

INSPECTION REPORT

FULBROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Weathercock Lane, Woburn Sands, Milton
Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK17 8NP

LEA area: Bedfordshire LEA

Unique reference number: 109658

Headteacher: Mr G Bent

Reporting inspector: Mr G Haney
[6477]

Dates of inspection: 5 - 8 November 2001

Inspection number: 188805

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	County
School category:	Middle, deemed Secondary
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed

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Appropriate authority:	Bedfordshire LEA
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Brian Hayward

Date of previous inspection:	17 June 1996
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19419	S Boyle	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2225	P Freund	Team inspector	Art and design Equal Opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
2277	K Valentine	Team inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught? Supporting - How well does the school care for its pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fulbrook is a nine to 13 middle school situated in Woburn Sands, in Bedfordshire, on the border of Milton Keynes. Most of the pupils come from the local villages of Aspley Guise, Brogborough, Ridgmont, Woburn and the town of Woburn Sands. However, the school takes over 30% of its pupils from schools outside its designated area. There are currently 423 pupils on roll, which is about average for middle schools. The school is over-subscribed and has risen in size from 408 at the time of the previous inspection. The school has 32 pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds (7.6%) and no pupils receive additional English language support, which is lower than most schools. There are presently 18 % of pupils on the special educational needs register and eight pupils have formal statements of special educational needs (SEN), both of which are below average. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been improving and is now above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fulbrook Middle School provides a sound education. The standards achieved by its pupils are in line with national standards, but they should be higher in some subjects. The attitudes and values pupils develop are very good and the school provides very good opportunities for children to gain effective learning skills for the future. Pupils learn well in lessons, thanks to a good standard of teaching across all year groups. The school is efficiently managed and provides a pleasant learning environment. Because there is some underachievement, the value for money provided is presently below expectation; however, the school has the capacity to improve.

What the school does well

- The standards of work achieved in English and design and technology across the school, and in French in Years 5 and 6.
- The quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in lessons is good.
- Pupils behave well and are responsive to the feelings of others.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop good social skills through their work in school and through clubs and after-school activities.
- The governing body has a strong involvement in the way the school is managed.

What could be improved

- Pupils should be achieving higher standards; there is a need to remove underachievement, particularly in science, art, religious education, and Year 5 and 5 mathematics.
- The pace of school improvement needs to be increased.
- Opportunities for spiritual development are poor and more emphasis needs to be given to the understanding of different world cultures.
- Procedures to assess pupil attainment and to use the knowledge gained to improve learning are too variable among subjects.
- Too many of the parents that responded to the survey feel that communication between them and the school needs improving.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in June 1996. Overall standards have been rising at the national rate, but have recently declined from a peak in 1999. Pupils should be achieving higher in several subjects and the school has made insufficient progress in maintaining or raising the standards achieved. Teaching is still of a high quality, despite a significant change in staff over the past two years, and pupils continue to make good progress in lessons. The school has responded positively to most of the issues raised in the previous report. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and specific activities provided for them, but some of the teaching activities in lessons still lack sufficient challenge. The school has a well-structured programme of monitoring and evaluation activities, which includes the participation of subject managers. The quality of marking is now acceptable and the range of assessment information available in the school has improved. The use of assessment across the school is still too variable. The governing body is now knowledgeable and involved with school improvement, though its evaluation procedures could be improved by making more explicit what it expects to be achieved. The use of the library and computers to improve independent learning has improved. The National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies are being successfully implemented and are starting to contribute to higher expectations in lessons. Given the quality of staff, the school has a good capacity to improve.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average points scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	B	C	D
Mathematics	B	C	D	E
Science	A	C	C	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

In 2001 the school achieved average results overall. Results are better in English, where a higher number of pupils achieved well. Mathematics results are lower than average. The comparison with similar schools shows that the school is achieving results that are worse than expected. This comparison should be treated with some caution as it is based predominantly on the outcomes of junior schools rather than middle schools. Over a five-year period the school's results have been rising at the national rate, but have dipped in the last two years. In comparison with pupils of a similar prior attainment, pupils in Fulbrook achieve as expected in English, below expectations in science and well below expectations in mathematics. The school sets challenging targets for the future, but has not been achieving these. More emphasis needs to be placed on reviewing and reinforcing learning and providing effective challenge to all pupils in order to drive up achievement.

Evidence of work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils are achieving at national standards in most subjects by the ages of 11 and 13 (the end of Key Stage 2 and the time they leave the school). The achievements in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) are better than expected. Pupils achieve well in French in Years 5 and 6, and able pupils produce high standards of

writing in Years 7 and 8. Speaking and listening skills are good throughout the school. The achievement of pupils in art, music and religious education is lower than expected.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils like coming to school and work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; pupils behave well in lessons and as they move around the school. In the playground they show a good standard of self-control and make the school a happy place of learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; the school is a friendly community where relationships are good among pupils, and between teachers and pupils. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility and this contributes well to their personal development.
Attendance	Attendance is very good and punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 8
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching was better in Key Stage 3 where there was a higher proportion of very good teaching. The quality of teaching in English is good. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively implemented in Years 5 and 6 and a good start made in Years 7 and 8. Other subject areas are making good contributions to pupils' use of English. The quality of teaching in mathematics is sound in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3. The National Numeracy Strategy is helping to raise teachers' expectations and mental and oral skills are being taught systematically. In science, the good quality teaching is enhanced by the knowledge of the teachers, which is effectively used to provide clear explanations and help pupils understand.

Generally the teachers effectively provide for the needs of different pupils by using a good range of questions to draw out learning. In some lessons there is a need to challenge bright pupils more and to ensure that boys do not dominate discussions. Pupils with SEN are supported well by Learning Support Assistant.

Pupils learn well in lessons thanks to the quality of teaching and their ability to concentrate well for long periods of time. Pupils are very articulate and use their skills well in discussion.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is unsatisfactory because of a lack of daily acts of collective worship, insufficient provision of ICT in different subjects and inappropriate match of work to some pupils' abilities. There is a good programme of personal, health and social education and a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is sound provision for these pupils. They participate fully in a broad and balanced curriculum and are integrated and supported well in normal lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	No pupils currently receive additional language support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for spiritual development is poor. Teachers do not adequately draw out the spiritual aspects within the work in different subjects. Opportunities for moral development are good and there is very good provision for social development. The wider study of different cultures falls short of expectations.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and supporting their personal development are good, but the school needs a more systematic way of assessing potential risks in activities and to be more consistent in the way it uses assessment to improve learning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school tries to involve parents through consultations on policy and the Parent Teacher Association raises a large sum of money. However, more work needs to be done to make all parents more involved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is provided with a clear direction by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Subject managers are providing an enthusiastic lead in developing the curriculum.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive. They are fully involved in shaping the direction of the school and have good links to teachers through their monitoring activities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has made a strong commitment to monitoring both teaching and areas that it is trying to develop. However, the evaluation of standards needs to be systematically organised and used to raise the pace of improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Plans for the school's development are clear and guide its work so that it makes effective use of the resources available.

The school is well staffed. Governors have increased staffing to enable school developments to be undertaken with the minimum of disruption to pupils' learning. In a few subjects a lack of staff with appropriate specialist knowledge results in lack of challenge for pupils. The school accommodation is adequate, with good specialist teaching bases for science, design and technology, and ICT. Subjects have

reasonable resources and some have good access to books and materials. The school's improvement programme is well structured through its development plan. Departmental improvement plans need to be more effectively focused on raising standards in the subject. The school takes reasonable care to try to achieve best value with the finance available.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
• Behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • Children make good progress in school. • The school is well led and managed.	• The amount and style of homework. • The information parents receive about how their child is getting on. • The way the school works with parents.

