

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Hill House St Mary's

Full Name of the School **Hill House St Mary's**
DfES Number **5716000**
Address **Rutland Street, Thorne Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
DN1 2JD**
Telephone Number **01302 323563**
Fax Number **01302 761098**
E-mail Address **info@hillhousestmarys.co.uk**
Name of Principal **Mr J Cusworth**
Chair of Governors **Mr J Whiteley**
Age Range **3-16** Gender **Mixed**
Number of Pupils **432**
Inspection Dates **November 24th – 28th 2003**

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 163(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The school must not quote the report selectively in the school prospectus or other promotional literature.

The inspection does not examine the financial liability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

1. MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

1.1 The school has made considerable progress since its creation in 2002. Its major strengths include the good start pupils get in the Foundation Stage and throughout the junior school, resulting in high standards being attained in several subjects by the age of 11. In addition, the school has a good ethos, pupils' behaviour is very good and they are well cared for. By the time they leave, good standards are attained in most subjects at GCSE level. Areas for improvement include the development of the good practice, right across the whole school, a review of the appropriateness of certain aspects of the senior school curriculum and a review of the roles and responsibilities of the school's senior managers and curriculum leaders.

What the School Does Well

- Pupils attain good standards at G.C.S.E. level in most subjects with high standards being attained in English and science in particular, by the age of 11.
- The school provides children with a good start in the Foundation Stage, which is then successfully built upon throughout the junior school.
- The ethos of the school is good and all pupils are well cared for.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and relationships within the school are excellent.
- The school has good links with parents and the community.
- As a result of the very good curriculum and assessment systems being used, good progress is made by the majority of pupils in the junior school,

What the School Should Do Better

1.2 However, the school has shortcomings in the following important areas.

- The roles and responsibilities of senior managers and curriculum leaders are insufficiently well defined.
- The balance, breadth and appropriateness of some aspects of the senior school curriculum are unsatisfactory.
- Many of the successful policies and practices need implementation throughout the whole school policies.
- The library provision in the senior school is unsatisfactory.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

1.3 The standards pupils attain in public examinations by the time they leave the school, are good overall in relation to their abilities.

1.4 By the time children reach the end of the Foundation Stage (nursery and reception classes), they have attained the nationally recommended goals for children of that age. Indeed, during their time in the Foundation Stage most children progress onto National Curriculum programmes of study for Key Stage 1. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, largely as a result of the good and often very good teaching they receive in all areas of the curriculum.

1.5 During Years 1 and 2, pupils make rapid progress in English and good progress in mathematics and science. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment is high in relation to their abilities in English and good in mathematics and science. These findings are similar to the results attained by pupils in the National Curriculum tests in reading, writing and mathematics.

1.6 In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make rapid progress in English as well as in science. Sound progress is made in mathematics. Consequently, by the time they transfer to the senior school, pupils' standards are in line with their abilities in mathematics but are high in relation to their abilities in science and English. As in Years 1 and 2, inspection findings are similar to the results attained by 11-year-old pupils in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in these subjects, although there are indications that a larger proportion of pupils are on track to achieve the higher levels than did so in 2003 in mathematics. In all subjects pupils study, evidence shows that pupils are on track to achieve good standards in many and high standards in several, by the time they reach the end of the junior school.

1.7 In Years 7 to 9, pupils make sound progress in English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign language. Consequently, they attain standards that are in line with their abilities in these subjects. As in Year 6, National Curriculum test results reflect these findings in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects studied, there are indications that appropriate standards are being attained.

1.8 By the time they leave the school at the age of 16, pupils attain good standards in relation to their abilities in many subjects in GCSE examinations. Inspection findings show that attainment levels are high in mathematics, good in English, modern foreign language and history and in line with their abilities in science. In Years 10 to 11 good progress is made by pupils in English, mathematics and history with sound progress being made in science and French.

1.9 Literacy and numeracy skills are taught to a good standard and are appropriately applied to other subject areas. The application of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills to other subjects is more variable ranging from good in some subjects to little if any in others.

1.10 Throughout the school, pupils who have special educational needs do well, largely as a result of the good support they receive in individual tuition sessions and in the work they are given in most classrooms. No significant differences were found in the amount of progress made by boys and girls.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

1.11 The quality of pupils' attitudes to their work and their very good behaviour are major strengths of the school. In classes and in the school generally, pupils of all ages display a good deal of common sense and responsibility. They are sensible when moving around the school and are considerate and most polite to each other and visitors. Older pupils in both sections are protective of, and helpful to, younger ones, and this fosters the family atmosphere which is characteristic of the school. In lessons, pupils apply themselves purposefully to their work. They sustain concentration at levels appropriate to their age and are positively motivated by their work. When asked to do so, in lessons such as science, they work well in pairs and in small groups. Pupils' attitudes to their work are good, although on the few occasions when pupils are given work that is insufficiently challenging, their concentration lapses and one or two can become bored and achieve little. The present inadequate library provision in the senior school, means that pupils' research and study skills are not as fully developed as they might be.

The Quality of Teaching

1.12 The overall quality of teaching is good and this contributes significantly to pupils' standards and to the good progress they make in many subjects. In over nine out of ten lessons, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. The quality of teaching was good in half of the lessons and very good in a further fifth. In a small number of lessons, the quality of teaching was outstanding. The proportions of good and very good teaching were noticeably higher in the junior school than in the senior school. A small number of lessons in the senior school were unsatisfactory.

1.13 In nearly all lessons, classes were very well managed and teachers provided a good combination of control, encouragement and support. In the majority of lessons, the expectations that were set were appropriate, but in a few lessons the work did not match the capabilities of the ablest pupils. In the small proportion of lessons where the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory, the pace of the lesson being too slow or the teacher's own subject expertise was inadequate.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

1.14 Pupils' levels of attendance are good. Most are punctual when arriving at school. The school meets all legal requirements for attendance and admission registers.

