

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Evesham

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116960

Headteacher: Mr T M S Holland

Lead inspector: Mr A Henderson

Dates of inspection: 27 – 29 September 2004

Inspection number: 268382

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	10-13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	378
School address:	Station Road South Littleton Evesham Worcestershire
Postcode:	WR11 8TG
Telephone number:	01386 830311
Fax number:	01386 832024
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Orme
Date of previous inspection:	18 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Situated in a rural environment to the east of Evesham in Worcestershire, Blackminster is a slightly smaller than average size middle school for pupils aged 10 to 13 years. At present, there are 378 pupils on roll with broadly similar numbers of boys and girls. Pupils are mainly drawn from rural villages in the surrounding area, and few are from the school's immediate locality. The school serves a diverse area, which includes both social advantage and rural deprivation. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is average, but includes 11 pupils with statements of need; at three per cent of the roll this is above average. Virtually all pupils are indigenous white, and there are none at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, despite indications of some rural deprivation. Since the previous inspection, the school has achieved Investors in People status, and has also gained Sportsmark, Artsmark and an Eco award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2941	A Henderson	Lead inspector	Physical education
11077	J Harrison	Lay inspector	
32113	J Byrom	Team inspector	Mathematics Special educational needs
30941	K Brammer	Team inspector	English Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
2485	J McKenna	Team inspector	Science Design and technology
14841	M Duffey	Team inspector	Information technology History
23480	M Harding	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
11975	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Art Music
23926	D Howorth	Team inspector	Geography

The inspection contractor was:

Nord Anglia School Inspection Services
 Anglia House
 Carrs Road
 Cheadle
 Stockport
 SK8 2LA

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a successful and increasingly effective school that is providing a good quality of education for all its pupils. It has many more strengths than weaknesses. Standards are rising and, throughout the school, pupils are achieving well because teaching is good. **The school is well led and managed, and provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior team ensure improving standards and achievement.
- Relationships in the school are very good; the attitudes, behaviour and personal maturity of pupils make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities enhance pupils' learning, especially in sport and the arts.
- A very strong partnership with other schools benefits the learning of pupils throughout the school.
- Higher attaining pupils are not doing well enough in mathematics.
- Basic literacy and mathematical skills receive too little attention across the curriculum.
- The quality of subject management is inconsistent, particularly in relation to the effective evaluation of teaching and its impact on learning, and in the use of assessment information to properly match work to pupils' needs and to help raise standards.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1999. Standards are rising, teaching is stronger, and Year 6 test results show marked recent improvement, most notably in English. The school has responded well in tackling the key issues from the previous report.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	C	E	C	C
mathematics	D	D	D	C
science	D	D	C	C

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.*

In National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6 in 2004, results were average in English and science, compared with both all schools and similar schools. Those for mathematics were below average for all schools, although average compared with similar schools.

Currently, pupils' achievement is good throughout Years 6, 7 and 8. Standards of work seen are average overall in Year 6, and improve to above average in Years 7 and 8. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, and average in both mathematics and science; they are average in all other subjects apart from art, ICT, history and music where standards are above average, and French where they are well above average. At this stage, pupils are achieving well. By Year 8, standards are sustained well, and are also now above average in science, geography and physical education. There are average standards in mathematics, design and technology, citizenship and religious education. Overall, boys and girls of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well in Years 7 and 8 and their progress quickens as they move through the school.

Pupils' personal qualities are good overall, fostered by good pastoral support and well-planned programmes for personal, social and health education. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good also.** Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive and are reflected in their above average attendance. Behaviour is good, and relationships within the school are very harmonious.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and are responsible for the good achievement and rising standards. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects and good in the majority. Teaching is very good in music and French. The teaching and arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs are good and enables them to make the same good progress as other pupils. Assessment procedures are improving and, despite some uneven practice between subjects, are making a positive contribution to the improving standards.

The curriculum is good; the provision of French in Year 6 is a good feature. The very good range of extra-curricular opportunities support learning well, notably in sport and the arts, and are very popular with boys and girls. The school takes good care of its pupils; they are equally valued and respected, and their progress is well monitored. The school values its partnership with parents, and both pupils and parents appreciate the very successful arrangements for helping pupils settle into the school. The very strong links with first and high schools positively enhance pupils' learning across the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership together with a clear vision and high expectations of rising standards and ensuring pupils achieve their potential. With good support from the senior management team and staff, there is shared determination to improve further the quality of education throughout the school. Management is good - the school is well ordered, calm and purposeful; subject management is not always consistent - systems for checking teaching, and for using data to set targets and track pupils' progress, have been introduced but are not universally well-embedded in practice. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well; they have good knowledge of the school, provide strong and visible support, and monitor its work well, although not all statutory requirements are in place.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both pupils and parents are very supportive of the school, and have confidence in it. Their views are justifiable, particularly with regard to the good quality of teaching and the progress children make. Parents are pleased with leadership and management, and the arrangements for helping their children to settle in; they feel strongly that pupils are expected to work hard, and that they would be comfortable approaching the school about any issue. These views are strongly endorsed by the pupils, who also appreciate the positive atmosphere and very good relationships across the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in mathematics, in particular for higher attaining pupils.
- Ensure that basic literacy and mathematical skills are promoted effectively in all subjects.
- Ensure that the work of teachers, and the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning, is monitored and evaluated regularly by all subject leaders, and identified best practice is shared widely.
- Ensure a better analysis and use of assessment information by teachers in all subjects to inform their planning, match work closely to pupils' needs and to help to improve standards/achievement.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Fully comply with requirements for collective worship, and information provided in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievements are good in Years 6 to 8. Standards are broadly average on entry to the school and are above average by the end of Year 8. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress and their achievements are similar. Standards by year 8 in the core subjects are above average for English and science, and average for mathematics.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 6 results are improving, particularly in English and science.
- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Years 6-8 because they are taught well and are very keen to learn.
- Good progress has been made in improving standards and achievement in ICT.
- Standards in mathematics are not as high as those in the other core subjects.
- Weaknesses in leadership and management are affecting progress in religious education.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunity to use and improve their skills in literacy and mathematics in other subjects across the curriculum.

Commentary

1. Pupils join the school in Year 6, in contrast to most middle schools which start at Year 5. Their results in National Curriculum tests taken in Year 2 in their first schools are approaching average. The school supplements the data supplied by first schools with further standardised tests on entry to Year 6; these confirm the school receives pupils from the full range and standards are broadly average overall, but that quantitative ability is the weakest of the components of the tests.
2. From this starting point, pupils work for only two terms before taking the end of Key Stage tests in Year 6. Results in these National Curriculum tests dipped in 2003 from those since the previous inspection which had matched the national rate of improvement. Both mathematics and science were below average, whilst results in English were much lower than predicted and were below average. Taken together the overall results in 2003 were below average compared with all schools, and were well below average for similar schools (i.e. those with pupils who achieved similar results in their Year 2 tests). The school fell well short of its challenging targets in English and mathematics, although exceeding that for science.
3. Most recent results in 2004 show improvement. Pupils' performance improved in each of the core subjects with a particularly sharp rise in English. Results in English and science were average compared with both all schools and similar schools. In mathematics results were below average for all schools, although average for similar schools. Despite this general improvement, results fell short of the targets set, and there was a dip in performance amongst higher attainers in mathematics.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.2 (25.5)	27.0 (26.8)
Mathematics	26.4 (25.9)	27.2 (26.8)
Science	28.7 (28.3)	28.9 (28.6)

There were 122 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

4. Standards in lessons seen in Year 6 are average; pupils are achieving well and their progress is good in response to good teaching overall. Standards in English are above average and pupils are achieving well. In French, standards are well above average and pupils are achieving very well as a result of very good and sometimes inspirational teaching. Standards are also above average in information and communication technology (ICT), art, history and music; they are average in all other subjects seen. Given their starting points, pupils are achieving well in music; their achievement is also good in science, ICT, art, history, geography and physical education. In other subjects, achievement is satisfactory.
5. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are higher and are above average. The pace of progress gathers momentum as pupils move through the school. Well above standards in French continue; those in English, ICT, art, music and history are sustained at above average, and are joined by science, geography and physical education at this stage. In mathematics, design technology, religious education and citizenship standards continue to be average and pupils' achievement in these subjects is satisfactory. In religious education, a lack of specialist leadership and management are affecting progress because work is not always sufficiently challenging. Achievement is good in all other subjects, and is very good in the work sampled in French. At this stage the impact of good teaching combines with very positive pupil attitudes to ensure they learn well and make good progress. This progress is clearly reflected in the above average results of Year 9 National Curriculum tests which pupils take in the High schools to which they transfer.
6. There is no significant variation between the achievement and progress of boys and girls. In recent years boys at the school have similar results to their peers nationally, whilst girls have done less well than girls nationally. Girls' performance in English is ahead of boys, reflecting the national picture. The reverse is true in mathematics, where the gap is wider than usual; analysis of other test data indicates that there are far fewer girls with higher attaining potential, and such variation is not therefore unexpected.
7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, in line with the achievement of other pupils. In mathematics, the achievement of these pupils in Year 6 is better than that of other pupils. The school identifies pupils who are gifted academically or have a particular talent, for example in music or sport; these pupils also achieve well.
8. The majority of pupils identified as having special educational needs have moderate or specific learning difficulties and low levels of literacy and numeracy. These pupils inevitably perform below the level of others in their year, but they make good progress. In 2004, at the end of Year 6 over half of these pupils reached level 4 in English, reflecting very good progress from their starting points. This was the result of very good teaching together with very effective in-class support.
9. Standards in both literacy and numeracy are average. Good progress is being made in using the national framework for literacy development and subjects are beginning to plan systematically to support this. However, literacy skills, and particularly writing, are not regularly reinforced in all subjects. As yet, too little attention has been given to the use of mathematics to support learning in other subjects, and opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum are insufficient. Pupils' ICT capability is good, and most subjects are providing good opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills in their work, building effectively on the much improved computer provision in the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes are very good and their attendance and behaviour are good. Pupils make good gains in personal maturity at the school. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are very well motivated in their studies and behave well both in lessons and around the school.
- Attendance is good and pupils are very punctual.
- The school provides good opportunities for pupils to become responsible and mature, and their social development is very good.