There was limited response to the parents' survey, with only 72 replies. On the whole the inspectors agree with the positive comments the parents make about the school. Pupils made good progress in the lessons observed, but the pace of learning needs to be improved in some subjects. The school is continuing to work hard to improve homework and the work given to younger pupils is reasonable. With older pupils there is some inconsistency and improvements in the quantity and quality of homework tasks are needed. The type and frequency of reports to parents and meetings are typical of most schools and provide adequate information on progress. The school is keen to improve the way it works with parents and has recently re-issued guidance as to how they can become involved. However, the survey indicates that there is still much work to be done in winning some parents' confidence.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of pupils when they enter the school is slightly above nationally expected standards. The levels achieved by pupils before they arrive in the school, in the core subjects of English and mathematics, have been increasing as the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies are taking effect. The pupils who took the tests for 11 year olds in 2001 had achieved above average results in reading and writing, and average results in mathematics, when they were aged seven.
2. By the age of 11 results in national tests in the school are in line with the national average. In 2001, results were slightly lower than in the previous year. The overall trend in results over a five-year period has been rising at a greater rate than nationally, but results in 2000 and 2001 have declined from their peak in 1999 when they were high. In English, overall results achieved are average by age 11, but a higher than average number of pupils do well. Science results in 2001 are in line with the national averages. In mathematics, attainment is below the national average. The school has high aspirations and sets challenging targets, but at present it is not achieving them. However, in all three subjects the levels of attainment are greater than at the time of the previous inspection.
3. In comparison with similar schools (these are schools that have similar numbers of pupils who have a free school meals entitlement) the 2001 test results at age 11 are below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, when compared with schools that have similar pupils based on their prior attainment, the school achieved typical results in English, worse than expected results in science and much worse than expected results in mathematics. Overall, inspection findings show a similar picture of under-achievement in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, in science.
4. In English lessons, good teaching is leading to confident pupils who use their prior knowledge well. Speaking and listening is a strength; pupils are articulate and able to use their skills in other subjects, such as their ability to explain in mathematics and use appropriate vocabulary. The quality of writing is more variable, but of a good standard, with some superb work by able pupils in Years 7 and 8. Reading standards are good, with pupils able to discuss books and favourite authors well. Overall, pupils apply good levels of skill in their studies across the school. In science, pupils show good practical skills and have a good recall of topics studied earlier. Mathematical skills are at a level that enables pupils to cope effectively with demands made on them in other subjects. However, the pace of learning needs to be improved in mathematics.
5. Taking all subjects of the curriculum into account, standards are about average. Generally, pupils make similar progress in Years 7 and 8 to that they make in Years 5 and 6. However, given that the pupils are from an economically advantaged area and have high attainment on entry, they should be doing better overall. In addition to mathematics and science, standards fall short of expectations in art and religious education. This is also the case in music, but there are signs of a recent improvement in this subject. The standard of instrumental orchestral performance is low. In art, standards of drawing and painting are inadequate. The teaching of religious education by non-specialist staff is contributing to lower standards than expected, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
6. Pupils study French in all years, and they show good standards in Years 5 and 6, particularly in speaking and listening, and learn rapidly. Whilst these skills continue to develop in Years 7 and 8, the present attainment is only average in these year groups. In history, geography and physical education the standards of work are average and pupils are progressing as expected. There is a legacy of underachievement in geography, which is now being addressed by more effective programmes of work, but more needs to be done to give pupils access to higher levels of study. In history the quality of work is reasonable, though the more-able pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not being sufficiently challenged. Pupils are achieving well in design and technology, and in developing skills in ICT; in both of these subjects pupils are showing standards that are above average.

7. A comparison of standards reported in the previous inspection with those that are being seen now shows that many subjects are performing less well than previously. The exceptions are design and technology, and ICT.
8. Inspection findings indicate that, as a result of good teaching, pupils are now making good progress in lessons. There has been a substantial staff change in the past two years and there are signs that different organisational emphases by heads of subject departments are making a positive difference to the rates of progress of pupils. The introduction of the national strategies in English and mathematics is now making a positive impact on the expectations of teachers, which should contribute to raising standards. However, improving standards needs to be more effectively at the centre of the subject development plans.
9. The school has a support programme for the most-able pupils, which includes specifically identifying a group of pupils for focused development. Taking account of the national picture, boys achieve well compared to girls. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as their classmates. The levels of challenge across different subjects are variable.
10. Pupils' special educational needs are clearly identified and subject teachers are well informed and directly involved with the production of individual education plans for identified pupils. Regular reviews show that pupils are making reasonable progress across their subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and to learning. Parents responding to the questionnaire, and pupils themselves, said that they liked and enjoyed school. In lessons, pupils work hard and outside lesson times, for example in the library, pupils demonstrate a strong work ethic. They sensibly get on with homework or work that interests them, some pupils using computers to research projects or to access information generally. The school has built well on the pupils' strong commitment to learning by introducing a homework club. Although the numbers of pupils making use of this are fairly low, those that do attend use it well. They use the time and resources profitably so that if they find something difficult, they make good use of the support offered by teachers.
12. The behaviour of pupils is very good. Pupils behave very well in and around the school. In lessons, behaviour is mostly very good. In assemblies behaviour is exemplary, with pupils attentive and keen to listen. In the playground, pupils are clear about playground rules and observe them well; for example ball games are only played in the designated areas even though space there is fairly limited. Pupils generally move around the school very well, although at times in congested areas they are not as careful of others as they might be. Sometimes, when pupils are waiting outside classrooms for teachers, the behaviour of some deteriorates into silliness. Pupils are always extremely polite and courteous and respectful of adults. Opportunities for pupils to demonstrate self-discipline are limited because they are often quite closely supervised, but when opportunities do arise, for example in the dining room where supervision is minimal, pupils are well behaved. There were no exclusions for bad behaviour.
13. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. Pupils relate well to each other and play and work together well. They are comfortable talking to adults and hold very sensible conversations. They are sensitive to the needs of others and, for example, will notice that an adult is about to pass through a door and open it for them. The school council is potentially an excellent opportunity for pupils' personal development and there is good evidence of this with those pupils on the council responsibly bringing the views of other pupils to the meeting. However, the numbers of pupils that have opportunities for this are relatively small, especially, for example, as one pupil has been on the council for three years. In addition, the school council itself is not run in the style of a committee with elected positions that would give pupils greater responsibility, and greater insight into democratic decision making.

14. Attendance rates at the school are very good, and most pupils arrive at school on time and are prompt to lessons.
15. The attitudes, behaviour, and personal development of pupils have improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is good. Almost all lessons observed demonstrated at least satisfactory teaching; a significant proportion involved good teaching and some represented very good teaching. The standard of pupils' learning was closely related to the quality of teaching and in almost all lessons observed the learning was at least satisfactory and often good.
17. Teaching is better in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 2. The best teaching observed was in French, ICT, science, and design and technology. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. All pupils benefit from good teaching, although in some classes observed insufficient attention was given to girls who were prevented from fully contributing by too much attention being given to the boys. Able pupils are sometimes restricted in their progress by a lack of challenge in the work undertaken. The teaching allows pupils of minority ethnic background to make progress in line with their abilities.
18. Good teaching resulted from the very good subject knowledge shown by a number of staff. For example, in one lesson pupils were using computers to produce printed images for different audiences. The teacher introduced the lesson well by a clear presentation of the purpose of the work. Because of good subject knowledge the teacher was able to help pupils in the development of their work. Pupils' learning and attainment were both very good and the teacher contributed to this through the challenging work provided.
19. The planning of lessons by teachers is generally good. In many cases teachers explain the objectives of the lesson well and pupils have a good understanding of what they are attempting. In one lesson observed pupils were extending their vocabulary in French and the teacher planned and paced the lesson well. French was used extensively by both teacher and pupils, and there was appropriate challenge in the work throughout the lesson. The lesson was brought to a clear conclusion with the objectives of the lesson being re-visited, and the new learning consolidated.
20. Teachers often make good use of questioning. This was particularly noticeable in some lessons observed in design and technology, and also in science. In one design and technology lesson the teacher was very effective in the use of questions when introducing the task. Good attention was paid, through questions, to safety issues and the demonstration of work was greatly assisted by the teacher's dialogue with pupils. The teacher was very effective in discussion with less confident pupils and as a result pupils with SEN often contributed as well as more-able pupils. The development of ideas in science is also greatly helped by very good questioning. In one lesson observed pupils' recall of earlier work on electricity was established by good questioning. The development of new ideas also benefited by very effective use of questioning.
21. Weaknesses in teaching were limited and largely related to a lack of subject knowledge. This was the case in some lessons observed in mathematics, art, religious education and history. This gave rise to lack of challenge and expectations in the work provided. In some subjects, particularly art, religious education, physical education, and within mathematics sets, there is a lack of appropriate match of work to the abilities of the pupils. This restricts the progress made by some pupils.
22. The teaching of pupils with SEN is generally good. There is a well-planned programme of support. In class, learning support assistants work very effectively and use their time with pupils well. Support is also offered to pupils through the use of withdrawal groups, although improved arrangements are needed in the monitoring of pupils' progress in these groups.
23. Generally the marking of pupils' work is good and some very good marking was noted. However, there is some inconsistency, and marking in geography and religious education is less good. The

setting of homework also varies in its effectiveness and the use of homework is less good in Key Stage 3, than Key Stage 2. Particularly in Key Stage 3 homework is not always set regularly, to the agreed programme, and in some cases homework lacks the challenge appropriate for the age of the pupils. Homework could be improved in geography, and, in Key Stage 3, in science and art. The setting of homework in a wider range of subjects should be considered.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