Assessment and Recording

1.15 The systems in place to assess and record pupils' progress vary considerably, from very good in the junior school to sound in the senior school. Tests are set at regular intervals and pupils are assessed for attainment and effort. National Curriculum tests are taken at the end of Years 2, 6 and 9. Pupils in Year 11 take GCSE examinations. Assessment and recording systems for the children in the Foundation Stage are good and closely linked to the Early Learning Goals. Formal assessment and recording systems are also good in Years 1 to 6. However, in Years 7 to 11 they are uneven. In these years, although they track progress in some cases, teachers rarely use the short-term assessment of their pupils' work sufficiently well to plan the next stages of their work. Pupils' work is marked regularly in most cases, although the amount of detail in the marking varies and, in some instances, pupils are not always given the precise help they need to form an accurate view of how well they have completed a piece of work.

Curriculum

1.16 The curriculum offered by the school varies from being very good in the junior school to being overall unsatisfactory in the senior school. For pupils in the Foundation Stage it is very good, being broad, balanced and based upon the Early Learning Goals. In Years 1 and 2, pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum based on the National Curriculum and religious education. The curriculum for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is very good and has sufficient breadth, although in some groups the time given to teaching design and technology is inadequate. The curriculum covers all the National Curriculum subjects, as well as religious education, French, drama and personal, social and health education. In the senior school, the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 lacks sufficient balance; for Years 10 and 11 a review of the GCSE options system is needed. In addition in Years 7 to 11, some subjects have insufficient teaching time to enable them to be taught to an appropriate depth.

1.17 Very good schemes of work are in place in the junior school and in some subjects in the senior school. However, there are few schemes of work that cover the entire age range from Year 1 to Year 11 and this is unsatisfactory. The curriculum of the school is significantly enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

1.18 The number of teaching and non-teaching staff is satisfactory, enables the full coverage of the curriculum offered and is similar to that found in other independent schools of this type. The good teacher-to-pupil ratio in the lower part of the school contributes significantly to the very good start these young children make. In a small number of instances in the senior school, the teachers' own knowledge and expertise is insufficient to teach pupils at that level.

1.19 Sound procedures are in place to help teachers to keep up to date with their own professional development. However, they are insufficiently well linked to school development planning, despite some progress in this respect. The need to build on the

current appraisal system for all teaching staff across the whole school has been recognised by the school. Legally required checks are carried out for all new staff.

Resources for Learning

1.20 Overall, the provision of resources to support teaching and learning is satisfactory in the senior school and good in the junior school. In most subject areas, the school is adequately provided with basic resources although the materials to support individual research by pupils are limited. Investment in ICT over the last few years has been substantial and has enabled two computer rooms to be adequately equipped and large enough for whole-class ICT lessons. Resources for pupils in the Foundation Stage, as well as for pupils with special educational needs, are good. In no curriculum areas, apart from design and technology in the junior school are resources unsatisfactory. The school makes good use of visits out of school for a variety of purposes, usually related to different areas of the curriculum. When resources are well used by teachers they have a most positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

Libraries

1.21 The library in the junior school is sound but in the senior school it is unsatisfactory. In the junior school an adequate stock of books, housed in a good-sized library, are supplemented, particularly in the younger year groups, by good stocks of books in classrooms. In the senior school stocks are inadequate and some books are out of date. Subject specific book stocks are satisfactory in most departments. Opportunities for pupils to carry out personal research are limited by the unsatisfactory library provision.

Premises and Accommodation

1.22 Overall, the premises and accommodation are adequate for the numbers, ages and gender of the pupils and are generally suitable to enable the curriculum that is offered to be taught effectively.

1.23 The accommodation for pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is sound. Most rooms are light and airy and, together with the good displays of pupils' work, make a most attractive learning environment for these young pupils. The accommodation for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is also sound. Specialist facilities are available for subjects such as science, ICT, music and art and design. Teaching rooms are bright and are enhanced by very good displays of pupils' work. One or two rooms are rather cramped given the number of pupils in them. However, this does not detract from the educational standards being attained.

1.24 Some of the classrooms and specialist provision for the senior school pupils have limitations that constrain the range of styles of teaching and classroom activity that can be offered and achieved. Nevertheless, overall, the premises and accommodation are adequate. Outdoor games facilities, largely on separate sites, are excellent and provide

very good opportunities for pupils to develop their games skills. However, as the school does not have its own outdoor facilities, valuable teaching time is lost in transporting pupils to off-site facilities.

Links with Parents and the Community

1.25 The school has a good partnership with its parents and links with the local community are worthwhile and important to the school. A questionnaire that was sent to all parents in advance of the inspection showed that they hold the school in high regard. In particular, responses indicated significant satisfaction with the information parents receive and the opportunities they have to discuss their children's attainment and progress. They feel they are encouraged to be involved in school matters and are strongly supportive of the school's aims and values. Inspection findings confirm most of the parents' views. The reports parents receive are good. Sufficient care is taken to inform parents, not only of their children's successes, but also what their children need to do next, in order to continue to improve. In some subjects, particularly in the senior school, the systems used for assessing and recording pupils' progress are less comprehensive and, as a result, the reporting on these subjects is only just adequate. The school has good links with the wider community and pupils are always willing, through various charities, to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Pupils' Personal Development

1.26 The provision for pupils' personal development is good. Teachers encourage the development of personal responsibility and social awareness and, in many aspects of their work, pupils are encouraged to think about and discuss appropriate values and responsibilities. Good, effective measures are taken to promote appropriate discipline and behaviour. The provision for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good overall.

Pastoral Care

1.27 The school makes good arrangements for the pastoral care and support of its pupils. Pupils know that they can easily approach any member of staff if they are worried or concerned about anything. As the marking of pupils' work in some subject areas in the senior school is insufficiently detailed, the academic support and guidance offered to pupils is not always well founded on appropriate information. Other support and guidance offered to pupils is very good. Good, all-round provision is also made for the welfare and safety of pupils. Appropriate guidelines for health and safety are in place and suitable risk assessments are regularly carried out. Levels of supervision are good, both in the buildings and outside. The school has a sufficient number of suitably qualified first-aiders. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. The school complies with health and safety regulations. It also complies with the statutory requirements related to child protection.

Governance and Management

1.28 The governance and leadership of the school are good overall, although certain aspects of the management of the school are unsatisfactory. Governors play a good, proactive role in providing leadership for the school. The principal has a good understanding of both the needs of the school and its pupils. He provides the leadership necessary to achieve the high academic standards, very good behaviour and personal development towards which the school aims. The school aims are appropriate and reflected in many of its policies and values. The relative newness of some of the whole-school policies means that not all are reflected in practice.

