard Strauss and Debussy. Inspired by what they have heard, pupils compose simple tunes and use a graphic score to record them. They understand the elements of music and are confident in the use of rhythm and dynamics. They are learning how to create an effect and, for example, compose eerie music to represent fog on the marshes. They listen carefully to other's compositions and confidently say what they think, giving constructive suggestions for improvement.

184. In Key Stage 3, pupils sing a folk tune as a round and embellish it with their own ideas. They quickly see what works and what does not, and discover that the number of beats in a bar is important to the rhythm of a tune. Pupils study a classical minuet and then compose a minuet for keyboard and percussion. They use musical notation and correctly place time and key signatures. They know about crotchets and quavers and even dotted minims. Pupils sing 'Swing Low Sweet Chariot' well and know about the origins of the song. They understand that music has a time and place and reflects feelings and experience. They have a good grasp of the language of music and, for example, distinguish binary from ternary form. This helps pupils to recognise patterns in music and provides structure for their compositions.

185. Pupils respond very well to music lessons and enjoy the challenge of music. They are

eager to take part and to show what they can do. They respond well to the variety of music on offer, listen attentively while others perform, and applaud generously. They learn well from each other, working happily together. There is a creative buzz in the classroom when pupils robustly defend their compositions. Pupils in Year 8 compose independently, testing out their own ideas and making changes to produce a better result.

186. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than sound and is good in two fifths of lessons; very good in a further two fifths. All teaching is well planned and builds very well on previous learning. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour. They make very good use of the resources. No opportunity for making music is ever lost. The classroom is organised very well, as a music workshop. Teachers demonstrate what they want the pupils to do and this motivates pupils well. Relationships are very good. Pupils and teachers enjoy making music together. Class management is firm but relaxed. Occasionally, teachers try to cover too much ground in a single lesson and the focus of learning is lost.

187. The teaching of the subject is very well organised. The scheme of work, which underpins the good progress of the pupils, is excellent. It is detailed and thorough and gives clear guidance on the assessment of pupils' work. Teachers work closely together and share their expertise. Resources are very good and make a major impact on learning. They are well maintained and easily accessible. The music room is of a good size, sufficient to accommodate large classes. It is very well furnished and the wall displays are exemplary.

188. Music was regarded as a strong subject at the time of the last report. Music in the classroom and the music that is taken out into the community continue to be a strength of the school and contribute significantly to its ethos.

Physical education

189. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils perform well in gymnastics. They plan, perform and refine imaginative gymnastic sequences. Most pupils move with control and poise. They have a good knowledge of technical language and use terms such as: flow, direction and points of balance when evaluating each other's work. Pupils know how to warm up and cool down and they sustain energetic activity regularly in lessons. All pupils are offered swimming lessons until they have attained the recommended standard for Key Stage 2 pupils.

190. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is in line with expectations for pupils of their age and is similar to the standards found in the last inspection. Standards continue to be high in gymnastics. Pupils plan and improve complex sequences. Most pupils perform with control, extension and good presentation. Pupils evaluate performance in gymnastics and can suggest improvements. In some lessons pupils emphasise weaknesses in performance rather than the strengths. Most pupils' attainment in games is in line with expectations for

their age. A small number, around 20 per cent, are more competent. Pupils can throw, catch and dribble in basketball practices, and satisfactorily when under pressure in a game. They use two systems of defence in practice but do not transfer this effectively into a game. Pupils often lead their own warm-up and cool-down activities but they do not have a clear understanding of the effects of short-term and long-term exercise on the body systems.

191. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in Key Stage 2. Most pupils improve the quality of their gymnastic sequences but higher attaining pupils do not always increase the difficulty of the actions. Pupils improve their knowledge of the language of gymnastics and the ability to evaluate performance. Progress in improving games over time has slowed down because the curriculum time for teaching games had to be reduced last year.

192. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, but the rate of progress varies across the different aspects of the subject. Pupils continue to make good progress in gymnastics. Pupils improve games skills, but in some lessons they do not learn enough about game strategies. Higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently in some lessons. Pupils with physical difficulties benefit from additional support from the class teacher and support assistant. Teachers are aware of pupils' special needs and plan relevant and effective activities.

193. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good in Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3 are good overall. In a third of lessons in Key Stage 3, pupils' attitudes are very good. Pupils enjoy physical education lessons. They are very keen and well motivated. They listen very carefully to instructions and concentrate well on the tasks. Many pupils carry out warm-up routines independently of the teacher. Most pupils are quick to organise themselves into games practices or into group work in gymnastics. Pupils behave very well in all lessons. They plan gymnastic sequences in groups very well. They show good sporting attitudes in games but are not always tolerant of weaknesses in some pupils' performance. Pupils help with the equipment willingly. A great many pupils, well over half, benefit from regular involvement in extra-curricular activity.

194. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall and is good in one third of lessons. The standard of teaching is similar to that described in the previous report. Teachers of physical education have specialist qualifications and have a good knowledge of the subject. They use their knowledge to plan progressively challenging activities. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' improved performance; they insist on good quality performance in gymnastics. Teachers' planning is good. They identify clear learning objectives; in most lessons they share these with the pupils and refer to them at the end of the lesson. Teachers use a good range of approaches in Key Stage 2 and a satisfactory range in Key Stage 3. Teachers make good use of demonstrations in games and gymnastics. They question pupils effectively to check what pupils have learnt. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate performance and use the language of the subject. Teachers give suitable observation tasks

to the very few pupils who cannot take an active part in lessons. Teachers maintain very good discipline in lessons. They organise lessons well and their working relationships with pupils are very good. Teachers establish a good pace in lessons and ensure high levels of physical activity.

195. The satisfactory teaching found in Key Stage 3 has features that can be improved. In some lessons there is not enough attention paid to improving pupils' understanding of games' strategies. In some gymnastics lessons evaluation tasks lack clear structure and focus on the weaknesses in performance rather than the strengths. In some lessons teachers do not give enough guidance on how to improve skills or techniques and higher attaining pupils are not challenged. Teachers miss opportunities to use flash cards or other written resources to help pupils learn the language of the subject. Teachers seldom use open questions and give few problems for pupils to solve.

196. The subject is well co-ordinated and managed. Since the last inspection, the systems for monitoring teaching and the implementation of policies have improved. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in both key stages. However, games dominate the curriculum and very little dance is taught. Teachers provide a good range of extra-curricular activities from which both boys and girls benefit equally. The accommodation is just adequate overall, but there are some limitations. The fields and gymnasium are in good condition. The changing rooms are in need of refurbishment. The recently re-surfaced tennis and netball court is too small for large classes, and pupils' experience of full games is restricted. The gymnasium is too small for most indoor games. The school enjoys the use of a nearby sports hall that belongs to a private school.

Religious education

197. At the end of Key Stage 2 and Year 8, pupils' attainment in religious education is in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

198. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. They know many stories from the Bible and stories from other holy books. They know about the festivals of different religions. Pupils understand that religion is important in people's lives and that it influences the way people behave. Unlike the last inspection, pupils now reflect upon the stories they hear and apply their learning to everyday life. They compare the customs of world religions, such as the baptism of a baby, and note that there are as many similarities as differences. This helps their understanding of the world in which they are growing up and encourages acceptance of other cultures. Pupils discuss the rules necessary to good community life and apply them to their homes and school. Pupils talk about the features of Sikhism in preparation for their visit to a Gurdwara. They act out the traditions of a Jewish Sabbath using a menorah and table dressing. Pupils ask to say a prayer before taking food. In this way they begin to understand the importance of religious ceremonies.

199. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. They learn that Jesus taught by example and by the use of parables. They know, for example, the story of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son. Pupils begin to understand that life presents a series of choices and that religious belief provides one basis for that choice. The relating of the stories from the Bible to their personal life becomes a strength, and they learn to recount experiences when they had a choice to make. They discuss how to react to name-calling and what to do if they feel their needs are being ignored. They talk about what they can do for others. In this way, pupils begin to see that religious teachings are relevant to everyday life. They compare the writings of the Bible with those of the Qur'an and begin to understand the similarities as well as the differences. One class enacts the Muslim preparations for prayer, using a poem as a guide. Another class prepares to interview the boy who found the *Dead Sea Scrolls*.

200. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, build a secure understanding of religion as they move through the school, and by the end of Year 8 they are able to understand and compare different beliefs. Pupils' progress is helped by good displays of their work in the school and by regular contact with the local Church. Assemblies support progress in learning. For example, the excellent enactment of *David and Goliath* showed clearly that 'might is not always right'.

201. Most pupils enjoy lessons and contribute well. They like listening to stories and are keen to express their views. Pupils listen well to one another and respect different opinions and beliefs. Many older pupils are sensitive to the issues raised by religion and talk thoughtfully about them. They do not yet undertake their own research, but the teachers' planning includes future use of the Internet for that purpose.

202. Teaching is always at least satisfactory. It is good in 30 per cent of lessons and very good in 15 per cent. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection. Lessons are usually well planned, but sometimes teachers attempt to do too much in a single lesson and the focus is lost. Teachers make good use of the available artefacts to emphasise key points in their teaching and this allows pupils to understand the importance of symbols in religious belief. Teachers listen to what the pupils say and this gives the pupils the confidence to recount their own experiences. Relationships are good. Classes are well managed and good-humoured. This provides the right atmosphere for learning.

203. The management of teaching and learning is good and is well supported by the new scheme of work, based upon the Agreed Syllabus. Staff training provides well for the development of specialist knowledge in religious education, which was considered a weakness at the last inspection. Accommodation is satisfactory but a specialist room would allow optimum use of all the available resources. There are plans to increase the number of visits to places of worship. These are too few at present and cover an insufficient range of faiths.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

203. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

204. The inspection was undertaken by a team of 10 inspectors, including a lay inspector, each of whom was in the school for between two and three and a half days, a total of 31 inspection days.

205. Observations were made of 123 lessons, covering all areas of the compulsory curriculum and the additional subjects taught at the school, including personal and social education. In total, there were just over 100 hours of lesson observation. The work of every teacher in the school was inspected at least once and for the large majority a number of times. Inspectors also observed registration sessions, assemblies, and extra-curricular activities. The work of pupils across the age and ability range was closely scrutinised by the whole team. Discussions were held with a selected sample of the pupils about their views of the school and also, informally, with many other pupils during the inspection week. Discussions were held with all members of staff, with administrative assistants and with classroom support teachers and assistants. A meeting was held with parents, attended by 18 parents, at which they could share their views on the school with the inspection team and the responses to the 200 parents' questionnaire returns were analysed in detail.

206. All of the school's documentation, including the policies for the curriculum, attendance and financial data, was scrutinised closely both before and during the inspection.

207.DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y 5- Y 8	427	25	54	17

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (Y 5- Y 8)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	20.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	21.14

Education support staff (Y 5- Y 8)

Total number of education support staff:	5
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	40.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	86.9
--	------

Average teaching group size:	KS2	26
	KS3	25

Financial data

Financial year:	1998 – 1999
-----------------	-------------

	£
Total Income	642490.00
Total Expenditure	600270.00
Expenditure per pupil	1415.73
Balance brought forward from previous year	42490
Balance carried forward to next year	84710

207. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out:

400

Number of questionnaires returned:

200

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	18	67	11	3.5	0.5
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	27.7	63.6	7.2	1.5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	17.8	55.6	23.9	2.2	0.6
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	18.6	65.5	11.3	4.6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	19.8	65.6	7.8	4.7	2.1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	22.7	67.0	7.2	1.5	1.5
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	34.8	56.1	8.1	1.0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19.3	66.7	8.9	4.2	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	27.9	57.9	11.7	2	0.5
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	28.7	60.5	9.2	1	0.5
My child(ren) like(s) school	35.9	55.6	7.1	0	1.5