24. The school provides all the subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, health and social education. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of French which is taught to all pupils from Year 5 onwards. However, the curriculum is not satisfactory because of the inadequate planning and provision for the delivery of ICT across all subjects, and the lack of provision for a daily act of collective worship. Teaching time meets the national recommendations and the allocation of time to the various subjects enables the coverage of the programmes of study.
25. There are effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy, and pupils have equal access through the setting arrangements in English, but more could be done to match work to abilities in mathematics. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced across the curriculum.
26. Pupils with SEN participate in a broad and balanced curriculum, supported by advice from the co-ordinator for SEN and the good use of learning support assistants. Individual education plans are satisfactory and reviews regularly occur. However, guidelines and training are needed if staff are to make the best use of these plans to ensure that SEN pupils can fully access the curriculum in the various subjects.
27. There is a development plan for gifted and talented pupils, but as yet, there is not enough differentiation in the curriculum to ensure that the most-able pupils are sufficiently well challenged. In this respect, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.
28. There is a good scheme of work for personal, health and social education, which includes sex education and drugs awareness. These lessons contribute much to pupils' growing awareness of moral issues. There is a school council, in which representatives discuss school issues and report back to the classes. This makes a good contribution to education in citizenship.
29. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Sporting activities cover a wide range and include many competitive games. Pupils take part in school productions and there is a good range of musical activities. There are some residential experiences, including a visit to France. Pupils participate in homework clubs and use ICT facilities both before and after school, which contributes to their learning.
30. Community links contribute satisfactorily to pupils' sporting achievements and to their social and moral development. As well as sponsorship from local businesses for football teams, there are a number of sporting clubs which coach pupils. The school is also involved with musical events performed to the local community, and an annual art exhibition is displayed in the local shopping centre.
31. Pastoral support meets pupils' needs. Pupils are well known to teachers. Bullying is rare, but pupils say they are confident that any occurrences are satisfactorily resolved. Pupils say they feel safe in the school.
32. The school has close involvement with partner schools and regular meetings to ensure that pastoral and academic information is passed on. An induction programme helps to ensure a smooth transition into the school.

33. Provision for spiritual development is poor, and has not improved since the previous inspection, despite clear provision for religious education. In subjects, opportunities are missed to build on the work in religious education by exploring values and beliefs of different cultures, and there is little time for quiet reflection.
34. The school provides pupils with a strong moral ethic. They explore moral issues in English and personal, health and social education. Pupils are provided with a strong framework in which to work and play, which contributes to their feelings of security within the school. They respect each other and the environment. The school fosters trust, and pupils respond well to this. In the cyber café, before school, pupils treat the library and equipment with great care, requiring minimal intervention by adults.
35. Provision for social education is good. Pupils mix easily together and are caring to one another. They are plenty of opportunities to discuss work and ideas in class and in out-of-school activities. The provision is further enhanced by the extra-curricular activities.
36. Opportunities for cultural development are satisfactory. Pupils have a sound understanding of Western culture, which is reinforced in many lessons. In a lively music lesson pupils in Year 5 were beginning to learn about South African rhythms. However, in other subjects opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of worldwide cultures were missed. There has been little improvement in this dimension since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school provides a generally supportive environment, particularly through the very effective relationships that most teachers have with the pupils.
38. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory overall. They are well established and the designated person and most staff are clear about procedures. However, the large staff turnover means that new staff have not yet been adequately inducted in the school's policy and some staff, such as the mid-day supervisors, are not included in the school's training arrangements. The school must ensure that all staff are included in training as soon as is practicable. Arrangements for health and safety at the school are unsatisfactory. This is because, although the school generally makes appropriate provision for health and safety through its day-to-day monitoring systems, the person with responsibility for health and safety has only very recently had risk assessment training. This means that it is not carried out routinely throughout the school. Although some departments are very careful to ensure that lessons are assessed for risk, others, notably physical education, do not carry out adequate risk assessment.
39. The monitoring of attendance and behaviour is appropriate. The behaviour policy is clearly set out and staff mostly use it consistently. For pupils who misbehave the policy sets out a series of progressive steps which may lead to pupils having to spend time outside the classroom. The policy is quite clear about how long pupils should spend outside the classroom but in practice this is sometimes longer than it should be. There is, too, the example of the same pupils being sent outside the classroom in more than one lesson. Monitoring procedures must evaluate whether some pupils are missing too much lesson time for a series of minor misdemeanours. In the light of this, the school should consider the effectiveness of the policy and the way in which it is used.
40. Entry and assessment data is used effectively to place pupils on the SEN register and to develop appropriate programmes for them to follow. Visits are made to the feeder schools by the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator to ensure that transition is smooth.
41. The school has improved its assessment procedures since the previous inspection. It has established effective whole-school systems for recording data from national tests that can then be used to track individual pupil progress. In a number of subjects, assessment procedures are sound, and in English and French they are good. However, assessment procedures in geography and

religious education are unsatisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' work in ICT across the curriculum is also unsatisfactory and the lack of pupils' work retained does not help in assessing standards. The school has established systems for recording data which can be used to monitor individual pupil progress. The records kept will need to be reviewed to ensure they meet the needs of all subject departments. Insufficient use is made of information from assessment to improve teaching and learning. This is particularly the case in the teaching of French, religious education, geography, physical education and art. The school provides pupils with targets and these have been increasingly related to assessment information. Pupils are well supported and helped towards their targets by their teachers.

- 42. There are effective procedures for dealing with bullying. The school ensures that pupils and their parents understand the nature of bullying and what to do about it. Pupils generally get on very well with each other, and learn appropriately about friendship. This means that bullying is less likely to occur, but if it does pupils are clear about seeking help.
- 43. The homework club works very well. This is because staff have created a very effective working environment, with very good relationships between staff and pupils. In this environment pupils work well and know that help is readily available should they need it. This provides very good support for pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 44. In their views of the school there are some areas about which a significant number of parents is dissatisfied. Although the number of questionnaires returned and the number of parents attending the meeting for parents were relatively small, the amount of dissatisfaction still represents a significant proportion of parents, taking the parent population as a whole.
- 45. The school regularly sends surveys to its parents and had already identified these areas and taken steps to address concerns. However, these measures appear to be only partly successful given that there are still a number of parents who remain dissatisfied. Some initiatives designed to address these issues have been in place for a relatively short time, and the school needs to assess the impact of new initiatives and continue to look at ways of involving more parents in the life of the school. This is one aspect of the school that the governors should investigate thoroughly.
- 46. The school has in place some potentially effective ways of involving parents, such as sending policy documents to parents for comments. However, the number of parents responding by writing comments is very small and initiatives such as the Literacy and Numeracy evening were very poorly attended. However, there was good attendance for the joint Governor and Parent Teacher Association Annual General Meeting and parents generally show their support of the school and are impacting on the school through the fund-raising efforts of the Parent Teacher Association which last year raised a very large sum of money. Parents are very supportive of homework and want to help their children, but do not always feel equipped to do so. This is partly because information about the curriculum is limited. Parents can, if they request it, have a copy of the curriculum preview which is lengthy and gives an overview of what is taught for the whole of a two-year period. However, it does not provide the sort of information that would enable parents to effectively support learning at home.
- 47. The pupil homework planners provide an effective link for parents to communicate with teachers and some teachers and parents are using these well. Further work should be undertaken to ensure that all teachers use this valuable means of communication consistently and effectively. Parents support the school effectively by helping with transport for sporting events and with the drama production.
- 48. Information for parents in pupil reports is generally satisfactory with information about what pupils have been taught, and what they can do. The quality of information varies between departments and teachers. Some teachers provide good comments that are evaluative, so that parents know what their children can do and how well they do it. Some information is too focused on what pupils have