1.29 The school does not have a whole-school development to cover its intentions over the next few years, although this is almost complete. An effective management team and curriculum leaders for all subjects are not fully in place. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the senior managers and curriculum leaders are insufficiently clear and in need of further review in order to enable the work of the whole school to be planned and monitored more effectively.

1.30 The ethos of the school is good and reflects a commitment to establishing a warm, friendly environment, high academic standards and very good relationships with pupils. General administrative procedures are well known by staff. The school runs smoothly. All legal requirements are being met.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

1.31 The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are very good in the junior school and sound in the senior school. They make a significant contribution to enhancing pupils' overall experiences and the quality of education they receive. Such activities are appreciated by parents and pupils' alike.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

1.32 There has been no previous inspection of this newly amalgamated school.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

The Independent School Standard Regulations apply from the beginning of September 2003, but schools have had relatively little time to implement them. This applies especially to the detailed regulations for providing parents with information and for establishing a parental complaints procedure.

DfES Standard		Does the school meet the regulatory requirements?
1 Quality of education:	1.(2) Curriculum	Yes
	1.(3)-(5) Teaching	Yes
2	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	Yes
3	Welfare, health and safety of pupils	Yes
4	Suitability of proprietors and staff	Yes
5	Premises and accommodation	Yes
6	Provision of information	Yes
7	Manner in which complaints are to be handled	Yes

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

1.33 No action is required.

1.34 The school is asked to tackle any issues highlighted in What the School Should do Better. These are set out as recommendations for the school in Section 2 of the report.

2. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The main recommendations are listed below. The school should now:-

R1 Review the roles and make clear the responsibilities of the senior managers and curriculum leaders, in order to:-

- Establish a more effective management structure, so that all have a clear understanding of their role in the running of the whole school.
- Establish a more effective system to monitor the work of the whole school, particularly the quality of teaching and learning, the standards pupils attain and the progress they make.
- Review, as necessary, subject schemes of work, so that they give a clear indication of what pupils are required to learn, in what order and at what point in time from Year 1 through to Year 11.

- Combine the junior and senior school development plans into one whole-school working document that is easily accessible to all.
- Carry out a review of teachers' skills and experiences to ensure that the groups of pupils to which they are allocated, make the best use of that expertise.

R2 Carry out a review of the senior school curriculum so that:-

- There is a better balance of time devoted to the teaching of subjects for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- For Years 10 and 11 pupils, a GCSE options system is put into place that is more appropriately based on the needs of all pupils.
- Sufficient teaching time is available to ensure that all subjects are covered to an appropriate depth.

R3 Continue to extend many of the successful policies, systems and practices evident in the junior school, throughout the whole school by:-

- Ensuring that all staff are familiar with whole-school policies, the implementation of them and the necessity for a consistency of approach to their implementation right across the school.
- Providing regular and appropriate opportunities for whole school in-service training to carry this out.
- Establishing a system to monitor the implementation of such policies and systems in actual practice.

R4 Further improve the library provision in the senior school in order to:-

- Create a modern, up-to-date library and study facility for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- Further develop pupils' research and study skills through the use of ICT as well as book provision.

3. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

3.1 Hill House St Mary's was established in August 2002 when the former Hill House Preparatory School, founded in 1912, merged with St Mary's School, which had been opened in 1959. Originally, both schools were proprietorial. In 1972 Hill House became a charitable trust run by a board of governors. It became co-educational in the early 1980's. St Mary's, originally a school for girls, also became co-educational during the 1980's. In Summer 2002 both schools merged. The current school is housed on two sites, the junior school on the old Hill House site and the senior one on the old St. Mary's site.

3.2 The school aims to provide the conditions for every child to flourish and to develop their talents to their full potential. It seeks to ensure that, whilst discipline and good moral values are most important, a broad curriculum is provided that caters for everyone's needs. Pupils should leave feeling completely confident to face life's challenges. The school also seeks to foster the characteristics of self-confidence, combined with a care and consideration for others. Furthermore, it seeks to provide a high quality education, which reflects not only high academic results, but also excellence in music, sport, art and leadership.

3.3 At the time of the inspection there were 435 pupils on roll aged 3 to 16 years. Of these, 74 children (64 part-time) were in the nursery (aged 3-4 years) and 32 in the reception classes, making a Foundation Stage of 106 children. In addition, 73 pupils were in Key Stage 1 (National Curriculum Years 1 and 2, ages 6-7 years), 159 in Key Stage 2 (National Curriculum Years 3 to 6, ages 7-11 years), 63 in Key Stage 3 (National Curriculum Years 7 to 9, ages 11-14 years) and 34 in Key Stage 4 (National Curriculum Years 10 and 11, ages 14-16 years). The Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 6 constitute the junior school, with Years 7 to 11 making up the senior school. At the time of the inspection there were 216 boys and 219 girls on roll. Twenty-nine pupils were identified as having special educational needs and one pupil has a statement to that effect. There were no pupils with English as an additional language. Fifty-three pupils were from minority ethnic backgrounds, but all were fluent in English.

3.4 On entry to the school, pupils come from a variety of social backgrounds, and most are of average to above average ability. The nearest schools nationally, for purposes of comparison, are those maintained primary schools that serve economically advantaged areas. The academic profile of the pupils alters as pupils move into the senior school, as a result of pupils' leaving at 11 and 13 having chosen to sit, and passed, examinations to selective maintained and other independent schools. In Years 7 to 11, therefore, the nearest equivalent schools are all maintained secondary schools nationally. No selection policy is applied for entry to the school, although for pupils entering from seven years onwards, reading and mathematics tests are administered. Of the pupils leaving in 2003 aged 16, all went on to some form of higher education.