Commentary

10. Pupils like their school and are proud of it. This is evident from talking to the pupils and their parents and from the survey of pupils' views that the school conducted. Pupils are very well motivated, keen to work hard and attentive because of the strong learning atmosphere that teachers work hard to ensure. Pupils show respect for their teachers, they behave well and often very well in nearly all lessons. In only a few lessons do these good standards slip slightly. This can be if the teaching is not up to the school's usual good standard or a few pupils distract others.
11. Pupils are helpful and considerate because the school fosters the good levels of maturity that pupils bring with them. Pupils of differing abilities and backgrounds get along together well at the school. The school effectively promotes confident relationships and self esteem through the tutorial programmes and assemblies. Incidences of bullying are rare and pupils say that they are quickly and effectively resolved. Any such incidents are recorded by the teachers, but the school does not keep a central log of any such occurrences. Such a log would facilitate monitoring and checking upon the effectiveness of the school's behaviour and relationship strategies. The new system of assertive discipline is working effectively; pupils know what is expected of them and helped to draw up their code of conduct. The merit and house system encourage pupils to succeed as they know their efforts are valued and recognised.
12. Pupils are very willing to take responsibility. Year 8 prefects help in the running of the school. Pupil representatives from each year group organise environmental projects on energy through an eco council. Break times and lunch times are pleasant and relaxed because of good behaviour and very good relationships. Pupils are enthusiastic to join the wide range of lunchtime clubs run by the school and these foster constructive activities. The number of fixed period exclusions is very much lower than is typical of a school this size and it is significant that no pupils have had to be permanently excluded.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	372	1	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

13. Pupils are keen to come to school because they think it is a good school. As a result, attendance rates are above average. Individual attendance is monitored well, although there are missed opportunities to analyse attendance statistics to help identify any trend in attendance patterns on a whole school or group basis.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.4	School data	0.0
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

14. Pupils with special educational needs behave well and are very keen to succeed. This is most evident when they are taught in small ability groups with additional in-class support or when subject teachers plan specifically for their needs within mixed ability groups. The school's inclusive approach to children with special needs is very evident and pupils feel valued and respected. They have good relationships with other pupils and very good relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants.
15. The provision for personal development is good overall. The school has worked hard at planning more explicitly for personal development across the curriculum. In particular, there has been work on improving spiritual development by developing pupils' thinking skills and giving them more chances to be reflective.
16. Spiritual provision is now good. The school's ethos and environment is inspiring, and pupils enjoy many chances for creative and aesthetic work in and out of lessons. The spiritual aspect of religious education in exploring beliefs and values has improved. The provision for a daily act of collective worship is still not fully in place, but some high quality moments for spiritual development were seen in assemblies for the whole school, enhanced well by music and singing.
17. Moral development continues to be good, and again the school has worked to improve provision by making the common-sense principles that underpin school rules more explicit. As a result, pupils perceive the school to be fair, and the principles are demonstrated well in the mutual respect and good relationships between teachers and pupils. Moral aspects arise in some lessons where issues are explored well. This was seen in English and science. Pupils are also encouraged to be generous towards a range of charities.

18. The provision for social development continues to be very good in the range of roles in which pupils can take responsibility and contribute to the school community both formally and informally. Prefects on duty during the inspection were very mature and diligent. There is both a school council and an eco council with a specific environmental role, and elections for both of these. Citizenship, physical education and music give very good opportunities for social development. In all other subjects, the opportunities are good through collaborative work and consistent class routines to listen and be courteous.
19. The provision for cultural development has improved. The school has been successful in widening the range of opportunities for pupils to learn about cultural diversity; this was particularly evident in music and religious education, through global citizenship, and in the displays resulting from the recent day celebrating many cultures. The provision for European heritage is strong in many lessons and extra activities.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a good quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are good across the school. The curriculum is good with very good enrichment opportunities for all pupils. Pupils receive good care, support and guidance, and the school has an effective partnership with parents and the local community. The very good links with both first and high schools strongly support pupils' learning and progress.

Teaching and learning

Both teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and are supported well by thorough assessment procedures that help pupils improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning are very good in music and French.
- Very good relationships, strong management and positive support for pupils underpin the positive atmosphere for learning across the school.
- The school gives high priority to improving teaching and learning; the national Key Stage 3 strategy is having positive impact, but is not yet consistently applied in all subjects.
- Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations and encouragement by working hard and trying their best.
- Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, and good use is made of teaching assistants to support their learning.
- Insufficient attention is given to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- In some lessons the pace is too slow, and work is not well-matched to the range of pupils' needs and capabilities.
- Not all subjects are using assessment information effectively enough to plan work which meets the full range of pupils' needs.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 71 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (3%)	20 (28%)	29 (41%)	19 (27%)	1 (1%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

20. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In Year 6 teaching was at least good in approaching four-fifths of lessons seen, whilst in Years 7 and 8 more than two-thirds of lessons were good or better. Both parents and pupils acknowledge the quality of teaching throughout the school. Teaching in the majority of subjects is good. It is very good in music and French. Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school in design technology, religious education and citizenship; they are also satisfactory in mathematics in Year 6, although good in Years 7 and 8.
21. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection; the proportion of good or better teaching has improved, particularly in Year 6, and the proportion of lessons judged to be at least very good has more than doubled. Good work has been done to generate this improvement; improving teaching and learning is a cornerstone of the school's improvement planning. Emphasis has been on improving teaching and learning styles by using strategies encouraged by the national Key Stage 3 initiative, together with developing the observation of work in the classroom to identify and share good practice in both teaching and how pupils learn best. The impact of this work together with improvements in assessment procedures are helping to raise standards but require more consistent application across and within subjects.
22. Across the school, examples of very good teaching feature in the majority of subjects inspected. It is the high expectations of what pupils can achieve that characterise this most effective teaching. A high level of challenge, matched well to pupils' needs, ensures their progress and generates enthusiastic responses. This is particularly true of teaching in French and music, and results in positive achievement from totally engaged pupils. Teachers' careful planning, very positive presentation of their subjects, and expectation that pupils are engaged in enjoyable yet critical analysis and review were clearly illustrated here, and notably in other lessons in art and English.
23. Key features of the good teaching in all subjects are the thorough planning and preparation of lessons and the variety of activities pupils experience in most subjects. Teachers ensure that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn and why - this positive feature of the Key Stage 3 initiative is clearly impacting in most subjects. As a result, pupils make generally good gains in their learning, particularly when work is well matched to their ranging needs. A Year 6 science lesson in which pupils successfully made branching keys to classify organisms illustrated these features well.
24. The management of pupils is a considerable strength of the teaching. Relationships are very good. Teachers are good role models and relate well to pupils, providing very good individual support and encouragement. Pupils in turn respond very well and there is very little disruption in lessons. They are keen to learn, and are very positive in their attitudes and commitment to their work. As a result, pupils make good gains in their learning. Many teachers are good listeners and treat all pupils with equal respect. Consequently, there is a strong atmosphere of trust and consideration that enables boys and girls of all abilities to make good progress.
25. Not all lessons are as effective. Pupils' progress is occasionally slower than it should be in some lessons in design technology, mathematics, science and religious education where weaknesses relate to work not sufficiently matched to differing pupil needs, somewhat pedestrian pace, and on occasion shortcomings in specialist knowledge and understanding. However, a positive feature in all subjects is the effective use made of homework to develop work in lessons and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.
26. All teachers are aware of the need to promote the basic literacy skills in their subjects, and are reasonably successful in this, although more consistency is needed. A particularly strong contribution was seen, for example, in a very good Year 8 geography lesson where pupils illustrated their understanding of the effects of earthquakes through their own poetry. Numeracy features less strongly and has not yet been the focus of similarly rigorous

attention given to literacy throughout the school. The use and application of ICT in subjects is much more widespread with the good improvements in computer facilities and staff expertise, and is a major strength in art.

27. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good across all subjects. It is very good in English where these pupils are taught in small groups by a very skilful and enthusiastic team of one teacher and two teaching assistants. The pupils are subdivided into three smaller groups where they receive excellent support on basic literacy skills to help them develop strategies for reading, spelling and punctuation in a very happy, caring environment. In mathematics, teaching and learning are also very good when there is in-class support, but this is not always available. All subject teachers have copies of the individual education plans for pupils on the special educational needs register and these mostly are clear and helpful. These are mostly used well to target support which is delivered effectively by the teaching assistants. However, in some mixed-ability groups, for example, in history the work is insufficiently varied to meet individual needs, and in lessons where there is no additional in-class support these pupils make less progress.
28. Assessment is good overall. The school is developing and promoting assessment procedures well and they are beginning to make an effective contribution to improving standards. Teachers now have comprehensive data about pupils and each subject has a detailed profile of their performance in a range of national and optional tests and their predicted attainment levels. The use of this data for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress is good in the core subjects and in the special educational needs department but, in some subjects, teachers need training in how to get the best use from it.
29. Most marking and assessment of work results in pupils knowing their National Curriculum levels and being aware of what they need to do to improve; however, there is still some scope for subjects to relate their assessments more closely to National Curriculum levels. This will involve pupils even more in the assessment process and help them to evaluate their own work and progress. Although there is very good practice in some subjects, in French, for example, assessment data is not regularly used for planning lessons which meet the needs of specific groups of pupils, such as the most able, though it is well used to identify underachieving pupils. A weakness is in the inconsistency of assessment use across the school which arises from the lack of rigorous and systematic monitoring.

The curriculum

The curriculum has improved and is now good. It meets all statutory requirements. A very good programme of enrichment enhances the taught curriculum. This provision makes a significant contribution to pupils' good personal development and enables the talents of all pupils to be identified, thereby turning potential into success. Accommodation is very good and learning resources are good; they have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. Staffing is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The distinctive secondary specialist provision in Year 6 includes French and citizenship.
- All pupils take part in an extensive range of enrichment activities including cross-curricular theme days and an annual 'Activities Week'.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Personal, social and health education are good.
- The requirement to provide a daily act of worship for all pupils is not fully met.
- Accommodation is very good. Specialist accommodation for science, design technology and physical education is very good and the school occupies a large, pleasant site.
- There are enough teachers to teach the curriculum but the small complement of staff results in timetabling constraints and increases the amount of non-specialist teaching.
- Resources for learning are good in most subjects but are unsatisfactory in music and religious education, and the library is just satisfactory.

Commentary

30. The curriculum provides good learning opportunities for boys and girls of all abilities and backgrounds. It enables them to make good progress as they move up through the school. The curricular provision is very good in art and design and good in other subjects. Planning is strong and ensures that pupils achieve well by providing progression in their learning.
31. Overall, the curriculum is broad and balanced and the teaching time considerably exceeds the minimum recommendation. In Year 6, the typical secondary school curriculum is much broader than that usually found in a primary school because it includes French and citizenship, both of which contribute strongly to pupils' achievement and personal development at this stage. In addition, there are good specialist facilities in subjects like science, design and technology, art, music, ICT and physical education. Dance is taught within physical education to both boys and girls throughout the school. As well as the National Curriculum subjects, religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) are taught in every year. The provision of PSHE is good and includes citizenship, sex and drugs education. It is well planned and taught; statutory requirements are fully met including those for careers education in Years 7 and 8, and overall the course contributes well to pupils' social development.
32. An imaginative and exciting development is the recent introduction of an integrated 'arts' period in Year 8. This provides additional experiences combining drama, music, dance and art working on themes such as the 'Victorians'. During the year the normal timetable is suspended to accommodate special theme days as, for example, the multi-cultural day when pupils sample South American carnivals, Asian dance, African storytelling and prepare and taste a variety of international cuisine. During each summer term an 'Activities Week' includes circus skills, orienteering and a residential camp for virtually all Year 8 pupils, again providing a major opportunity for developing their social and academic skills.
33. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school believes wholeheartedly in a policy of inclusion and pupils with special educational needs have access to the whole curriculum. In addition, homework clubs are provided for them by the teaching assistants. Small ability groups in English and mathematics together with in-class support enable teachers to provide for pupils' individual needs very effectively. In mixed ability classes there is usually additional in-class support and this is most effective when the work is matched to need. However, in some subjects, for example, science, design and technology, and citizenship, all pupils are expected to do the same work, which, although pupils with special educational needs are usually well supported in this by the teaching assistants, does not match their needs precisely.
34. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good overall, though at present this is mainly through the normal curriculum with more challenging work for higher attaining pupils but little specifically for those identified as gifted or talented. Provision for those with a talent in the arts or sport is enhanced by good extra-curricular opportunities. In mathematics, pupils are encouraged to enter a weekly challenge. Additional provision is planned through the pyramid initiative with other local schools; pupils will be encouraged to join the SWIPE (students working in pursuit of excellence) club and a number of exciting activities are already planned.
35. The school organises a very good range of learning outside school hours. Despite issues relating to transport, the activities are popular and well-supported by boys and girls. Aspects of particular strength are sport, music and arts activities generally, but all subjects are actively engaged in providing additional experiences which are making positive impact both on standards and pupils' personal development.

36. Staffing is satisfactory with enough teachers to enable the curriculum to be taught. Some subjects, such as art, music and physical education, are taught exclusively by teachers with appropriate specialist qualifications and knowledge, but there is a considerable amount of non-specialist teaching in some other subjects. Teachers work hard to overcome the limitations posed by their lack of specialist knowledge; some of the non-specialist teaching is of good quality but, in general, while being satisfactory overall it is less effective than specialist teaching. The fact that the complement of staff is small and some are part-time poses constraints on timetabling and increases the amount of non-specialist teaching. There is an adequate number of teaching assistants. The school is providing some technical support in science, although it too is non-specialist, but in general the amount of support provided for practical subjects is low.
37. Accommodation is very good. The school occupies a large, pleasant site and the extensive grounds are attractive and used well for teaching and learning. Specialist accommodation for subjects such as science, design technology and physical education is very good, and for most other subjects is good, although in a few cases, classrooms are on the small side and rather cramped.
38. Resources for learning are good in the large majority of subjects, with a suitable range of textbooks and other equipment. The exceptions are in music and religious education where they are insufficient, and in citizenship where resources are just adequate. The library is satisfactory. It provides a pleasant environment and quality of fiction has been improved recently, but it is not centrally located and there are not yet enough non-fiction texts in it. Since the previous inspection there has been a considerable expansion of the use of computers to support teaching and learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care, welfare and health and safety. Pupils are given good support and guidance and are involved effectively in the work and development of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is friendly, well ordered and pastoral care is good. This enables pupils to learn with confidence.
- Induction procedures are very good, so new pupils are enthusiastic about coming to Blackminster School.
- Child protection procedures are satisfactory, but training for all staff and more comprehensive written guidelines would strengthen provision.
- Pupils know their views matter and this makes them feel valued.
- Arrangements to support pupils with special educational needs are very good.

Commentary

39. This is a caring school where pupils are known well by tutors and Heads of Year, and their needs recognised. The pattern for this successful care is established early on in school life with a very good induction programme. Parents complimented the induction information and meetings which helped them and their children know what to expect and the work to be taught. There is some exchange teaching with the First Schools; this is good practice which helps pupils to get to know their prospective teachers and ensures a smooth transition.
40. Health and safety procedures and practice are good. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. The school is well maintained and cared for. Pupils are well supervised at lunch times by teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers also supervise pupils catching buses at the end of the day; this demonstrates the school's careful concern for pupils' welfare.

41. The headteacher is the designated person responsible for child protection matters and appropriate procedures are followed. All staff know to refer any concerns appropriately. However, the school does not routinely provide training for all teaching, non-teaching and supply staff on child protection matters. Such training is overdue and advisable. Written guidelines on child protection need to include advice on how best to handle situations if a child should choose to disclose a confidential matter to them.
42. Pupils are very positive about the school because they feel well supported and confident that the school helps to develop their potential. The tutor group programme of personal, social and health education promotes good values. Pupils enjoy year group outings and activity weeks and these foster strong relationships. Bullying is not an issue because incidents are usually minor and dealt with very effectively. The Heads of Year work closely with tutors and the special needs co-ordinator, and with parents, to ensure that all pupils who are having difficulties with work or behaviour are supported and cared for. Teaching assistants provide good support in the classrooms for children with identified behavioural, physical or learning needs. Pupils are given good guidance in their academic work and know what National Curriculum levels they are working at. They are given effective guidance through marking and their annual reports about how to improve.
43. The school regularly canvasses pupils' views. These surveys show that pupils have very positive views of their school. Pupils contribute their ideas about school matters through an elected school council, which is an effective body. Pupils also play a very active part helping as prefects and monitors and thus have a strong sense of commitment to their school.
44. Arrangements for assessing the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good and all statutory requirements are met. All pupils on the special educational needs register have detailed and helpful individual education plans and these are reviewed termly by the special educational needs co-ordinator and teaching assistants; subject teachers contribute usefully to these reviews. Pupils with statements also have a formal annual review, which is attended by parents and the appropriate outside agencies as well as school's special educational needs co-ordinator. In addition the special educational needs co-ordinator holds termly support meetings with outside agencies who give expert advice on a range of special needs including speech and language, autism and attention deficit disorder as well as learning difficulties; these are also attended by the headteacher or deputy head and the educational psychologist. There are good transition arrangements with the special educational needs co-ordinator attending Year 5 reviews prior to pupils transferring to Blackminster.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good, constructive relationships with parents. Links with the community are satisfactory and those with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the school, receive good information about their children's progress, and in return give good support to the school and their children's education.
- The governors' report to parents and the prospectus do not contain all the required statutory information.
- There are very effective links with the seven feeder First Schools and the two main High Schools which benefit pupils' transition and progress.