done without evaluating how well they can do it. There are targets for pupils and again these vary in quality with some too broad to be really useful. The Interim Report in the autumn term is a useful indicator to parents about how well their child is progressing. The school provides an opportunity for parents to meet with teachers annually, and regularly reminds parents they can come to see a teacher at any time. However, this is not the perception of some parents who do not feel that it is an open-door school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The headteacher and the senior managers provide a strong lead in the strategic direction of the school. The school has undergone significant changes due to nearly half of the staff joining the school in the past two years, but the quality of teaching has remained good. Subject heads of department are keen and enthusiastic and in many cases provide a positive focus for improvement. Opportunities are being provided for staff to undertake professional development programmes; a group of staff is to take part in the Bedfordshire School Improvement Programme, which will lead to the use of accelerated learning programmes in school. However, some teachers need further opportunities to improve their subject knowledge and to make links with other specialist teachers. Good leadership is provided to the school's learning support assistants who are also encouraged to undertake professional training.
50. There is a clear agenda for improvement within the school. The development plan is a clear, well-structured document, set within a three-year strategic plan. It sets out the main priorities for further development in the school and thus provides a focus for guiding budget planning and the professional development of staff. However, the criteria for success within the plan are less well defined and they are insufficiently focused on the need to raise standards in specific subjects. This means that evaluation of success is more focused on whether actions are carried out rather than on what they are meant to achieve. The plan is drawn up in consultation with staff and governors, and includes a process for integrating departmental bids for funds to enable specific subject development. However, the development plan is not used as an effective framework for subject departments to construct their plans. These departmental plans are very variable in content and effectiveness and do not all have raising attainment at their core. For example, the ICT plan is focused on the improvement of hardware rather than on how the use of ICT will improve the quality and variety of teaching and learning across the school. The senior management needs to provide leadership to encourage co-operative support, particularly where departments consist of only one teacher, and ensure that the pace of improvement in attainment is increased.
51. There is a clear structure for monitoring specific aspects of the school, such as teaching. A system of performance management for teachers has been introduced in line with government guidance. The school maintains an extensive monitoring and evaluation file that includes teaching observations and reviews of marking. This, combined with computer-linked assessment information, means that the school has, potentially, an extensive array of data to help evaluate progress. Some of the information is in a form that makes it very difficult to identify the key messages, such as complex attainment graphs. The review process needs to provide clear evaluations of what the data shows, that can be understood by all staff and governors and help identify improvement needs.
52. The governing body plays an active role in the life of the school. The governors interviewed during the inspection were knowledgeable and committed to supporting school improvement. They have a good understanding of their responsibilities and are aware both of the strengths of the school and of areas where further improvements are needed. Their knowledge of the school is a consequence of effective arrangements by which governors get to know the school and its functions. They have extensive links to teachers through the subject reviews they carry out. However, these links would be more effective if they were specifically targeted to the evaluation of outcomes set as a result of the departmental financial allocations. They seek to apply best value principles in a general way to spending decisions. Governors are fully involved in setting the educational direction for the school through the school development plan. They are conscious of their need to keep abreast of educational developments and have recently increased their own training and development. Governors ensure

that statutory requirements are met, apart from: ensuring that the school provides for all pupils to be able to take part in a daily act of collective worship; ICT within National Curriculum subjects; and, a systematic way of assessing risk within subjects.

53. The school has found that the replacement of staff has become more problematic in recent years. The numbers of applications for jobs has decreased considerably. However, governors are confident that they have been able to attract good staff into vacant positions, and the good teaching observed during the inspection supports this view. Partly in view of the need to maintain an effective teaching force the governors have increased staffing above normal levels and increased the amount of non-contact time for teachers to allow improvement projects to be undertaken. This has also meant that the long-term illness of a member of staff has been covered within the permanent staff in the school, minimising the inevitable disruption for pupils. Specific grants to the school are being used in line with government guidance. The school bursar efficiently undertakes the financial management of the school and provides regular updates for governors.
54. The school is well staffed with a balance of young and more experienced teachers. With such a high turnover of staff recently, some teachers have felt they lacked adequate induction support, but the support programme for newly-qualified teachers has been sound. In almost all subjects, teachers' skills are matched to the teaching they undertake, but there are some problems with staff undertaking the management and teaching of subjects where they do not have sufficient experience or expertise. Further support for these teachers is required, either through external consultancy, or teacher networks, or through professional development opportunities. In some cases teachers' lack of knowledge limits the learning for pupils in mathematics, art and religious education. Support for SEN pupils relies heavily on learning support assistants. The skilled specialist teaching that could be provided by the special needs co-ordinator is not used in the direct teaching of pupils. The school has tried to ensure that staff receive the necessary training to help them meet priorities, such as the use of ICT. However, many staff have not completed the ICT training and a review of its effectiveness is required.
55. The school's accommodation is good overall. Specialist facilities have been upgraded on a rolling programme, providing good bases for the teaching of design and technology, food technology, science, and ICT. The school is well kept and maintained.
56. The school's resources are satisfactory. Most departments have at least adequate provision, and some have good stocks of books, materials and equipment for teaching the National Curriculum successfully. Music equipment needs further additions. The book stock in the library needs an extensive review. The condition and age of some of the books are poor. Learning resources for special educational needs pupils are limited; there are a few computer programs, but the range of books in the library to encourage slower readers needs expansion.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

57. In order to improve the quality of education and standards further, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
 - (1) Raise the standards of attainment of pupils by removing underachievement, particularly in the following subjects:
Mathematics by:
 - continuing to develop the use of the National Numeracy Strategies to raise teacher expectations;
 - providing support for teachers to ensure that they have the required knowledge and understanding;
 - providing tasks more closely matched to the abilities of the pupils.

Science by:

- more effectively consolidating work learned through revision programmes and homework.

Art by:

- providing professional development and specialist professional subject support for the co-ordinator;
- improving the scheme of work.

Religious Education by:

- providing professional development and specialist professional subject support for the co-ordinator and teachers of religious education;
- improving the planning for the delivery of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus.
(Paragraphs 2, 3, 5, 9, 21, 23, 65, 72, 75, 78, 91, 98, 113, 119, 128, 129)

- (2) Improve the pace of school improvement, particularly in raising standards of attainment by:
- ensuring that the school development plan contains direct reference to the attainment targets set by the governors and relevant actions to achieve them;
 - providing leadership to subject co-ordinators in making raising attainment a central part of the subject development plans;
 - linking the governors' monitoring of subjects to agreements with co-ordinators about what is expected to be achieved.
(Paragraphs 8, 50, 51, 52, 110, 117, 120)
- (3) Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual understanding and the study of world cultures by:
- ensuring that each subject explores spiritual aspects, using the guidance provided in National Curriculum documents;
 - making sure that pupils are provided with an opportunity for a daily act of collective worship or reflection;
 - ensuring that the wide study of different cultures is integrated into subject schemes of work.
(Paragraphs 33, 36)
- (4) Improve the consistency and effectiveness of assessment by:
- reviewing the data that is provided by the whole-school systems to ensure it meets teachers' needs;
 - providing training for teachers in the use of assessment data;
 - providing leadership and support to subject co-ordinators in the way assessment information is used to support planning for programmes of work;
 - continuing to develop the pupil target-setting approaches.
(Paragraphs 41, 45, 51, 83, 94, 102, 109, 116, 130, 132)
- (5) Improve the links between parents and the school by:
- reviewing the style of presentation of the school;