3.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

Key Indicators

3.6 Externally audited National Curriculum Assessments at age 7 (Key Stage 1)

Subject		Level 2 or higher	Level 3 or higher
Reading	Boys	96	36
	Girls	100	52
	All	98	54
Writing	Boys	88	16
	Girls	100	30
	All	94	23
Mathematics	Boys	100	60
	Girls	100	52
	All	100	56

3.7 Externally marked National Curriculum Assessments at age 11 (Key Stage 2)

Subject		Level 4 or higher	Level 5 or higher
English	Boys	100	75
	Girls	100	64
	All	100	69
Mathematics	Boys	92	58
	Girls	86	21
	All	88	39
Science	Boys	100	92
	Girls	100	43
	All	100	65

3.8 Externally marked National Curriculum Assessments at age 14 (Key Stage 3)

Subject		Level 5 or higher	Level 6 or higher
English	Boys	89	56
	Girls	100	70
	All	95	63
Mathematics	Boys	100	89
	Girls	100	80
	All	100	84
Science	Boys	89	89
	Girls	100	80
	All	95	84

3.9 GCSE

	Most recently completed Year 11			Average for the last <i>three</i> Year 11s		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Entered for 5+ subjects	100	100	100	100	100	100
Achieved 5+ @ A* - C	100	100	100	90	100	97
Achieved 5+ @ A* - G	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average score per candidate*	67.57	61.0	63.08	54.86	60.43	59.6

3.10 Attendance for the school year ending May 2003

	Authorised	Unauthorised
Percentage absence	4.04	0

3.11 Exclusions Over the Previous 12 Months

Temporary exclusions	Permanent exclusions
0	1

4. Educational Standards Achieved by Pupils at the School

Attainment and Progress

4.1 The standards that pupils attain by the time they leave the school are high in several subjects and good in relation to their abilities in most subjects. They also make good or sound progress in relation to their abilities in all subjects, throughout the school.

Foundation Stage

4.2 By the time pupils move into Year 1, most have attained the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals for pupils of this age and some have moved on to the programmes of study for Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. They make good progress during this stage of their education in nearly all areas, particularly in the development of their communication, language and literacy skills, as well as in their mathematical development. Children's personal and social skills are very well developed. They relate well to each other, learning to share, take turns and interact in small groups, as well as in the class as a whole. They develop confident language and literacy skills. Children talk confidently about their experiences and listen and respond effectively to instructions. They learn to recognise letters and associate these with sounds, thus developing the beginning of reading. They acquire an early mathematical vocabulary through counting songs and number rhymes and quickly learn to recognise numbers and to count to appropriate levels. They become familiar with the names of simple shapes in two and three dimensions and begin to quantify the passage of time. Through using materials, their manipulative skills are being well developed. They make good progress in their control of their bodies and in their awareness of space. They are familiar with shape and colour and explore and use a range of materials. Their knowledge and understanding of the world around them are also very good.

Years 1 and 2

4.3 The National Curriculum test results in reading, writing and mathematics, show that pupils' standards are above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. Inspection findings show that by the time they reach the end of the Year 2, pupils' attainment is high in English and good in mathematics and science, in relation to their abilities. In English, pupils' handwriting is of a good standard and care is taken to ensure that pupils develop a legible cursive style of their own. In mathematics, pupils' skills in numeracy are good and they attain higher standards in this than in other aspects of the subject. In science, their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things are also good. During their time in these year groups, pupils make rapid progress in relation to their ability in English and good progress in mathematics and science.

Years 3-6

4.4 The National Curriculum test results for 11-year-olds in 2003 in English and science were well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. In mathematics, pupils' standards were about average. Inspection findings confirm the national test results. Pupils make rapid progress throughout Years 3 to 6 in English and science and sound progress in mathematics.

Years 7-9

4.5 Results in the National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 14 in English, mathematics and science are in line with the national average for all nationally maintained secondary schools. Inspection findings show that pupils in Year 9 are attaining standards in English, mathematics, science, history and modern foreign language that are in line with their abilities. Throughout Years 7 to 9, pupils make sound progress in relation to their abilities in all these subjects.

Years 10 and 11

4.6 In GCSE public examinations, pupils' results are well above those of pupils in maintained secondary schools in almost all subjects. Care must be taken when making such overall and individual subject comparisons because the small number of pupils taking public examinations means that statistical comparisons are liable to be insecure. Standards amongst the current Year 11 pupils are high in relation to their abilities in mathematics, are good in English, history and modern foreign language and in line with their abilities in science. In Years 10 and 11 pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and history, with sound progress being made in science and modern foreign languages.

4.7 Throughout the whole school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress given their prior attainment levels. This is as a result of the good, and often very good, individual support teaching they receive, as well as work being set that is well matched to their abilities in most, but not all, classes. This is also the case for higher-attaining pupils, although, on a few occasions, in some classes, the evidence suggests that their progress is not as rapid as it might be, largely because one or two teachers occasionally do not provide them with sufficiently stimulating work. No significant difference occurs in the amount of progress being made by boys and girls. A survey of parents in the senior and junior schools showed that nearly all were very pleased with their children's standards and progress. Inspection findings support these positive views.

Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

4.8 The quality of pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are very good throughout the school. Boys and girls are co-operative, helpful, enthusiastic and willing learners who always try their best.

4.9 The quality of pupils' learning in the **junior school** is never less than sound, is often good and in many lessons is very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their

work and usually apply themselves to the tasks they are set. In lessons, they are attentive, show interest in what others have to say, and are able to work with sustained concentration. They approach their lessons with enthusiasm and are confident to work independently. These are articulate pupils who are eager to contribute their ideas and opinions in class discussions. Being highly motivated, they readily settle to independent work but also enjoy collaborative work in pairs. For example, in a number lesson in a Foundation Stage class, children willingly worked in pairs, throwing dice and recording and adding numbers together. They worked effectively and shared the results with each other. Respect is often shown for each other's differing abilities, ideas and opinions.

4.10 Specific ICT lessons contribute considerably to pupils' enjoyment of learning. They demonstrate well-developed skills and expertise which they use in other subjects of the curriculum when given the opportunity. A good rapport exists between teachers and pupils and this creates an atmosphere that promotes good learning. Pupils are most courteous, well behaved and clearly enjoy their time at school. They are happy and secure and this makes a positive contribution to their attainment and progress.

4.11 Throughout the **senior school**, the quality of pupils' learning, their attitudes and behaviour are also very good and support the learning process effectively. Pupils in all years are well motivated, keen to learn and succeed. They apply themselves readily to the task in hand, whether in writing, orally or practically. Pupils show good levels of concentration, often working within a carefully defined framework, in which vocabulary and technical terms are used appropriately. As a result, they become competent learners. However, in some subjects, limited opportunities for independent learning and research restrict their capacity to assume personal responsibility for their own learning. Given the pupils' positive attitudes to learning, their progress and achievement could be further enhanced if, at times, they were allowed to work less prescriptively.