Commentary

45. Parents are very satisfied with the school. They say that the school expects their children to work hard, teaching is good and the school is well run. Parents expressed no significant concerns, although there was some dissent on the extent of consultation and progress information. Consultation with parents is effective although not yet systematically established. This year the school consulted parents by questionnaire, and their views of the school were overwhelmingly positive. The school provides good information on children's progress. The annual written reports are good and usefully supplemented by well thought out interim reports. This reporting pattern provides timely and apposite information on children's attainment and progress.
46. The school regularly sends out good quality information, including the Blackminster News, so parents are well informed about school life. Pupils' homework diaries are used very effectively. Parents complimented the excellent induction information and the curriculum information sent out each term. The last inspection noted some reporting deficiencies in the governors' report to parents and prospectus; this is still the case. The published information needs to include a comparison of results to national results and more specific information on the progress of children with identified special educational needs, disability access and school finance.
47. Although, the school does not currently enjoy the dedicated support of a parents' association, parents do give good support to social and fundraising events such as the Christmas raffle and Fayre and the recent multi-cultural event. Some parents have given valuable help with reading, the library or with sports teams and transport. Parents' support for their children's education is demonstrated by their very good levels of attendance at the meetings with teachers to discuss their child's progress. Despite the location of the school in a rural and comparatively scattered community, there are sound links, although the school rightly recognises that there is some potential to increase the use of the school by the community. Some local businesses sponsor the school prospectus diaries and rewards system. Pupils take part in music, art and drama performances in Evesham library.
48. The transfer of information on pupils with partner schools is efficient and timely. Arrangements with feeder First schools are very effective and supportive of transition. The close links with First and High Schools enable pupils to take part in a wide range of sporting and social activities and to benefit from some specialist teaching as, for example, Spanish taught by High School teachers. There is a teacher exchange project with some of the feeder First Schools which fosters very good curriculum continuity.
49. Links with the parents of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. Parents are fully involved in the statutory annual review of pupils with statements of special educational needs, but not in the reviews of other pupils on the special educational needs register. For these pupils, changes to their individual education plans are recorded at the back of the pupils' homework diaries, but parents are not formally informed or their views sought. They are informed at the start of each school year that their child is on the special educational needs register and parents can talk to the special educational needs co-ordinator at parents' evenings.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good. Management is good overall. The work of the governors is effective and they are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vision, determination and planning of the headteacher has created good teamwork so that standards have improved and pupils' very good attitudes have been maintained.

- Self-evaluation, strategic planning, performance management and staff development link together effectively to support the school's vision.
- Monitoring the impact of teaching and learning, the use of assessment data and the procedures for developing literacy and mathematics across the curriculum are not consistently and rigorously applied within and across subjects.
- Governors are influential in their role as critical friends, although not all statutory requirements are in place.
- The school is managed very well on a day-to-day basis.
- Very good leadership is clear in music and evident in art and design and French.
- Leadership and management of special educational needs is very good.

Commentary

50. 'Turning potential into success' is the core of the school's ethos. The headteacher's commitment to this mission, his clear vision and his planning have ensured that pupils are now achieving well. Standards are higher and teaching and learning are better than at the time of the previous inspection. Therefore, improvement has been good.
51. Leadership throughout the school has gained strength through the extension of the senior team. This has been supplemented with the changed focus in the responsibilities of middle management from administration to monitoring and evaluation. Teachers have been involved in consultation so that effective subject and pastoral teams have formed. These changes have released potential and skills so that the school is now more effective in managing change. For example, there are single gender classes in mathematics in Year 7 to improve standards. A new structure and scheme for teaching citizenship and personal, social and health education has been successfully introduced. Another good innovation is the Year 8 integrated 'arts' period.
52. Whilst leadership and management are good overall, there are variations in subjects. Very good leadership is clear in music (and also evident in art and design, and French which were not inspected in detail) with positive impact on standards. Key characteristics of strong leadership are the high level of expectation and challenge in the work in these subjects, together with the positive way in which assessment procedures reinforce and support pupils' confidence in their learning. Leadership and management are satisfactory in religious education where the school has experienced difficulty in recruiting a subject leader with specialist qualifications and experience.
53. Despite the priority given to improving teaching and learning through monitoring and evaluation, the use of assessment data, and the promotion of literacy and mathematics across the curriculum there are inconsistencies in the rigour and impact of these procedures within and across subjects. They are least effective in design and technology, mathematics, physical education, religious education and science. For example, in mathematics and science there is little use of assessment data to match work more closely to pupils' needs so that the achievement of higher attaining pupils is not maximised. The challenge for leadership and management at all levels is to ensure a more robust and consistent implementation of agreed procedures to enable all pupils to realise their full potential and thereby drive up standards and results in Year 6 even further.
54. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and corresponds closely with the inspection findings. Strategic planning at all levels maintains a sharp focus on raising standards further through continuing to identify and share the very best practice in teaching and learning. Subjects are financed not only on basic resource costs but also on plans where development and improvement are identified. Staff training and development are linked to these priorities effectively alongside performance management.

55. Special educational needs across the school is very well led and effectively managed, and reflects the school's strong commitment to the development and care for all its pupils. The strong team of skilled teaching assistants are very well deployed, and work very well together. The effective management of information ensures that all teachers know and understand pupils' individual education plans and have the opportunity to contribute to them. Staff training needs are identified and addressed, and appropriate priorities are set for the school year. Very effective links have been established with the local education authority and other outside agencies to ensure appropriate support for pupils.
56. The governance of the school is good. Governors are conscientious and strongly committed to the school's well-being. They support the school well in shaping its future. Through their clear committee structures and regular meetings, governors are well informed and understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Governors check regularly on standards achieved and the quality of education provided. Through the review and formulation of policies they have done their best to ensure that all statutory requirements are in place. The governors' action plan in response to the previous inspection has been successful. However, the school does not fully meet requirements for collective worship, and published data relating to attendance and Year 6 test results are not compared with the national picture.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,126,062
Total expenditure	1,121,904
Expenditure per pupil	2,968

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	21,853
Balance carried forward to the next	43,602

57. The school's financial affairs are managed well. Financial management is well thought through and has enabled significant improvements, for example, in provision for ICT and science. The school works hard and mainly successful in overcoming the limitations experienced by a small school with consequent budget and staffing constraints alongside an uncertain future of possible LEA reorganisations. Through its good leadership, a clear focus on standards and progress has been sustained. Principles of best value are applied well and financial administration is good. The school matches its spending well to its priorities and specific grants, for example, for special educational needs, are used properly. Unit costs are average, pupils are achieving well, and the school is providing good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In this curriculum area English was the focus for the inspection. Work in French was also sampled, and three lessons were seen, one each in Years 6, 7 and 8. Standards are above average because of very good, and sometimes excellent, teaching. Assessment information is very well used in lesson planning and the leadership of the subject is very strong.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good management and good teaching are raising standards in all years.
- Pupils' enthusiasm and positive attitudes contribute well to their good achievement.
- Curriculum enrichment opportunities are very good.
- Teachers' marking does not always guide pupils towards improvement, particularly in Year 6.
- Planning for, and the evaluation of, literacy in subjects is inconsistent.

Commentary

58. Results in Year 6 standard tests in 2003 were well below average, having been average the previous year. Girls outperformed boys by a similar margin to that nationally. These 2003 results were also well below those in schools with a similar ability intake. However, the 2004 results indicate a significant improvement. The school's optional test results for Year 7 and 8 pupils show standards to be better than expected for these age groups.
59. Current standards are above average overall. Speaking and listening skills are well above average in all years because pupils are encouraged to use talk to share and develop their ideas in every lesson. Reading is above average. Teachers work hard to help pupils to develop their comprehension skills and encourage them to read for pleasure: however, many middle and lower attaining pupils have difficulty recognising implicit meanings. Writing standards are average. Spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, understanding and use of a range of sentence structures and grammar improve well in Year 6. This improvement is sustained through Years 7 and 8 as writing becomes more challenging. Pupils regularly use, and experiment with, a wide range of vocabulary and are not deterred from using language creatively by a fear of making technical mistakes. High attaining pupils write confidently and show good narrative skills. In all years and groups, creative writing is better than writing to inform or explain. Boys' writing in particular shows good gains because their needs are well targeted by teachers.
60. Achievement from entry to the end of Year 8 is good because of consistently good teaching, pupils' very positive attitudes and enjoyment of the subject and the many enrichment opportunities provided by a high quality extra curricular and support programme. New teaching schemes now include a wide and exciting range of literature, as well as units on drama and ICT to challenge all abilities. Pupils with identified special educational needs also achieve well because of the close teamwork between teachers and learning assistants and the very good relationship between adults and learners. Good use is made of the library and computers to support and extend pupils' learning and to develop their independence.