- governors investigating the means of improving the relationships between the school and parents;
- looking for ways in which parental expertise can be used to support the curriculum.
(Paragraphs 44, 45, 46, 47, 48)

In addition to the key issues above, the school should also consider the following issues:

- ensuring that the National Curriculum expectations in the use of ICT in subjects are met;
(Paragraphs 24, 111)
- ensuring that risk assessment is carried out systematically.
(Paragraphs 38, 127)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	85
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	18	31	31	3	1	0
Percentage	1	21	36	36	4	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	423
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	23

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	78

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	64	45	109

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	52	49	57
	Girls	39	30	39
	Total	91	79	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (88)	72 (75)	88 (95)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	50	51	58
	Girls	38	32	40
	Total	88	83	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (82)	77 (73)	90 (93)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	12
Indian	13
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	391
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	22
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.2

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	159

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	24.7
Key Stage 3	29.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	931118
Total expenditure	930107
Expenditure per pupil	2184
Balance brought forward from previous year	32313
Balance carried forward to next year	33324

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	423
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	56	8	1	-
My child is making good progress in school.	33	54	4	-	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	63	1	1	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	51	32	6	1
The teaching is good.	21	63	1	3	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	14	39	34	8	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	30	43	17	7	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	29	64	3	-	4
The school works closely with parents.	14	42	31	10	3
The school is well led and managed.	30	54	3	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	21	67	4	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	51	12	1	8

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

58. The quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching
- Pupils' attitudes and skills
- Sharing ideas amongst teachers

Areas for improvement

- The focus and pace of independent tasks
- Clearer target setting to help pupils improve their work

59. Standards in English are good in comparison to national outcomes at Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment is sound in comparison with pupils of similar ability in like schools. Most individual pupils make sound progress in Years 5 and 6. There is, however, room to improve the proportion of pupils achieving the highest results. In Years 7 and 8, outcomes from Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) tests taken this year were very good in comparison to other Bedfordshire schools.
60. Attainment in speaking and listening is good, often very good, in all years. Most pupils are very keen to talk, and many are able to develop their point of view effectively in a range of styles. They use evidence well to support their views. In both key stages, the most able enjoy asking appropriate questions and speculating about different interpretations of a text. Most pupils use formal English well, are confident whether speaking to each other or to adults, and can make extended contributions to discussion. Listening skills are occasionally weaker. This happens when whole-class discussion is over-used and so there are limited opportunities for all individuals to speak.
61. Reading standards are good in both key stages. Particular strengths in Year 5 and 6 are the enthusiasm many pupils have for literature, their enjoyment of opportunities to read aloud in class, and their ability to apply ideas from their reading in their own writing. By the end of Year 8, the majority have a well-established grasp of how language works at both a literal and inferential level, and can summarise information well. Able pupils can analyse layers of meaning in complex literary texts. Less able pupils make sound progress and can put forward their ideas using appropriate evidence from what they have read. Pupils of all abilities show a good knowledge of how to use reference and information books.
62. Attainment in writing is good for middle-ability and upper-ability pupils in all years. The least able achieve a sound result and make appropriate progress. In one Year 6 target group, progress was accelerated for less-able children by the very clear, well-matched teaching they were receiving. This gave them the support they needed to make progress in small, accessible stages. They were also developing good understanding of how to make an impact with their style of writing. In Years 7 and 8, there is a wide gap between the most and least able, but the majority are attaining well and making sound progress. The average pupil is writing in a good range of styles, including poetry,
63. The quality of teaching is good. No lesson was less than satisfactory and many were good. Strengths include teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations. Teachers have clear purposes for the lessons they teach which they share with their classes. Planning is usually differentiated, especially to meet the needs of less-able pupils. Assessment is good, and marking gives pupils clear advice on how to improve. Teachers have good questioning skills and use pupils' contributions to discussion purposefully.

64. Teachers develop very positive relationships with pupils, encouraging them to become active learners whatever their ability or confidence level. These strengths in teaching create a positive and well-focused climate in the classroom. They also build on the very positive attitudes of pupils, who are lively, co-operative and articulate, and respond well when challenged. Pupils enjoy creative approaches to the subject, including role-play, media and interactive work. They also enjoy research opportunities.
65. The satisfactory teaching would be further improved by a more focused approach to independent tasks. The pace sometimes drops at this point in lessons if teachers' support is not clearly directed. More time spent helping a particular group develop their work, would have increased the pace. On some occasions the size of group was inappropriate for the task that was set. Clearer and more varied structures for speaking and listening would also have ensured more pupils had a chance to contribute to discussion in some classes.
66. The co-ordination of English is good. Staff leading the subject have a good grasp of the issues, have clear priorities for development and know how they will use resources effectively. Apart from the improvement of resources for the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy and renewal of library stock, the department is well resourced. The National Literacy Strategy has been appropriately implemented in Years 5 and 6, and other departments are contributing soundly to pupils' literacy development. In Key Stage 3 development has begun well in English. There has been some cross-curricular training but staff illness has delayed implementation of support work in Year 7. Sharing ideas and disseminating good practice is a strength of the department.

MATHEMATICS

67. The quality of provision in mathematics is generally satisfactory with some good features. Currently this results in standards which are in line with national averages but below those of similar schools.

Strengths

- The strong and enthusiastic leadership of the new Head of Department
- Effective lesson planning based on the National Numeracy Strategies incorporating clear learning outcomes and high quality activities
- A high proportion of good quality teaching
- The positive attitudes and hard work of pupils
- The developing systems to track pupils' progress and set targets for learning

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all lessons are effectively implemented
- Increase differentiation in lessons and the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils
- Ensure that pupils show in their books how they have arrived at their answers rather than just writing a list of numbers
- Increase the use of ICT within mathematics

68. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have fallen in the last two years. Although they are in line with national averages, in 2000 and 2001 they were well below similar schools. Standards observed in Year 8 are in line with national expectations, but many pupils could achieve more than they currently do. However, results from tests taken at the end of Year 8 in 2001 shows pupils achieving well.
69. Lessons are well planned and teachers share the expected outcomes with pupils. Almost all lessons start with an interactive mental and oral session. These sessions have a good pace and involve all pupils using individual cards and boards to show answers. Pupils are encouraged to explain their answers and develop their mathematical vocabulary.

70. In half of the lessons observed the teaching was good. These lessons were well structured, explanations were clear and teachers ensured that the lessons' purposes were met. Some lessons were less than satisfactory, despite having adequate plans. This was due to limited subject knowledge or poor use of resources. The school uses ability sets to provide work which is appropriate for pupils. However, the breadth of ability in each set is wide and more needs to be done to match work to pupil's needs.
71. Pupils work well in lessons and respond enthusiastically to teachers' questions. They are keen to explore ideas, to try to explain their thinking and to demonstrate in front of their class. Pupils' recording in their mathematics books is often limited to lists of answers. This is because teachers do not consistently model effective methods of recording on the board.
72. The mathematics department has developed a useful system for tracking pupils' progress based on test outcomes and using grades to break National Curriculum levels into smaller steps. Individual pupil target cards have recently been introduced so that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning. These are not yet consistently used across the department and further work needs to be done on assessing pupils' class work and ensuring consistency across all staff.
73. There has been a significant turnover of mathematics teachers this year. The new team is working well together to ensure consistency and raise standards under the very effective leadership and management of the new Head of Department.