4.12 When given the opportunity, pupils willingly enter into discussion, drawing on their written work and previously acquired knowledge, as, for instance, in some history and English lessons. However, this is not the case in some subjects where such opportunities are limited.

4.13 Throughout the whole school, pupils form very good relationships with one another, with teachers and with others in the school. They are highly supportive of each other, behaving in a natural and friendly manner. They work equally well in pairs, small groups or as a whole class, as, for example, in a Year 7 French lesson when pupils sought information relating to family composition from each other to enable them to conduct a mini-survey.

4.14 Pupils respect their teachers and listen to them attentively in class. Much good learning is associated with complete concentration as pupils focus on the task in hand, to the exclusion of other things around them.

Attendance

4.15 Pupils' levels of attendance right across the school are good and above the national average. Most pupils are punctual when arriving at school and a sensible approach is taken to the few pupils who are affected by early morning traffic. This means that pupils are able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the school.

4.16 Daily registration is carried out in a routine and systematic manner and a record of absentees, efficiently maintained by office staff, ensures that absences are well monitored and reasons for them clearly established. Satisfactory arrangements exist for keeping registers safe and accessible during the day. In some instances closer monitoring of these arrangements is needed to ensure that they are consistently adhered to by all staff. The school's admissions and attendance registers comply with statutory requirements.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for admission and attendance registers?

4.17 Yes.

5. Quality of Education Provided

Teaching

5.1 The quality of teaching right across the school is good overall and contributes effectively to pupils' good attainment levels and progress in many subjects. Such teaching also has a significant impact on the very good behaviour shown by most pupils in the great majority of lessons, as well as in the positive attitudes they have to their work. In nearly all lessons, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory; it was good in two-fifths of the lessons and very good in a further third. The quality of teaching in a small number of lessons was outstanding.

5.2 The quality of teaching of children in the **Foundation Stage** is always at least good and on occasions very good. Good and very good teaching is also evident in many classes in the **junior school**. This is particularly the case in English and science; in the latter of these, specialist teaching has a significant impact on the progress pupils make. In the **senior school**, whilst the overall teaching is good and consistently good in English and physical education/games, there are significantly fewer examples of good and very good teaching than in either the junior school or in the Foundation Stage. Indeed, in the senior school there were a number of unsatisfactory lessons, whereas there were none in the other two sectors.

5.3 In those lessons where the quality of teaching was not so strong, and on the few occasions where it was unsatisfactory, some pupils became bored and completed little work. Also, certain groups, notably some higher-attaining pupils, made insufficient progress in their learning as a result of the lack of challenge in the work set. In addition,

unsatisfactory lessons were also characterised by the teachers having an insufficient depth of knowledge of the subject, in order to teach successfully the age group to which they had been allocated. However, most teachers right across the whole school have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and are able to give pupils challenging work and thus raise the standards that they attain. Whilst the specialist teaching of ICT is good in subject specific lessons, the development of ICT skills is more limited in other areas of the curriculum. The school is aware of this and has plans in hand to give teachers more opportunities to increase their own knowledge and skills through in-service training.

5.4 In most lessons, teaching met the needs of pupils across the range of abilities within the class. In some of the lessons a variety of material or teaching methods were used in order to cater for pupils with different abilities. The relatively small size of teaching groups often enabled teachers to give individual attention to any pupils who were experiencing difficulties. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for in most lessons and when receiving individual tuition. However, in some lessons the lack of work specifically geared to their needs, means they do not always make the progress of which they are capable. The work of nursery nurses when working with younger children is very good and contributes significantly to the good progress these children make.

5.5 Much of the good and very good teaching is characterised by several key features. Teachers plan their lessons so that pupils are aware of what they are required to achieve and learn. Teachers introduce such lessons in a way that catches their pupils' imagination and gives them a clear focus to the lesson. Similarly, they ask clear, concise questions which challenge pupils' understanding and require them to articulate their thoughts appropriately. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 6 science lesson where the opening question and answer session, using the correct scientific vocabulary, provoked pupils to think about distillation. The pupils carried out a series of experiments related to distillation and evaporation in order to produce rock salt. Throughout, the teacher challenged all groups of pupils by the skilful use of prompts and questions geared to the different ability levels of the pupils.

5.6 In a large proportion of lessons, questions were asked that were appropriate to the pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding. Wrong answers were not criticised but skilfully turned into right answers by requiring pupils to answer a series of other questions. This not only encouraged pupils, but also ensured that, by the development of their logical thought processes, pupils reached the correct answers. On many occasions, the teachers' appropriate and well-judged intervention consistently challenged the pupils and enabled them to make rapid progress during the course of the lesson.

5.7 The very good lessons are well structured and pupils are encouraged to complete their work at a brisk pace. Teachers have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In many good and very good lessons teachers also manage their pupils well. In addition, they expect good levels of behaviour and use resources very well to enhance their pupils' learning. This was particularly evident in an excellent Year 9 design and

technology lesson where pupils were making a clock they had designed and planned. Some or all of these good features were present in a substantial number of lessons where pupils made rapid progress and displayed high standards of attainment.

5.8 Teachers' lesson planning is more variable in quality. Where it is very good, plans are well structured and clearly show what pupils are required to do and learn as well as highlighting what different ability groups will be doing. In some cases however, planning is no more than satisfactory, is restricted to a brief outline of the lesson and gives no clear indication of what can be expected of the pupils.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for teaching?

5.9 Yes.

Assessment and Recording

5.10 Overall the systems to assess and record pupils' progress are very good in the junior school and satisfactory in the senior school.

5.11 Very good assessment and recording systems are firmly established in the **Foundation Stage**. An effective profile system provides full, detailed information on the development of each child across a wide range of skills and competencies. Teachers' assessments are consistent and continually undertaken. Teachers and other adults have a very clear view of pupils' attainment and progress and future needs. Information from assessments is regularly analysed and used to influence the planning and development of future activities and the curriculum.

5.12 This approach to assessment is effectively built upon in the **junior school** where a range of standardised tests and teacher assessments provide accurate data for future planning. National test results are systematically analysed and future teaching and learning needs clearly identified. Within many lessons, teachers use perceptive oral questions continually to assess pupils' understanding and knowledge. As a result, appropriate tasks, often set at different levels, meet the needs of the pupils.