61. Teaching and learning are good overall. There is some very good teaching in all years, including lessons given by non-specialists, which engages pupils and makes learning rewarding and enjoyable; therefore, pupils behave well and are eager to learn. In these lessons, teachers clearly identify the skills and understanding to be developed and fully involve pupils in evaluating their own learning. The careful setting of pupils also helps teachers to ensure that all have work which is suited to their needs. Teachers have successfully researched how boys learn and how to motivate them; consequently, they have high expectations of them and use a good range of successful methods. Pupils' test and examination data are beginning to be used effectively to set targets for them and to identify where there is underachievement: however, whilst marking is positive, not all teachers regularly use it to show pupils exactly what they have to do to improve.
62. The good leadership of the department promotes a strong corporate dedication and a total commitment to the raising of standards. Management is good. Systems for the close monitoring of teaching and marking are still being developed, but the subject's priorities are clearly identified, best practice and lesson planning shared and staff well supported. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Good teaching is enabling all groups of pupils to achieve well. New management and thorough lesson plans are driving up standards; ICT is now fully established in the curriculum, and assessment information is being shared with pupils.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

63. The provision for literacy is satisfactory and standards are average. Although speaking and listening are above average, there are weaknesses in pupils' writing in several subjects. Only high attaining students write with consistent accuracy and develop argument effectively.
64. Overall achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils speak confidently and fluently because these skills are carefully targeted in all lessons. Reading for information improves as pupils mature but comprehension skills are not developed so well. Some groups have opportunities for independent reading in their form time; and reading is also promoted through regular hymn singing and competitions. Writing is the weakest area of literacy, especially writing to express and support opinions. Although literacy skills, particularly vocabulary development, are well taught in English, they are not regularly reinforced in all subjects.
65. Overall, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory. There is very good practice in geography, music and art, but it is not consistent across departments; planned opportunities, such as that in geography which has produced impressive poems about earthquakes, are missed. The quality of teachers' correcting of writing is inconsistent and, in some subjects, pupils are not shown models of good writing. Additionally, there is insufficient evidence of pupils rewriting their work, or parts of it, to incorporate their teachers' advice.
66. The monitoring and evaluation of literacy planning and teaching by some subject heads is not rigorous enough. There is no cross-curricular group to promote and drive literacy forward and although the English department is working to develop a reading for pleasure culture, the contribution of the library and librarian to whole school literacy have yet to be fully considered.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving slowly, and the standards reached by higher attaining pupils are below average compared with similar schools.
- Pupils are very well motivated and enjoy very good relationships with their teachers.
- Lesson plans are usually very well structured to address individual needs, although in some lessons the work for higher attaining pupils lacks rigour and challenge.
- Assessment is used very well to inform teaching and learning.
- There is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work; as a result there is insufficient support for individual teachers and best practice is not shared.
- ICT is not used widely enough to enhance learning in mathematics.
- There are too few planned opportunities to develop mathematics skills in subjects across the curriculum.

Commentary

67. In 2003, pupils' results in statutory tests taken in Year 6 were below the national average. They were also below average when compared with schools of similar prior attainment. In 2004 the proportion of pupils reaching level 4 or above increased, but the proportion of higher attainers reaching level 5 fell. Fewer girls than boys achieved level 4 in both 2003 and 2004. The rate of improvement over the last four years is below the national trend. Currently, overall standards in Year 6 are broadly average. This reflects satisfactory achievement from pupils' starting points. Boys and girls achieve similarly and pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
68. Standards in the current Years 7 and 8 are also average, and show steady improvement as pupils progress through the school. Both boys and girls achieve well given their below average standards when they were in Year 6. Pupils in all year groups are articulate and confident in answering questions and explaining their answers. They are very well motivated and set out their work neatly. They organise themselves sensibly for group work and work collaboratively. They draw and measure accurately. Numeracy skills are good and pupils are confident in making sensible estimations. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good in all three years, and very good when there is additional in class support.
69. Teaching and learning are good overall, but weaker in Year 6 where teaching and learning are satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils in Years 6 and 8 are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons. As a result, they make less progress than they should in those lessons and are not reaching the higher levels. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs both in Year 6 and in Years 7 and 8 was at least good in all lessons seen. This is because lessons are very well structured to enable these pupils to learn in small steps, and in most lessons they receive very effective one-to-one support from both teachers and teaching assistants. Lessons are usually very well planned, with clear learning objectives which are shared with the pupils. Teachers use a range of teaching strategies, including paired and group work, with good emphasis on numeracy skills. The national strategy to improve teaching and learning is used well overall, and pupils are expected to explain their methods and to use mathematical language accurately. At present, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT to enhance their learning of mathematics. Interactive white boards are used well as a teaching aid by some teachers but this good practice is not yet widespread. Very detailed analysis of assessments to identify the pupils' strengths and weaknesses informs lesson planning. This results in very good long term planning and teaching which focuses clearly on most pupils' needs. Homework is used well to complement classwork and consolidate learning. The quality of marking is good overall, and

sometimes very good, with very clear, detailed comments to encourage and inform pupils how to improve. Teachers use the optional national tests at the end of Year 7 to monitor pupil progress and to address any weaknesses. Work is referenced to National Curriculum levels and this is shared with pupils so they have a clear understanding of how well they are doing. Relationships are very good and pupils are attentive and diligent in lessons.

70. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory and management is good. Teachers work well together and share a commitment to raise standards, but their involvement in more than one subject area gives them too few opportunities to meet together regularly to discuss teaching and learning and to share good practice. At present, there is insufficient formal monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work. As a result, weaknesses in teaching, for example, insecure subject knowledge or lack of rigour and challenge, are not identified and addressed. Assessment of pupils' work is used very well to inform planning and data is analysed well to measure their progress. All pupils have individual targets based on national curriculum levels and they know what these are. There is some planned use of ICT, particularly for pupils in Years 7 and 8, but this is not yet sufficient to meet pupils' needs and entitlement.
71. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The use of assessment is now a strength. The use of ICT has improved but not sufficiently. The national strategy for improving teaching and learning has been implemented in all years and is contributing to improving standards, particularly of numeracy skills. There is still insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning, and higher attaining pupils are not always fully challenged.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Pupils are able to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics in other subjects, but opportunities for this are insufficient. Pupils use their graphical skills competently in science and carry out distance-time calculations; they use fractions in music and spreadsheets in ICT. Two years ago, all staff received training for the teaching and application of mathematics across the curriculum, but there has been no follow-up since. There is little evidence of planning for the teaching of mathematics across the subjects of the curriculum. As a result, there is insufficient focus across the school on raising achievement in mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards improve as pupils move through the school and those reached by pupils in Year 8 are above average overall.
- Teaching is good overall and pupils achieve well in most lessons, although some non-specialist teaching is less effective.
- Lessons are well planned although work is not modified enough for pupils of different prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support but higher attaining pupils could be challenged more.
- Extensive use of worksheets restricts opportunities for pupils to explain their work in their own words.
- Specialist facilities and good resources support pupils' learning well, but not enough use is made of ICT.
- The subject leader works hard to raise standards, but there needs to be more monitoring of teaching and action to share good practice.

Commentary

73. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining the expected level was average. The proportion gaining higher than expected levels was well below average, however, and this made results below the national average overall. These results were also below those from similar schools. Results in 2004 were better, especially at the higher level where they improved considerably. This is due to the positive impact of developments in curriculum planning and assessment. Current standards in Year 6 are average across all areas of science. Pupils have secure factual knowledge because this aspect of their learning is reinforced well during the two terms that they have in the school before taking the national tests. They are developing their understanding of key scientific concepts although not all pupils can yet explain them fully and clearly.
74. Standards improve as pupils move through the school and those reached in Year 8 are above average overall. Pupils have a thorough knowledge of scientific facts. Their understanding and ability to apply their knowledge to answer key scientific questions is generally good. Explanations are usually in the form of answers on worksheets and are rarely extended in pupils' own writing, however, and this restricts the development of deeper levels of understanding, especially of higher attaining pupils. Pupils have well developed investigative skills, although the quality of conclusions is not as good as other aspects. It was not possible to observe any practical work during the inspection, but evidence from the writing of experiments in pupils' work suggests that standards in this area are above average. Scientific language is used by pupils but not always correctly.
75. Pupils' achievement is good overall. It is best for the oldest pupils, largely because there is a greater proportion of specialist teaching in Year 8, and so the quality and depth of explanations given to them by their teacher are better. Pupils of all levels of prior attainment make systematic progress in the acquisition of scientific knowledge; there is a particular emphasis on this in Year 6. There is an increasing emphasis on developing pupils' understanding and their experimental and investigative skills in Years 7 and 8 and good progress is made overall, although higher attaining pupils could be challenged to go into greater depth in their work. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants and achieve well.
76. Teaching and learning are good overall, and range from satisfactory to very good. All lessons are thoroughly planned, and most are well structured with clear introductions which means that pupils understand what they have to do, followed by a suitable tasks carried out at a fast pace. In a majority of lessons teachers give good scientific input and clear explanations which help generate interest and develop pupils' understanding well. However, a third of the teaching is by non-specialist teachers and, while a small amount of this is very good, in general it limits the breadth and depth of facts and explanations that some pupils receive. Over time there is a good balance of theoretical, investigative and practical work, and considerable efforts are made to make work relevant and interesting for pupils. However, all pupils tend to be given the same work to do and it is rarely modified for groups with different prior attainment. There is a heavy use of worksheets and these often restrict the extent to which pupils have to explain their understanding in their own words or in enough depth. This particularly limits higher attaining pupils. Lessons are usually well resourced, but pupils are rarely expected to use textbooks in lesson to find out answers to questions they do not know. Pupils work hard in science lessons and are keen to do well.
77. The curriculum is well planned, apart from attention to different levels of prior attainment, and there is good provision of extra-curricular clubs and visits. Procedures for assessment are good. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly, their progress is monitored and targets are set. There is some analysis of performance data and the information gained is used to alter the curriculum but it is not used enough to modify teaching. There are very good specialist laboratories and the subject is well resourced overall, although use of ICT in

lessons is limited by difficulties in access to equipment. A small amount of technician support is available to the department which, although helpful, is non-specialist in nature.

78. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is a good practitioner and she works hard to improve provision in science, taking a lead in developments and promoting a team approach. Some monitoring of teaching takes place, but this is not yet regular enough and, given the amount of non-specialist teaching, more action needs to be taken to share good practice and ensure greater consistency of teaching. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum, assessment and accommodation have all improved, but greater challenge for higher attaining pupils remains an issue to be tackled.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average; pupils are achieving well because they are well taught and resources for ICT are good.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes support their learning well.
- The presentation and organisation of pupils' work requires attention.
- Pupils' progress in ICT in other subjects needs to be monitored.

Commentary

79. Standards of work at the end of both Year 6 and Year 8 are above average. These standards represent good achievement by both boys and girls who enter the school with varying experiences of ICT but with average standards overall. Pupils benefit from specific lessons in ICT, from specialist teaching, good resources and from beginning the national strategy for ICT a year early in Year 6.
80. Teaching and learning are good across all years. Lessons are well planned in line with the national strategy. Teaching is knowledgeable and well organised. Over the three years, boys and girls of all abilities learn to use a range of software through a programme of varied tasks and project work. The skills they are developing are increasingly being used in other subject areas. Most impressive is the construction of questionnaires and the development of databases in Year 8 with very good analysis of the results through graphs. Pupils' learning is helped by the fact that their behaviour and attitudes are very good. Whilst some pupil work is printed and kept in folders, the organisation and presentation of work could be more systematic with more formal note taking to consolidate learning.
81. Leadership and management of the department are good. The department is well organised and focussed upon raising standards. Its success is reflected in the very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in standards and resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. There has been a very good improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum since the last inspection. Provision is good overall and standards are above average. However, the picture varies from subject to subject and the progress of pupils using ICT in the different subjects is not monitored. Good use is being made of newly acquired interactive whiteboards particularly in history, geography, French and in some mathematics lessons. Good use is made of a range of software including control in design and technology, and there is some use of data logging in science. There is very good use of ICT in art particularly in digital technology. The use of ICT in music is more limited, and also needs improvement in science and mathematics.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved and are now above average in Year 8.
- There are insufficient opportunities to develop fieldwork skills.
- Leadership and management provide very good support for non-specialist teachers and ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- Good teaching promotes good learning and helps all groups of pupils to achieve well.
- Pupils' good attitudes to learning underpin their good achievement.

Commentary

83. Standards in geography in Year 6 are average but they improve and are above average in Year 8. Given the attainment of pupils on entry to the school, these standards represent good achievement. Girls and boys make equally good progress as they move up through the school because they are keen and interested in the subject. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because their capabilities are clearly identified and their learning is supported with appropriate tasks and materials. They receive effective individual help from both teachers and learning assistants.
84. In Year 6, all pupils make rapid progress developing their skills of map reading and interpretation. For example, higher-attainers use Ordnance Survey maps very competently to draw sketch maps of their village. The maps of lower attaining pupils are less accurate and some contain drawings rather than symbols. Throughout the school pupils gradually expand their geographical vocabulary and increase their knowledge and understanding of places from a local to a world scale in topics such as farming and settlement. By Year 8, higher attaining pupils link physical and human geography in work on natural disasters. They explain the cause of earthquakes and describe the different intensity of their effects in relation to distance from the epicentre. Middle and lower-attainers, including those with special educational needs, complete their work in less detail. For example, they do not fully explain the causes of global warming. Computers are used effectively to support pupils' learning, particularly for research, but fieldwork skills are not sufficiently developed and opportunities to directly link theoretical work with practical experience are missed.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The best teaching has a clear focus on improving literacy skills, provides appropriate challenges, uses a variety of learning techniques and is well planned. For example, whilst learning to interpret photographs, pupils were shown how to record facts and feelings before moving on to analyse examples of writing about earthquakes. This enabled all pupils to successfully meet the challenge to write their own prose or poetry. Such lessons capture pupils' interest, especially when reading their work to the class, and secure good attitudes to learning. Teaching is less effective, but never unsatisfactory, in lessons where there is too much teacher input so that the pace of learning slows. As a result, pupils are not as productive as they might have been.
86. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader provides very good support for non-specialist teachers and has developed an enthusiastic team who teach well. Planning has a clear focus on raising standards further by improving pupils' learning. Teaching has improved as a result of evaluation but this needs to be more frequent and rigorous to raise standards further throughout the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good because standards are now higher. Pupils are more active learners and achieve well, using computers more often to support their learning.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average, and pupils achieve well because they are well taught.
- Good use is made of time to cover National Curriculum topics in detail.
- Pupils behave very well, and are very interested in the subject.
- Teachers' marking does not pay enough attention to improving pupils' spelling and grammar.
- The work for low attainers in Years 7 and 8 needs to match their ability more closely.

Commentary

87. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. This represents good achievement for both boys and girls whose standards are average when they enter the school. Pupils benefit from a generous allocation of time for history which enables teachers to cover topics in detail and quickly develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Standards at the end of Year 8 are also above average. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is good. Whilst pupils having special educational needs also make good progress because they receive additional support, occasionally the progress made by other pupils of lower attainment is only satisfactory because the work set does not always match their ability.
88. Teaching is good overall, and is very good in some lessons observed. Teachers are well prepared and knowledgeable although not specialists in the subject. They make good use of the time allocated to cover National Curriculum topics in depth. Pupils' learning is good. They are very well behaved and motivated. Teachers encourage independent research and enquiry and, from Year 6, they focus upon extended writing. More able pupils with good literacy skills produce very good work on a range of topics including the Roman army, castles, and Tudor houses. They are able to make informed comparisons between the reigns of Henry VIII and William III. However, all pupils do the same work, and those with weaker literacy skills find enquiry and extended writing more difficult, and require tasks more suited to their abilities. Assignments are marked using National Curriculum levels, and pupils understand how well they are doing and know what they have to do to improve. Day-to-day marking, however, is more varied and more attention needs to be paid to errors in spelling, punctuation and historical accuracy.
89. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is well organised and leads an enthusiastic team of teachers. Together they are reflective and focussed upon improvement, and have made good progress since the last inspection in their use of ICT and in challenging the more able pupils. Whilst some evaluation of teaching takes place, the monitoring of pupils' work requires more rigour to ensure that standards are maintained.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers ensure that pupils behave well.
- The overall quality and balance of the programme of study has improved since the previous inspection.
- Marking does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance to help them improve their work.
- More and better books and software are needed to help to raise standards.
- More training in religious education is needed to ensure consistently good quality in teaching.
- Leadership and management, although satisfactory, require strengthening.

Commentary

90. Current standards in Year 6 are broadly average and pupils of all abilities achieve well. Year 6 pupils are enjoying the intellectual challenge of considering whether there is a God, and how can Christians communicate with their God. They are able to discuss such issues sensibly, and to write with good understanding for their age.
91. Standards for the oldest pupils in Year 8 are also in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The achievement of most pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. Pupils gain knowledge and understanding of all the major world religions, but the writing in their books is a little limited in range. There are some weaknesses in writing skills across all abilities although pupils do have a sound grasp of appropriate terms and words. There are occasions when higher attaining pupils could do better, for example, in producing work of greater detail and length, but overall they achieve satisfactorily. No significant difference was seen in the attainment of boys and girls in any year.
92. Pupils behave well, are courteous, work with each other effectively, and persevere with tasks. This reflects good skills in managing behaviour, and the calm atmosphere for work seen in all the lessons. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall. The range was from very good to unsatisfactory. All the teachers are non-specialists and in some lessons teaching was hindered by a lack of subject expertise. In the best lessons, there was a brisk pace, and teaching was lively through the effective use of an interactive whiteboard, or through the use of artefacts such as the foods for a Jewish celebration of Passover. Pupils were well engaged and absorbed by these lessons. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, there was some repetition from the previous lesson, and insufficient challenge for the higher attaining pupils. There were occasions when the use of books would have been beneficial. Pupils' work is marked regularly with much encouragement for the pupils, although not enough marking was seen that evaluated the subject content and advised on how to improve.
93. It has not been possible to appoint a subject leader who is a specialist and arrangements are currently under review. Diligently produced schemes of work have been developed that offer a better balance than at the time of the previous inspection, and pay good attention to pupils' differing needs. A scheme to assess pupils according to the levels required in the local syllabus has been introduced recently. It has yet to become embedded in practice, but does meet a weakness identified previously. Both leadership and management are satisfactory. However, there is a need for further monitoring and evaluation of teaching so that there is less discrepancy between pupils' experience in lessons.