SCIENCE

74. The quality of provision for science is good.

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching; subject knowledge of teachers; the good quality of questioning of pupils; the good marking of pupils' work
- The resources and accommodation for science

Areas for improvement

- Work undertaken, particularly in Years 7 and 8, should be consolidated, either through the use of published material or through pupils' own note-taking, so that they have a clear record of the work studied
- Homework, particularly in Years 7 and 8, should be used more to challenge pupils and reinforce earlier work
- More monitoring of pupils' progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6 should be done to reduce the degree of underachievement found at present

75. The standards pupils attain are broadly in line with national averages. This is the case in both key stages. The rate of improvement of standards in Years 5 and 6 since the time of the last Ofsted inspection is about the same as that found nationally. However, this improvement has not been sustained evenly, and the results in the last two years are lower than those in 1999. There is some underachievement in the standards pupils attain. In Key Stage 3, pupils show average standards of recall and understanding of work undertaken earlier in the term. They are good at carrying out experimental work and most can explain clearly what they are investigating. In both key stages pupils' work in science is greatly helped by well-above average standards in speaking and listening. There was very limited evidence available of pupils' work contributing to numeracy skills or work using ICT.
76. Pupils generally make good progress in lessons. Boys and girls make equally good progress, and pupils with SEN make progress in line with their ability. Minority ethnic pupils make progress and attain standards in line with all pupils in class. Pupils' learning is greatly helped by their good

attitudes and behaviour. Attitudes and behaviour were particularly good in Key Stage 3 and learning was better in the case of pupils in this key stage. Pupils work well together in groups and most contribute well in discussion. Although pupils' learning in lessons is often good, the progress they make over time is less secure and an area for development is to seek opportunities for reinforcing earlier work.

77. The quality of teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they explain clearly to pupils the objectives of each lesson. There is good use by teachers of questioning, and the ideas involved in lessons are well presented. The marking of pupils' work is very good. In one very good lesson observed on the solar system the teacher encouraged very good attitudes and behaviour. The objectives for the lesson were clear to pupils and the teacher explained the work very effectively. Pupils were confident in response to the good questioning. There was an appropriate variety in the tasks set and pupils maintained a good pace of work.
78. Although there is a degree of underachievement in the standards pupils attain in science the standard of teaching and the management of the subject are good. Improvements will be gained if the department can provide appropriate reinforcement and consolidation of work pupils undertake.

ART AND DESIGN

79. Overall, the quality of provision in art is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Opportunities for pupils to develop understanding of art, literacy and social skills
- Classroom management and organisation

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment of most-able pupils and those of average ability
- Quality of teaching and management
- Monitoring and evaluation of the subject

80. The school's provision for art and design is not adequate. The management and teaching of the subject are unsatisfactory, which results in a lack of challenge for pupils and standards of attainment below those expected for their age, both at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8. The scheme of work does not support teaching sufficiently well and there are no clear statements within it of what pupils are expected to achieve at the end of each unit of work. Although there is a programme to monitor aspects of teaching and development planning, there is insufficient expertise within the school to evaluate the quality of the provision and standards in art and design. The head of department is not an art specialist, and there has been insufficient support and staff development for her to fulfil her role adequately.
81. There are strengths in the teaching, particularly in classroom organisation and management, and in the opportunities provided to develop social skills and understanding of art and literacy. In a lesson on observational drawing, the teacher encouraged the Year 6 pupils to comment on different styles of drawing after watching a video. They responded with interesting and perceptive comments. However, their own drawings did not reflect their understanding, partly because the teacher had insufficient subject knowledge to enable the pupils to progress, and partly because the materials provided were not appropriate to develop the styles of drawing that had been previously discussed.
82. Pupils use sketchbooks to explore ideas, and the quality of work in these was better when they had made drawings from direct observation of landscape. There were some lively and expressive interpretations of landscape in coloured pencils, particularly by pupils with SEN. These were not well developed in subsequent lessons. Cultural development focuses too narrowly on western art. In a

lesson on headgear, pupils explored different styles, but opportunities were missed to explore headgear from different cultures and religions, with their associated values and beliefs.

83. Assessment across the key stage is accurate, but the majority of pupils do not attain levels commensurate with their abilities, and this represents significant underachievement, particularly of the higher-ability pupils. Marking is done regularly, but it is often over-generous, and therefore pupils do not have an accurate picture of their attainment and progress.
84. Opportunities are provided for pupils to draw and paint, and to use textile materials and clay. Much of the work is small in scale, which limits the type of work that pupils can do. Although pupils use the Internet to research artists and artistic styles, there is only one computer and a software programme, which has recently been acquired. It is therefore difficult for pupils to have their full entitlement to ICT in art and design.
85. Improving standards in art and design was a key issue in the previous inspection report. This has not been realised.
86. A comprehensive programme of staff development is required and support from a specialist in writing a comprehensive scheme of work or in interpreting the national guidelines for art, so that the teacher is able to help pupils to progress.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. The quality of provision for design and technology is good. Provision is stronger in Years 7 and 8 but good foundation work in developing skills and knowledge is now being established in Years 5 and 6.

Strengths

- Good quality teaching and very well planned lessons
- Setting high expectations for pupils in all aspects of their work
- Pupils being well motivated and keen to learn
- The provision of very good specialist facilities
- Very good subject management

Areas for improvement

- Further extending pupils' understanding of designing within their own and other cultures
- Developing the use of assessment to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential
- Continuing to extend the application of ICT in designing and making

88. Standards achieved have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now good and above the national average. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this very effectively to stimulate pupils' interest in design and technology. The importance of working with accuracy and attention to detail is emphasised well in teaching project work. As a result pupils work carefully and take pride in the products they are making. Lower-ability pupils are well supported and show similar confidence to their peers. In Year 7, more-talented pupils are given opportunities to develop more challenging ideas when designing and making a mechanical toy. In Years 5 and 6 basic skills for designing and making are being introduced well. Design folios in Years 7 and 8 show very good standards being achieved in developing pupils' understanding of the process of designing. They also gain valuable experience in designing to meet the needs of others, for example, when working with the gift shop of a local garden centre. Literacy skills are being extended well through the good use of

language to communicate ideas and the development of technical vocabulary. There is also good emphasis on the application of numeracy to achieve accuracy in measuring, cutting, joining and testing when working with materials.

89. Pupils respond well in lessons and show good attitudes to work, and their behaviour is also consistently good. The recent refurbishment of the subject work areas has been very beneficial. Pupils now work in clean, well-organised areas and show a good understanding of health and safety. Good progress has been achieved already in creating appropriate stimulus in these areas to capture pupils' interest and imagination. There is good progress in developing the use of ICT, including the introduction of computer-aided design and manufacture, and links to computer control in Years 7 and 8. The use of software to test electrical circuits is also a good development here.
90. The subject is very well managed and provides a clear vision and direction for development. Documentation is thorough and communicates the subject's intentions and purposes very well to others. With the current team of staff the school is now well placed to maintain the present level of progress in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

91. Overall, the quality of provision for geography is satisfactory. It is stronger in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. Attainment in Years 5 and 6 is about average. In Years 7 and 8 it is below expectations for the more-able and is related to the lack of challenge.

Strengths

- Teachers have good classroom management skills
- The sharing of good practice is being used to improve teaching and learning
- The team approach to the production of resources is resulting in a wider variety of teaching strategies

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop the basic skills, particularly numeracy and ICT
- Provide additional opportunities for all pupils to carry out investigatory work
- Improve the use of assessment procedures to give access to the higher levels for the more able

92. Standards are satisfactory, with SEN pupils achieving well. Standards achieved by more-able pupils are lower than expected. The standard of oral work is good as is the quality of discussion and presentation. Teaching within the subject is satisfactory overall. It is better in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned and materials catering for different learning needs are used. In a few topics, such as the work on rivers, tasks are undemanding and rely heavily on textbooks. Basic literacy skills are being developed within the subject and support learning. However, the teaching of numeracy and ICT skills are not sufficiently developed.
93. Attitudes and behaviour are good and enable pupils to concentrate and progress in lessons. Teachers manage the pupils well and have satisfactory subject knowledge and understanding. Where behaviour was not so good, this was as a result of undemanding tasks or a slow pace.
94. Supportive targets are given but these need to be more detailed to show how pupils can improve.. The use of assessment of National Curriculum levels needs strengthening as there are too few pupils gaining access to the higher levels. The use of homework to support pupils' learning is satisfactory, but activities are frequently related to the completion of tasks started in the lessons.

95. The subject is well led and managed. Clear direction is given to the team members. Monitoring is being carried out but this needs to be evaluated so that teaching and learning can be further improved. Records are kept of pupils' attainment but these are not used effectively in the planning of work.
96. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching and learning has improved and this is having a positive impact on the achievement of pupils. The over-reliance on textbooks is decreasing, although this is still found in some topics.