5.13 In Years 1 to 6, an efficient system ensures that a good profile of pupils' achievement and progress is built up. A valuable information sheet systematically and precisely tracks pupils' development in English and mathematics. Regular, well-planned tests, often at the end of topics, accurately assess pupils' knowledge and understanding, notably in geography, science and English. Subject teachers assess attainment and keep regular records of progress. This data needs to be lodged within the centrally held profiles of work. Careful teacher observations and more formal assessment strategies effectively identify pupils who need additional support.

5.14 Teachers' marking is regular, constructive and clear. In an increasing number of classes this leads to the setting of class and individual targets. The setting of targets is

particularly well developed in Years 1 and 2, and, although introduced in Years 3 to 6, is not yet fully and firmly established.

5.15 In the **senior school**, whilst assessment and recording systems are satisfactory, they are not yet unified across the curriculum. Little assessment is made of pupils' cognitive abilities to identify under-performance or that of gifted and talented pupils and, apart from good practice in design and technology, there are few formal links between assessment and curriculum planning. The small numbers of pupils in the senior school ensures that, though there are no agreed assessment criteria for the school as a whole, the assessment of pupils by their subject teachers is, nevertheless, effective. Teachers make good use of this to provide help and encouragement for lower attaining pupils in particular. Pupils' standards and achievements are effectively tested and recorded by National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 and throughout Years 7 to 10 by school examinations at the end of the Autumn and Summer terms. These provide satisfactory evidence of pupils' performance by subject.

5.16 In Years 10 and 11, assessments do not always enable the satisfactory identification of the best tier of entry for pupils to GCSE examinations, for example in modern foreign languages and science. For Years 7 and 8 the nationally standardised Middle Years Information System test; the optional National Curriculum tests and a good system of performance tracking, have recently been put in place as an aid to the assessment of progress and the prediction of performance at examination level. As yet these have had insufficient time to take effect. The further development of the good practice in the junior school is likely to offer a great deal of useful information upon which to build in the senior school and to develop a whole-school approach to assessment, curriculum development and planning.

5.17 The marking of pupils' work in the senior school is frequent, though often cursory. It is not formally monitored or standardised throughout the school. Some teachers in, for instance, art and design, English, history and home economics, adopt helpful and positive marking methods suited to their subjects, using annotation, constructive comments giving good guidance to improvement, clear explanation of grades awarded and indications of levels attained. Because not all teachers in all subjects use these good practices, there is a clear need to review the marking system as a whole.

Curriculum

5.18 The overall curricular provision in the junior school is very good whereas in the senior school it is unsatisfactory.

5.19 The very good provision found in the **Foundation Stage and junior school**, offers a broad and well-balanced range of experiences that meet the needs of the pupils. Nursery and reception pupils enjoy a wide and stimulating range of activities across all the Early Learning Goals. Most subjects receive an appropriate allocation of time but some minor inconsistencies occur. Although design and technology is occasionally taught within art, insufficient time is allocated specifically for the subject from Years 2 to

4 and this constrains the development of a full programme of work. Strong emphasis is given to English and mathematics in all years, but particularly in Year 4 classes. This over emphasis however reduces significantly the time available for other subjects such as ICT, design and technology and religious education. This creates an imbalance in the curriculum for those classes.

5.20 The curriculum overall is rich and interesting and makes a strong contribution to the pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. The curriculum, which mainly follows the subjects of the National Curriculum, is carefully planned. It also includes religious education and French. The National Curriculum elements are suitably modified to meet pupil needs. Detailed schemes of work for all subjects ensure the progressive development of knowledge and skills across the year groups. Continuity from the Foundation Stage to Year 6 is good but links with the senior school curriculum are not yet, as well developed. A detailed subject development plan, closely allied to the overall objectives in the school development plan, identifies clear priorities for each subject.

5.21 In many subjects particularly, science, ICT and aspects of mathematics and geography, due emphasis is placed on the development of pupils' practical and problem solving skills. Very occasionally the overuse of undemanding worksheets inhibits the full development of these skills. Overall, however, the broad range of activities and subjects stimulates pupils' interest and helps them to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in academic, practical and creative subjects.

5.22 The curriculum also provides effectively for pupils who experience learning difficulties. Opportunities are also created to challenge the higher attaining pupils, such as master classes. Tasks are planned at different levels in most subjects to meet individual pupils' needs. A wide range of out-of-school activities and visits, including sport and recreation, broaden and significantly enrich the curriculum provision. Teachers' planning is detailed and effective. Regular meetings of staff and careful use of schemes of work ensure a good degree of continuity and progression within and between year groups.

5.23 In the **senior school**, for pupils in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broadly based and contributes effectively to the intellectual, physical and personal attainment and development of the pupils. It is appropriate for their age, ability, gender and ethnicity. However, the curriculum is not well balanced, in that the time allocated to history and geography is generous whilst that given to music and religious education is less than in comparable schools. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is broad and balanced, but most pupils take 11 subjects at GCSE. This is a greater number than is usual, even for the ablest of pupils. A review of the curriculum in the two years leading up to GCSE, with the objective of reducing the total number of entries per candidate to nine, is needed. If this reduction were to be implemented it would be important to ensure that the nine subjects were those that best matched the particular skills of each pupil. The reduced number would also provide the opportunity to consider the provision of additional teaching time per subject at this level.

5.24 Continuity and progression within the curriculum are not guaranteed because of the lack of subject coordinators who have whole school responsibility for a particular subject. Subject schemes of work detail what is being taught to each year group, but there is little overall planning and coordination to monitor the breadth, balance and appropriateness of curriculum across the senior school as a whole. A reliance on experienced staff to deliver their subjects has led to good achievement, but the development of co-operation and a better exchange of information between subjects would benefit the pupils.

5.25 Teaching staff devote considerable time, both within and outside lessons, to helping individual pupils. A statemented pupil in Year 9 is provided with suitable and effective education in line with his statement. He is fully integrated into the school community and works at a level with other pupils in the class. He is enabled to do the same work and encouraged to reach high standards. Very able pupils are generally encouraged to achieve highly, although, in some subjects, opportunities to show flair are inhibited by teaching that is too structured and over directed.