94. More and better books are needed to support teaching, and to offer a ready means of extending more able pupils. The library does not have enough books for this subject. Pupils would also benefit from increased ICT teaching and opportunities. The department has no suitable software for networked lessons, and not all rooms have interactive whiteboards.
95. Improvement has been satisfactory, particularly in meeting some of the shortcomings in the curriculum, but staffing issues remain.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and weaknesses have been effectively tackled, especially in design.
- Pupils make good progress in their understanding and application of design across a range of material areas, resulting in above average standards in this part of the curriculum.
- Assessment procedures are thorough. Pupils are set targets and know how to improve their work.
- The subject is well resourced and teaching takes place in very good specialist workshops.
- Tasks are not modified well enough to fully meet the needs of different groups of pupil and to ensure appropriate support and challenge for all.
- Although lessons are well planned, the pace of learning in some of them is too slow and in others teaching does not always result in all pupils concentrating on their work enough.

Commentary

96. The standards that pupils attain both at the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 8 are average overall. Standards in design, which were a weakness at the time of the last inspection, are much improved and are now above average and a strength. Pupils undertake extensive research of the features of different products using a range of sources including the internet, test users' opinions, and modify their designs in the light of the outcomes. They think creatively about their designs. It was not possible to see any making taking place during the inspection but evidence from finished products and pupils' written accounts of making products indicates their practical skills to be average. They use a range of tools and work with a good, broader range of materials than at the last inspection. Pupils demonstrate some knowledge of the properties of different materials, such as hard woods and soft woods, but there is little evidence of detailed understanding of the environmental and economic factors. Pupils are increasingly using ICT in their work, especially in relation to the control and computer assisted designing parts of the curriculum, and their knowledge and skills in this part of the curriculum are average. Pupils' evaluations of their products and projects are satisfactory overall but are less detailed than other aspects of their work. Some of the completed work of higher attaining pupils is above average and shows a good attention to detail and accuracy, but this is not always apparent in lessons. The work of lower attainers, by contrast, is less comprehensive and accurate, and is sometimes not well organised.
97. The achievement of pupils of all ages is satisfactory overall. They make good progress in their understanding and application of design across a range of material areas because of the particular emphasis placed upon this part of the curriculum. Other aspects, while not as strong, are satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough in lessons which limits their rate of achievement. Pupils with special educational needs

achieve in line with their peers because of the support they receive from teaching assistants rather than from tasks being adapted for them.

98. The quality of both teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons are well planned and organised. They have clear introductions which mean the pupils know what they are going to learn. Tasks are generally satisfactory, designed to cover appropriate knowledge and promote the development of pupils' understanding and skills, and are usually explained well. All pupils do the same work however and, although higher attaining pupils carry it out to a higher standard, tasks do not always make sufficient demands of them. In some lessons, such as those involving the use of ICT, the pace of learning is good. In some other lessons the pace is slow and pupils are allowed too long to complete tasks which reduces the amount they learn. Pupils generally do what is asked of them and most apply themselves well, although there are occasions when some do not concentrate as well as they could. Some teaching is not effective in ensuring that they are brought back to task quickly and successfully.
99. The curriculum is now sufficiently broad and planning is good, with a much improved focus on design and greater use of ICT. There are good assessment systems in place which are closely linked with the National Curriculum and involve monitoring of pupils' progress and target setting. Assessment information is not yet used enough to make sure teaching tasks are closely matched to the needs to different groups of pupils. Specialist accommodation is very good with well equipped workshops. The subject is well resourced although there is not yet a good range of equipment for computer assisted making and no technician support is provided.
100. The management of the subject is good. Hard work has gone into tackling the weaknesses identified at the last inspection and there has been good improvement since then, especially in relation to the curriculum and assessment. The department is involved in a pilot project with other schools which is helping to develop the design aspects of the subject. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Action is being taken to improve provision, but it is not yet being fully effective in ensuring good achievement in all areas. Now that the weaknesses from last time have been eliminated and provision is satisfactory in all areas, there needs to be a greater focus on improving standards through improving the quality and consistency of teaching.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In this curriculum area, music was the focus during the inspection. Work in art was also sampled. Three lessons, one in each of Years 6,7 and 8, were seen. Standards in the lessons seen, and in examples of pupils' work in their sketchbooks and displayed around the school, were above average with higher attaining pupils achieving standards above this level. In the lessons seen teaching is good, with some very good features, and leads to good, and at times very good, learning.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Year 8 are reaching above average standards because teaching is very good.
- There is an extensive range of opportunities to enrich pupils' experience outside the classroom.
- Insufficient opportunity is provided for pupils to use ICT in music.

Commentary

101. Standards of attainment in Year 6 and in Year 8 are above those expected nationally. A significant number of more able pupils in Year 8 attain standards well above this level. Boys and girls at all stages achieve well in response to improved, systematic teaching underpinned by clear, long-term musical objectives. In a lesson in which pupils in Year 6 learned about different types of drums, they made very good progress not only in factual knowledge but also in developing aural discrimination, acquiring technical and other appropriate descriptive vocabulary to describe sounds they discovered by experimenting with drums of different timbres. Their listening skills and ensemble playing improved as they took part in a swiftly improvised arrangement of an accompaniment to their singing of 'Dem Bones'. The listening skills of older pupils become very perceptive; they build systematically on performing and composing skills, developing secure understanding of strategies such as layered rhythmic patterns and variation form. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by learning support staff and by the informed use of their IEPs, and make good progress, as do more able pupils, whose composing and performing is well above the expected standard. The imaginative use of dynamics and texture in a short set of variations created by a group of girls in Year 8 captivated the attention of the class audience.
102. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. The single music teacher, recently appointed, is well qualified and experienced, and understands very well how to develop the musical responses of individual pupils. Questioning techniques are skilful and lessons are conducted at a lively pace. Her approach to topics is imaginative and engaging, activities are varied but carefully integrated, and pupils share in her enthusiasm for music-making. As a result, their progress is improving and standards are rising in response to the strong levels of challenge and expectation in the teaching.
103. Leadership is very good. The flair and energy with which the subject is taught extends into a wide range of activities by which pupils' personal, social, spiritual and cultural development is enriched. Around one-fifth of pupils learn to play an instrument. Many are involved in the choirs and orchestra which meet weekly, and take part in musical events and competitions both in school and in the wider community. Management is good. The assessment scheme is systematic and properly related to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Teaching is monitored regularly, and would be strengthened further by formal monitoring of instrumental teaching. There are good cross-curricular arts initiatives, and good links with first and high schools. The teacher in charge of music is currently putting comprehensive departmental documentation into place, but does not have sufficient time to complete the task quickly because her appointment is part-time. Resources are unsatisfactory. Although the lack of recording equipment is about to be made good, there is not enough ICT equipment.
104. Since the previous inspection, the quality and consistency of teaching have improved, as have pupils' attitudes to music. The scheme of work and the assessment system are fully relevant to pupils' needs, and opportunities for personal development are extensive. The subject contributes significantly to pupils' personal development. Improvement is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes, and achieve well because they experience good, knowledgeable teaching.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils ensure a strong learning atmosphere in lessons.

- Extra-curricular provision is a very strong feature and is helping to raise standards.
- Procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are not regular enough.
- Work is not always sufficiently matched to the range of pupils' capabilities in lessons.

Commentary

105. Standards of work in physical education are average overall by the end of Year 6. Both boys and girls, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. They make good progress because good teaching stimulates their very positive attitudes towards the subject. At this stage, pupils' performance in dance is above average, and includes good opportunities for them to plan their work and talk to each other about ways of improving.
106. By the end of Year 8, standards are higher and above expectation for pupils at this stage. Boys and girls of all abilities make good progress in games activities and are achieving well; this is particularly the case for girls in hockey where standards are notable. However, in general, pupils' capacity to plan and evaluate their work is not as well developed as their performance skills. Both attitudes and behaviour continue to be very good at this stage, and a very good programme of extra-curricular sport also contributes to the improving standards.
107. The quality of both teaching and learning is good. Teachers are knowledgeable, hardworking, enthusiastic, and relate very well to their pupils. As a result, boys and girls are very keen to learn. In the best lessons, teachers plan work well, ensure that pupils know what they are learning and why, and regularly question pupils to check their understanding. All pupils learn quickly and achieve well when they are stretched by challenging tasks. This was illustrated clearly in successful lessons where Year 8 girls improved their hockey dribbling skills, and in Year 6 where boys and girls developed their dance motifs based around the Olympic Games. However, some lessons are not as effective: some are too teacher directed, and pupils are not given sufficient responsibility for themselves, for example, by suggesting or leading warm up activities; in others, better use should be made of the information from the good assessment procedures in place to plan a sharper match of work for pupils of differing capabilities.
108. Leadership and management are good in physical education. Day-to-day routines operate very well, and work is well-planned. More emphasis is needed on monitoring the quality of teaching, and sharing effective teaching strategies to ensure consistency. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good; issues relating to dance and swimming have been successfully tackled; facilities for physical education are very good, and standards have been sustained well. Good links with the first schools and the local Sports College are important in this respect, as are the good quality of teaching and very positive pupils' attitudes towards physical activity. Strong staff commitment is reflected in the well-supported extra-curricular programme that is important in helping to raise standards for both boys and girls.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

In this curriculum area, citizenship was the focus for the inspection. Personal, social and health education was also sampled. The school's provision for this is integrated into the citizenship course, and the arrangements work well. Pupils' work files show that the oldest pupils in Year 8 have made good progress in learning about the dangers of illegal drugs through a special project, which is supported in school by presentations from the local police. Progress is good in other aspects of the course related to health and hygiene, and the dangers of smoking and alcohol. A lesson in a Year 6 class with a significant element of personal development education was observed. Teaching, learning and achievement in this lesson were satisfactory.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New schemes of work and assessment are innovative and imaginative but not fully implemented yet.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, and there are very good opportunities for active citizenship in the school.
- There is good leadership and vision for developing the subject.
- The team of teachers is a large one for effective management, and monitoring is not fully in place.