HISTORY

97. The quality of provision for history is good.

Strengths

- Excellent documentation and plans for the future of the subject
- Some very good teaching
- The majority of pupils have a very positive attitude to and enjoy history
- Learning objectives are usually clear and are shared with pupils
- Effective deployment of learning support assistants to support pupils with SEN

Areas for improvement

- More consistent planning for all abilities with appropriate tasks and assessments
- Make the aspirations set out in the history handbook become a reality by the systematic monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning
- Further develop the use of primary sources and artefacts and build up a wider range of history resources
- Develop staff expertise by a programme of in-service training in history

98. Standards in history are sound across all years and in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils work at appropriate National Curriculum levels, though there is a lack of challenge for the most able in some lessons and some evidence of lower attaining pupils struggling with too difficult tasks. For example, in one Year 8 lesson a Powerpoint presentation was used as a stimulus for pupils' learning but pupils themselves were not offered the opportunity to make their own presentations in this way. This was a lost opportunity for pupils as it resulted in several too-similar presentations. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils' attitudes to learning in most lessons are good across the whole age and ability range.
99. Marking, although based on the whole-school policy, does not diagnose strengths and areas for improvement and tends to make judgements relating to presentation, spelling and grammar. There is evidence in Year 5 books of opportunities for extended writing where more-able pupils write empathetically about a day in the life of an ancient Greek child, though this is almost subsumed by rather too many 'stuck-in' worksheets, neatly coloured in. Learning is often not consolidated, with the most able making the least progress. There is not enough evidence of consistent challenge for the most able. Pupils with SEN make most progress when they have in-class support. Most pupils are not fully extending their range of skills and few opportunities are offered for extended writing in Years 7 and 8. No evidence was seen of pupils using ICT to enhance understanding in history or to develop independent learning skills.
100. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Lessons are planned using the National Curriculum framework and there is good coverage of significant individuals and events in the history of Britain and the significant periods of world history. Most teachers' knowledge is generally satisfactory, though in at least one case pupils' lack of understanding was due to the teacher's lack of knowledge and clarity of what was meant to be learned. In this lesson pupils were noisy, took a long time to settle to task and behaviour was poor. There needs to be more variety in the design of some tasks to meet the needs of all pupils.

101. The very good teaching seen in one Year 7 lesson was characterised by the teacher's ability to enthuse and inspire pupils in history. The lesson had appropriate pace, rigour and high expectations, and was fun. Consequently pupils' learning was very good, they settled to task quickly and conscientiously, made progress and their attitude and behaviour were very good. Use of primary sources is underdeveloped though good use was made of an extract from the Domesday Book, which related to Aspley Guise. Year 7 pupils were able to understand the context of the document in relation to William's fiscal and political policies and re-create the document in authentic style. There is a general lack of specialist expertise in history, which could be addressed by a programme of in-service training for history staff. This should give teachers more confidence in the teaching of history and ensure improvement in pupil attainment.
102. Leadership of the subject is good. The acting co-ordinator has already begun to develop a team approach to planning so that all history teachers can work co-operatively to develop their skills and share examples of good practice. There is a clear need to develop a more consistent approach to teaching and learning and to improve assessments to meet the needs of all pupils. Accommodation and basic resources are good but there would be an advantage in building up a range of artefacts, ICT and other resources to give pupils the opportunity to use first-hand sources for historical enquiry and interpretation. The department is now well placed to begin to use the history handbook as a working tool to plan, assess, monitor and evaluate teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

103. Overall the provision for ICT and the teaching of timetabled lessons is good. The high level of resourcing in the specialist room and the library is well used by the pupils both in lessons and outside normal school hours.

Strengths

- The structure, planning and delivery of ICT lessons and the exposition, support and advice given by teachers during those lessons
- The recent opportunity for pupils to practise and extend their capability in breakfast, lunchtime and after-school clubs.
- Subject knowledge of the ICT co-ordinator

Areas for improvement

- The ICT development plan does not have a clear focus on the role of ICT to support teaching and learning in raising pupils' attainment
- Professional development of all staff in the use of ICT to support learning linked to the development plan
- Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress in ICT

104. Attainment of pupils is good, and the schemes of work allow the pupils to make progress, showing a good level of achievement. The activities allow pupils to extend their skills. Pupils work independently and explain processes accurately.
105. The school has addressed a number of issues since the last inspection. However, some improvements have not yet been fully implemented and weaknesses exist in the way teachers use ICT to aid learning. There are opportunities for more challenging activities for the more able. Pupils are encouraged to become more independent users of ICT, and make a good contribution to the learning process. The use of ICT to develop the understanding of control is much improved and is now a strength of the department. The schemes of work give continuity and progression to the development of ICT capability, and lesson planning is effective.
106. During the week of the inspection, the standard of attainment of pupils in work observed and in teacher assessment was good. Pupils are achieving levels at or above those expected nationally.

All pupils have a weekly lesson of ICT where achievement is generally good, and sometimes very good. The school's process for recording pupils' achievement shows they make progress.

107. The overall quality of teaching in ICT lessons is good, and in some cases very good. The lessons are well planned, the structure is good, the learning objectives clearly defined and shared with the pupils. Teachers have the confidence to discuss ICT, show a satisfactory level of subject knowledge, give clear explanations and the support during the development of the lesson is good. Pupils are well managed and teachers foster a positive working atmosphere. Occasionally the pace is too brisk and the questioning does not check pupils' understanding, which leads to some disengaged activity. The end of lessons includes an effective summary that reviews learning. At the start, good links are made to previous lessons, and, at the close of the lesson, to the next development. Activities offer challenge and more able pupils progress quickly to the more demanding tasks. However, some tasks lack focus.
108. The quality of learning is good; pupils increase their understanding of ICT and acquire new knowledge and skills. They can discuss what they are doing and the processes involved. They show enthusiasm for their work and the majority concentrate on the task for a sustained period. Pupils showed a growing confidence with ICT and demonstrated a level of independence in lessons and in extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils are confident learners.
109. The ICT co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and is aware of the needs for developing ICT in the school. Schemes of work are in place and efforts are being made to ensure the full breadth of the programmes of study is available to all pupils. Opportunities for the use of ICT to monitor and measure data must be further improved. Pupils' progress is assessed and collated, but there needs to be more effective use of this data linked to better evidence for the monitoring and evaluation of progress and continuity.
110. The development plan for ICT does not have a clear vision for raising pupil attainment, nor links to planned development of resources and staff competence to meet these needs. The link governor and the present cycle of meetings should play an important role in monitoring the effectiveness of this plan if clear outcomes are first identified. The school has undertaken the nationally funded teacher training, but there is a low expectation for staff completion. This may be one of the reasons why this training is yet to have an impact on the delivery of ICT across the curriculum.
111. The use of ICT in other subjects to enable pupils to develop their capabilities is inconsistent. Insufficient use of ICT to support the teaching and learning was seen during lesson observations of other subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

112. The quality of provision for French is good in Years 5 and 6 and sound in Years 7 and 8. Teaching is of a consistently high standard and pupils' response and engagement are good. The department is well equipped and resourced.

Strengths

- Teaching is good through effective short and medium-term planning, and emphasis on continuous interactions in French, with pace and variety in lessons
- Pupils are engaged and motivated, with good listening and responding skills
- Pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 through opportunities for developing language skills
- There is high attainment in Years 5 and 6

Areas for improvement

- Departmental development planning
- Use of assessment to inform planning for progression and target setting
- Departmental review processes

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113. Very good foundations are laid in Years 5 and 6 for French. Well-sequenced lessons establish good learning routines, some of which are borrowed from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Attainment and progress in Years 7 and 8 are average. Pupils respond well and are used to rich target language teaching, but are not sufficiently challenged, particularly in writing tasks, which limits their attainment in Years 7 and 8. Planning for progress is a weakness.
 114. On balance, the department has been successful in maintaining the positive findings of the last inspection. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher plans well, has good subject knowledge and leads classroom interactions almost exclusively in French. There is a good variety of appropriate tasks and lessons progress at a lively pace. There is a need to include more opportunity for cultural aspects of learning and planning should include more ICT tasks.
 115. Pupils' response and behaviour are of a high standard. Pupils of all abilities are well motivated and take part in all aspects of learning with enthusiasm. They speak French with confidence because they are given opportunities to create their own meaning in French.
 116. Assessment is integrated into the scheme of work, but results are not used to analyse progress or plan for progression. Consideration should be given to analysing pupil performance against expected progress.
 117. There is a need for more detailed departmental planning and the elaboration of policies for the department. The departmental handbook contains good information on marking and reporting but there is insufficient specific detail. Departmental review processes to inform development are lacking.