5.26 In Years 7 to 9 all pupils follow the same subjects and programme of work, so the curriculum offers equal access to all. In Years 10 and 11 a blocking system is in place to attempt to accommodate the wishes of each pupil in regard to the subjects chosen for GCSE, in addition to the core subjects studied by everyone. However, limited experience of music prior to Year 10 makes it less likely that music will be chosen as a GCSE subject. Religious education is not offered as an examination subject.

5.27 Few extra-curricular activities took place during the week of the inspection, but the printed programme listing what is normally provided indicates that extra-curricular activities, including sport, enrich the curriculum. Overall, despite being unsatisfactory in some aspects, the curriculum adequately prepares the pupils for their next stage of education, training or employment.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum?

5.28 Yes

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

5.29 The overall quality and quantity of the staffing of the school are satisfactory and contribute appropriately to the quality of education provided and to the standards pupils attain. However, the deployment of one or two staff in the senior school, teaching subjects to a level with which they are unfamiliar, is unsatisfactory.

5.30 The teaching staff in the **junior school** are well qualified and experienced and make a positive contribution to the good teaching standards achieved. The ratio of pupils to adults overall is good in the Foundation Stage and is in line with legislation. There is a generous pupil-to-teacher ratio in the rest of the junior school. The effective deployment

of the teaching staff enhances the delivery of the curriculum. The teaching loads for the staff are satisfactory.

5.31 In the **senior school**, the staff are, in most instances, well qualified and many are very experienced. However, more than half are part time and this very high proportion places severe restrictions on timetabling flexibility. In addition, the management responsibilities of senior staff and subject leaders are not sufficiently clearly defined. The pupil teacher ratio is good. Classes are small and this ensures that a family atmosphere is retained and that pupils receive individual attention if needed.

5.32 The provision of non-teaching staff within the whole school is satisfactory and their deployment is effective and supportive. The secretarial and administrative staff, catering staff, caretakers and cleaners on both sites, ensure that the school is safe, maintained to a good standard and runs smoothly. However, technical support is limited and support for ICT is bought in. Apart from this, there are neither classroom assistants nor are there any technicians, except for a part time science laboratory assistant, in the senior school. This places pressure on the teaching staff who have to carry out roles that in other schools would be carried out by teaching assistants. There is one newly qualified teacher who is being appropriately monitored.

5.33 Most employees have contracts with job descriptions and new staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. A good policy and an appropriate procedure for staff development are now in place based on maintaining a balance between school and individual staff needs. However, as yet, these have not had sufficient time to be effective. Adequate budgetary provision is made for training, although in the past, teachers have largely attended courses on an ad hoc basis. Closer links to the school development planning process are now necessary. Policies and procedures for appraisal are in place and there is a helpful and welcoming handbook for new teachers as well as an induction programme.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff?

5.34 Yes.

Resources for Learning

5.35 Overall the resource provision to assist pupils' learning is good in the junior school and satisfactory in the senior school.

5.36 Resources throughout the **junior school** site are good and support pupils' learning. Textbooks are plentiful and over 2000 appropriate fiction books are housed in the main library, within classrooms and on trolleys in corridors. Forty one computers are available in the junior school but only the 18 computers in the ICT classroom are networked and linked to the internet. Televisions are available in most classrooms and overhead projectors are used as appropriate in subjects. Some subject resources for Years

3 to 6 are not catalogued and not all teachers are aware of the audio-visual and other aids available. The provision of resources in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 is particularly well organised. Members of staff are aware of what is available and they have easy and ready access to central stores. The only under-resourced subject is design and technology which suffers from a lack of equipment and tools.

5.37 In the **senior school**, ICT resources are modern and well equipped and include 18 newly networked computers. Other computers are available in some subject bases. Access to this main resource is limited for part-time staff whose teaching is on days when the ICT suite is fully occupied. This resource therefore cannot be effectively used across the whole curriculum to enhance teaching and learning.

5.38 Resources generally are appropriate to the age and ability of pupils and to the range of subjects taught. Little monitoring of the effectiveness of resources and investment takes place. Similarly, little monitoring or review of the effectiveness of resources to enrich teaching and learning across the curriculum takes place.

5.39 Individual subject resources are housed mainly in classrooms, many of which also have small selections of books and enrichment material. Whilst most subject areas are adequately resourced, certain subjects, such as design and technology and science are well resourced. Textbooks and videos are up to date and plentiful in most subject areas. In addition there is a good allocation of visual aids, televisions and videos, photocopiers, laminators and other office machines. Available for use by the whole school are 4 mini buses which are extensively used for transport between the two sites as well as for ferrying teams to matches and taking classes on outings.

Libraries

5.40 Library provision in the junior school is satisfactory but is unsatisfactory in the senior school.

5.41 The main library for the **junior school** is attractive with modern and comfortable furniture and it is well sited at the heart of the school. Fiction books for Years 3 to 6 are effectively catalogued in three age appropriate sections with titles arranged alphabetically by author. Fiction books for the younger age groups are largely located on trolleys outside the relevant classrooms. A good selection of reference books in the library are arranged clearly by subject with plentiful stocks to support specific areas covered in the school curriculum.

5.42 Efficient librarians in Year 6 help the member of staff with responsibility for the library. An electronic scanner for reading bar codes exists has been out of use for some time.

5.43 The library is only opened to individual pupils at lunch times, although teachers have weekly library periods with their classes. In these sessions pupils are helped with their book choices and with understanding the working of library systems. Discussion

with pupils indicates that they are able to use the library for research purposes on a limited basis.

5.44 The library in its present form has only been open for a short time and plans exist for its further development and for widening its accessibility. Generous funds are also available from the library budget and from the parents' association for adding to the stock of books.

5.45 In the **senior school**, the library provision is unsatisfactory. It is housed in a room developed since September 2003 with only approximately 1500 books. The room itself is a good size and capable of development. Stock has been acquired in various unplanned ways and is not yet classified.

5.46 The ICT resource, next to the library, could provide useful extension facilities for research, teaching and learning. Access to this, however, is limited.

5.47 The school has no policy for the management of the library or how more appropriate books might be acquired. Whilst some subject rooms have a facility which allows pupils to carry out individual research, the library does not support teaching and learning or the senior school curriculum sufficiently well. The use and appearance of the library as a learning resource is limited by this lack of management and the stock the library carries.