Commentary

109. Citizenship teaching begins in Year 6 and is integrated with PSHE throughout the school. In Year 6, there is no national target for their age. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and their standard is in line with what might be expected for their age and abilities. Most have a secure understanding of why rules are needed in a nation and in any community, and they have a good sense of what is reasonable and fair.
110. The oldest pupils in Year 8 are all working towards the target for pupils aged 14, and at this stage they are also in line with what might be expected. The achievement of pupils of all abilities is satisfactory in their written and oral work. Year 8 pupils showed a sound grasp of aspects of global citizenship, in particular the contribution of some voluntary organisations to international development. Most could express well reasoned views. The encouragement to do this, plus the wide range of opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to the school community, are all making a very significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Their attitudes to lessons and also to the opportunities for 'active citizenship' are very good. Appropriately, some pupils joined 'focus groups' to review this course and have made positive contributions to the new materials.
111. Overall the teaching is satisfactory. All the lessons observed were in the range good to satisfactory. In the better lessons teachers showed suitable knowledge of the topics and good expertise in organising effective group work and drawing out pupils' views. Pupils enjoyed the lessons, written work was marked and much encouragement given. There are some good ICT opportunities for pupils in lessons, and literacy is developed by the drive for pupils to use new terms with accuracy. Where teaching was satisfactory, some new terms were not grasped well enough by lower attaining pupils, and the lessons could have been further enlivened with some concrete examples of emergency aid and development projects.
112. As all the tutors teach the subject, there is a large team, and this makes demands on the responsibility to manage and monitor that are not fully met. There is a good leader with energy and vision, and plans to 'model' good lessons. Currently the management is satisfactory and beginning to drive up standards. New schemes of work are being trialled. They integrate all the demands of citizenship with PSHE effectively and show flair and innovation in the planning of lessons and assessment. As well as activities in school, there are some special visits out that enrich pupils' experience well. Some will visit County Hall for Democracy Week, and all pupils will visit a magistrate's court during their time in the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT Autumn 2004

Headteacher's comment :

I am delighted to publish the main findings of our recent Ofsted Inspection which was conducted earlier this term by an Ofsted team led by Mr Andrew Henderson.

The findings are very encouraging and recognise the hard work done by pupils and staff. It is also a tribute to all our parents who support the school and their own children so positively and effectively.

The report contains many pleasing and positive comments but the one which I believe captures the real spirit of our school is in the section examining pupils' attitudes:

“ Pupils like their school and are proud of it . “ (p.10)

We strive to make every child feel valued and that their unique personality and talent will be allowed to blossom. The inspection report indicates that we are doing well in this aim and that we provide many avenues for success.

Another encouraging aspect of the report is that we were already aware of all the issues raised and indeed had already got a number of initiatives set up to address those matters prior to the inspection.

We wish to thank all parties connected with the school for their positive support : parents, staff, Governors and most of all the pupils. It was a very effective team effort.

However, rest assured we will not be resting on our laurels and that the school will continue to seek ways of providing our local community the best possible education.

Terry Holland Headteacher

SUMMARY OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKMINSTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

An average sized mixed middle school in south-east Worcestershire, inspected
27-29 September 2004 by an inspection team led by A. A. Henderson

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a successful and increasingly effective school that is providing a good quality of education for all its pupils. It has many more strengths than weaknesses. Standards are rising and, throughout the school, pupils are achieving well because teaching is good. **The school is well led and managed, and provides good value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior team ensure improving standards and achievement.
- Relationships in the school are very good; the attitudes, behaviour and personal maturity of pupils make a strong contribution to their learning.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities enhance pupils' learning, especially in sport and the arts.
- A very strong partnership with other schools benefits the learning of pupils throughout the school.
- Higher attaining pupils are not doing well enough in mathematics.
- Basic literacy and mathematical skills receive too little attention across the curriculum.
- The quality of subject management is inconsistent, particularly in relation to the effective evaluation of teaching and its impact on learning, and in the use of assessment information to properly match work to pupils' needs and to help raise standards.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in 1999. Standards are rising, teaching is stronger, and Year 6 test results show marked recent improvement, most notably in English. The school has responded well in tackling the key issues from the previous report.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	C	E	C	C
mathematics	D	D	D	C
science	D	D	C	C

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils have attained similarly at the end of Year 6.

In National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6 in 2004, results were average in English and science, compared with both all schools and similar schools. Those for mathematics were below average for all schools, although average compared with similar schools.

Currently, pupils' achievement is good throughout Years 6, 7 and 8. Standards of work seen are average overall in Year 6, and improve to above average in Years 7 and 8. By Year 6, standards are above average in English, and average in both mathematics and science; they are average in all other subjects apart from art, ICT, history and music where standards are above average, and French where they are well above average. At this stage, pupils are achieving well. By Year 8, standards are sustained well, and are also now above average in science, geography and physical education. There are average standards in mathematics, design and technology, citizenship and religious education. Overall, boys and girls of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well in Years 7 and 8 and their progress quickens as they move through the school.

Pupils' personal qualities are good overall, fostered by good pastoral support and well-planned programmes for personal, social and health education. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good also.** Pupils' attitudes to school are very positive and are reflected in their abo

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, and are responsible for the good achievement and rising standards. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all subjects and good in the majority. Teaching is very good in music and French. The teaching and arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs are good and enables them to make the same good progress as other pupils. Assessment procedures are improving and, despite some uneven practice between subjects, are making a positive contribution to the improving standards.

The curriculum is good; the provision of French in Year 6 is a good feature. The very good range of extra-curricular opportunities support learning well, notably in sport and the arts, and are very popular with boys and girls. The school takes good care of its pupils; they are equally valued and respected, and their progress is well monitored. The school values its partnership with parents, and both pupils and parents appreciate the very successful arrangements for helping pupils settle into the school. The very strong links with first and high schools positively enhance pupils' learning across the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides good leadership together with a clear vision and high expectations of rising standards and ensuring pupils achieve their potential. With good support from the senior management team and staff, there is shared determination to improve further the quality of education throughout the school. Management is good - the school is well ordered, calm and purposeful; subject management is not always consistent - systems for checking teaching and for using data to set targets and track pupils' progress, have been introduced but are not universally well-embedded in practice. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well; they have good knowledge of the school, provide strong and visible support, and monitor its work well, although not all statutory requirements are in place.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Both pupils and parents are very supportive of the school, and have confidence in it. Their views are justifiable, particularly with regard to the good quality of teaching and the progress children make. Parents are pleased with leadership and management, and the arrangements for helping their children to settle in; they feel strongly that pupils are expected to work hard, and that they would be comfortable approaching the school about any issue. These views are strongly endorsed by the pupils, who also appreciate the positive atmosphere and very good relationships across the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in mathematics, in particular for higher attaining pupils.
 - Ensure that basic literacy and mathematical skills are promoted effectively in all subjects.
 - Ensure that the work of teachers, and the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning, is monitored and evaluated regularly by all subject leaders, and identified best practice is shared widely.
 - Ensure a better analysis and use of assessment information by teachers in all subjects to inform planning, match work closely to pupils' needs and to help to improve standards/achievement.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Fully comply with requirements for collective worship, and information provided in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

A copy of the full inspection report, which includes all the main judgements and grades, can be obtained from the school. Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet 'Complaining about Ofsted inspections', which is available from the school or Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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INSPECTION REPORT KEY FINDINGS

Blackminster Middle School Evesham

Inspection 27 -29th September 2004

Registered Inspector: Mr A Henderson

Inspection number: 268382

We are delighted with the findings of the Ofsted team which confirm that this is a very happy and successful school. Coming so soon after our excellent summer SATs results (our best ever!) it makes 2004 a year of real achievement for the school. To enjoy the findings in the full report visit the Ofsted website on :

Key findings of the team

The school provides a good quality of education for all its pupils.

The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

Teaching and Learning are good throughout the school.

The good leadership and management of the Head and senior team ensure improving standards.

Pupils' achievement in Years 6,7 and 8 is good.

Progress quickens as they move through the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Behaviour is good and relationships are harmonious.

Governors fulfil their responsibilities well ; they have a good knowledge of the school.

Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are well motivated in their studies.

Pupils like their school and are proud of it .

Standards in National tests 2004

Blackminster	English	85%	National average	75%
Blackminster	Maths	73%	National average	73%
Blackminster	Science	91%	National average	86%

Ofsted gradings : main inspection judgements

(Inspection judgements in full on page 35 of full report)

The overall effectiveness of the school	GOOD
Value for money	GOOD
Pupils' achievement	GOOD
Overall standards	GOOD
Attendance	GOOD
Attitudes	VERY GOOD
Quality of Education	GOOD
Quality of teaching	GOOD
How well pupils learn	GOOD
Links with other schools	VERY GOOD
Curriculum enrichment	VERY GOOD
Resources	GOOD
Leadership of headteacher	GOOD
Management	GOOD
Support for pupils	GOOD
Links with parents	GOOD
Links with community	SATISFACTORY
Pupil care and welfare	GOOD