MUSIC

118. The quality of provision is satisfactory and improving because of the good teaching, but pupils are not yet achieving as well as they should.

Strengths

- Clear, shared lesson objectives aid continuity, progression and consolidation of musical knowledge
- Pupils enjoy their music, particularly keyboard work and singing, and their progress is enhanced by their familiarity with terminology and notation
- Pupils take pride in finished work and final performances, which are rewarded by good listening and appropriate applause
- There is a good range of peripatetic lessons and extra-curricular activities

Areas for improvement

- The lack of ICT prohibits access to the full National Curriculum in music in all four years
- The tasks to meet the needs of different ability groups are not yet consistently built into lesson plans
- Achievement, particularly in peripatetic instrumental lessons, is unsatisfactory

119. Whilst attainment is satisfactory overall, it is not as high as it should be for this school. In particular, very few pupils with instrumental skills above ABRSM grade 2 attend school peripatetic lessons and there were no examples of high attainment in any of the classroom lessons visited. However, many pupils now take advantage of the range of music activities on offer and a group of over 100 pupils is preparing for the next musical show. The standard of singing is good and singers learn quickly. The

new music co-ordinator has worked hard in a short time to provide an appropriate music scheme; to ensure that boys participate; to provide open access to more pupils; to make the listening work relevant; and, to enthuse the pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their music, there are boys from all years in the choir, group work is successful and effective routines for the organisation and use of classroom instruments are developing well.

120. Overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, but significant improvement has been made in the last one and a half years. The department has the capacity to continue this improvement and is well supported in its work by peripatetic teachers. However, they need to address the average attainment and unsatisfactory achievement of pupils.
121. The music curriculum is broad, but the lack of ICT prohibits coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Improved access is required in order that pupils may be able to capture, change and combine sounds in Years 5 and 6, and be able to create, manipulate and refine sounds in Years 7 and 8.
122. Accommodation is cramped and insufficient for the purpose, despite the availability of practice. Storage facilities are inadequate because pupils have to interrupt the music classes to collect instruments. Resources are improving but are insufficient for meeting the needs of the curriculum. Keyboards and classroom percussion need particular attention.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. The quality of provision is sound. Standards of attainment in physical education are in line with national expectations.

Strengths

- Pupils acquire and develop games skills to a good standard
- Pupils are taught game tactics effectively
- Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and are reviewed in the plenary
- Physical education terminology is taught from Year 5
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are motivated and enthusiastic
- Pupils are taught by specialist physical education teachers

Areas for improvement

- Pupils of average and higher ability need to be challenged more, both academically and practically
- Increased emphasis needs to be placed on teaching pupils: how to select and apply skills, tactics and compositional ideas; how to evaluate and improve performance; and, how to take increasing responsibility for warming themselves up and preparing appropriately for different activities
- Involve pupils in activities matched to their learning needs

124. There was evidence in the lessons observed of skills in games being taught to a good standard. Teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 are good and in Years 7 and 8 are satisfactory.
125. Teaching is clearly focused on achieving well-defined objectives, with activities following on from one another. Clear explanations and good demonstrations, both by the teacher and with pupil assistance, enable the practising of skills to progress quickly. The correct technical language is taught and reinforced throughout lessons. Many pupils are able to explain the meaning of words and phrases and practically demonstrate them. In a Year 6 dance lesson pupils made some very perceptive

comments on how an aspect of the 'cricket' dance could be improved. Pupils remain engaged in skills practices and in small-sided games and show a willingness and enthusiasm to learn. In gymnastics in particular, pupils in Year 8 remained committed to achieving success in performing the basic skills of vaulting prior to work on flight. All had gained in confidence by the close of the lesson. Pupils are taking increasing responsibility for organising themselves.

126. Teachers have a good knowledge of how to teach pupils to acquire and develop skills. Their planning is good in this aspect. However, overall, teaching pupils how to evaluate and improve performance and how to select and apply skills is not as evident. There is nothing in the very brief schemes of work to indicate that there is any planning for these aspects. This would then enable pupils of higher ability to be further challenged with extended and differentiated tasks.
127. The physical education handbook is very out of date. There is no risk assessment in physical education and no safety policy. The schemes of work need a complete revision to ensure that the four areas of knowledge, skills and understanding, which must be taught, are planned for. Assessment can then be linked directly to teachers' plans for lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Provision for religious education is satisfactory across all years. Standards of attainment, however, are unsatisfactory, as work is not matched appropriately to the requirements of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

Strengths

- The recent appointment of a new co-ordinator, who is keen to develop a more rigorous approach to religious education and improving standards
- Good links with literacy and opportunities to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Behaviour in classes and pupils' attitudes to religious education are generally very good
- Good relationships between teachers and pupils

Areas for improvement

- Raise attainment in religious education by careful monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across both phases
- Match medium and short-term planning more closely to the new agreed syllabus
- There is an urgent need for professional development opportunities in religious education to be made available to all teachers of religious education including the co-ordinator

129. Attainment is unsatisfactory because teachers are not yet familiar with the eight level scale of attainment, which is contained in the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus. There is no specialist teacher of religious education in the school which impacts upon teaching and learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8, where specialist knowledge would be an advantage. As a consequence, lessons are planned which do not sufficiently challenge the more able and there is not enough evidence that the needs of the least able are always met. For example, in one Year 7 lesson all pupils were given the same task. It was quickly completed by the most able but it proved difficult for the least able as it depended very heavily on reading and assimilating written information. No extension work was provided and opportunities to extend pupils' understanding were lost. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
130. Pupils do not know at what level they are working and how to improve their work. Marking in exercise books is based loosely on the school's policy and tends to make judgements relating to presentation, spelling and grammar rather than on a diagnosis of strengths and areas for improvement. Work in books and in lessons shows little emphasis on 'Learning From Religion' but

rather on 'Learning About Religion'. This imbalance does not allow pupils to show their deepening understanding of religious concepts such as forgiveness or reconciliation, and stifles the creativity that some pupils can bring to the classroom. Learning is often not consolidated, with the most able making the least progress. There is little evidence of challenge for the most able. Pupils with SEN make most progress when they have in-class support. Most pupils are not fully extending their range of skills and few opportunities are offered for extended writing. No evidence was seen of pupils using ICT to enhance understanding in religious education or to develop independent learning skills.

131. The quality of teaching is sound. Lessons are planned using the agreed syllabus framework, teachers' knowledge is generally satisfactory and good links with the National Literacy Strategy ensure pupils' literacy skills are developed through religious education. There needs to be more imagination in the design of some tasks to meet the needs of all pupils. The good teaching seen in one Year 6 lesson was characterised by differentiated tasks, appropriate pace, rigour and high expectations. Consequently pupils' learning was good, progress was made and their attitude and behaviour were very good.
132. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory and has the potential to be good. The very enthusiastic, newly appointed co-ordinator recognises the need to review the current scheme of work in light of the new requirements of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus, particularly the need to link learning objectives to levels. She has the desire to improve both the status of religious education and pupils' enjoyment of and attainment in the subject. The co-ordinator and teachers of religious education need further staff development in order to develop a more rigorous approach to teaching and learning and especially to improve the use of assessment to inform future planning.
133. At the last inspection the distinction between religious education and personal and social education was not clear and curriculum provision for religious education was described as inadequate. This has now improved since religious education is separately timetabled and allocated an appropriate amount of the total curriculum time.