Premises and Accommodation

5.48 The buildings, accommodation and other facilities are satisfactory on both sites and are appropriate for the numbers, abilities and gender of the pupils. They support the curriculum provision, teaching and learning and make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

5.49 The **junior school** consists of two large adapted town houses. These form the nucleus of the provision and two smaller semi-detached houses in between them which provide additional facilities. Security is good and all outside doors are locked and entrance doors have push button codes. Access to the school is confined to a congested narrow cul-de-sac which creates serious difficulties for parents delivering and collecting pupils. The younger pupils' playground has traditional games marked on the tarred surface, but it is severely reduced in size when used as a car park for the teaching staff. The other playground is used for games and physical education during lesson time, but is barely able to cater for all the pupils during break.

5.50 There is a sufficient number of classrooms and year groups are generally situated close to each other. Most year group classrooms have ample space. In addition, some effective specialist rooms such as the library and the science laboratory are available. The hall/gymnasium is large. However, some rooms are cramped, for example the music rooms, the ICT centre and the changing rooms. Congestion is liable to occur on the numerous staircases and in the narrow passages, unless close supervision is maintained.

The office space for the administrative staff is good and the facilities for the teaching staff are satisfactory. The dining room caters satisfactorily for the school in three sittings and the pupils' entrance area provides a suitable dining area for the nursery. The school lacks suitable facilities for pupils who are ill. The standard of maintenance and decoration overall is good and south facing rooms have suitable blinds. However, some of the pupils' toilets are in need of refurbishment. Classroom walls contain bright attractive displays, much of which is pupils' work. The quality of much of the work is very good.

5.51 Apart from the gymnasium and the playground at the junior school and limited outdoor provision at the senior school, there are no other sporting facilities. To compensate, the physical education/games staff transport pupils to a variety of commercial facilities as well as making use of the adjacent local authority ground. In most instances these facilities are excellent, but the school is not always able to guarantee their use. In addition, valuable teaching time is lost commuting between the school and these venues.

5.52 The **senior school** is housed in a large adapted house, but also has several other permanent and temporary buildings. Although staircases are narrow in the main building, the majority of teaching takes place in other buildings, thereby reducing congestion.

5.53 Teaching areas are suitably close to each other, so that movement between lessons is easy. Whilst some subject areas have a designated base, pressure on the science laboratory is particularly significant. Year 7 pupils are currently transported to the junior school site for science, so that transport time has an adverse effect on the time available for teaching. The limited space in the science, home economics and ICT areas results in overcrowding, particularly when they are used by older pupils. This restricts the breadth and range of learning experiences and teaching opportunities. The school has no designated careers office.

5.54 The dining room is used by all pupils at staggered times. It is clean and functional. The entrance to the school is bright and welcoming. The general office is large, carefully planned and well equipped for administrative purposes and for the storage of files and other data.

5.55 Overall, the standard of maintenance and decoration in the senior school is good. Classrooms and corridors are made attractive with displays of pupils' work, extracts from newspapers relating to pupils' achievements and other memorabilia. However, some changing rooms and toilets are in need of refurbishment.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation?

5.56 Yes.

Links with Parents and the Community

5.57 Overall the school has a good and effective partnership with parents and links with the local community are also good and worthwhile. The range of academic and social contacts with the community is considerable and results in positive pupil development.

5.58 A questionnaire, sent to parents in both the junior and senior parts of the school in advance of the inspection, showed that they agree strongly and are positive in all areas covered (academic, pastoral care and general). Parents indicated significant satisfaction with the information they receive, and the good opportunities provided for them to discuss their children's attainment and progress. They feel encouraged to be involved in school matters and are strongly supportive of the school's aims and values. A minority of parents had a few concerns related to homework and the activities provision in the senior school. However, the inspectors found no evidence to support these.

5.59 Parents are kept well-informed about the school through the school prospectus, parents' handbook, the principal's regular newsletters, a calendar of events, parents' evenings and social events, and by daily contact, especially the parents of the youngest pupils. A newsletter, 'Governors Matters' is also produced regularly. Daily contact with parents is also available, if required, through such means as the communication books in the Foundation Stage and throughout the junior school, and homework diaries in Years 4 to 11. These effective methods of communication between home and school also provide parents with good opportunities to comment on any matters concerning their children's work.

5.60 Parents evenings are held regularly throughout the school and parents are welcome to phone or visit to discuss progress or problems. Reports sent to parents in all sections of the school are clear and helpful. They give a good indication of attainment and effort. On one or two occasions, some reports do not give parents sufficient information of what their child needs to do next in order to continue to improve.

5.61 A very active parents' association, 'The Friends of Hill House and St. Mary's School', raises substantial funds for specific items for school; recent projects have been software for computers and a digital camera. Parents also assist in school events and run social occasions, such as bonfire night, the Summer and Christmas fairs and the end of year ball. A 'Parents' Forum' gives them further opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, which leads to a good partnership between teachers and parents. In addition, parents are invited to talk to pupils about their interests, professions and world cultures.

5.62 Links with the local community are important to the school and being well developed. The range of academic and social contacts is good. Each year, several charities are chosen and given generous support. These include one international charity, two national ones and several local ones. The school has contributed generously to these. Pupils in Year 11 participate in a period of work experience after sitting their GCSE

examinations. The pupils themselves, together with their parents, arrange placements for this. The school also offers the 'Young Enterprise' scheme in Year 10 at the end of which a presentation is given to a panel of sponsoring businesses together with other participating schools. The school's curriculum and pupils' experiences are enriched by good links with parents and the community.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the provision of information?

5.63 Yes.

6. Pupils' Personal Development and Pastoral Care

Pupils' Personal Development

6.1 Throughout the whole school, the provision for pupils' personal development as well as for their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good.

6.2 The school provides pupils with a good range of opportunities through which they can develop their social, spiritual, moral and cultural awareness. Pupils from all backgrounds and faiths are valued as individuals within the school community, their different contributions are valued and they learn to relate positively to each other and to the adults with whom they come into contact within the school and outside.

6.3 The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage includes a good range of activities for pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world, and awaken their sense of awe and wonder. Years 1 to 6 also have good opportunities to develop their spiritual awareness. Assemblies, which often include hymns and prayers, promote spiritual awareness and encourage pupils to care for one another. For example, friendship and love are this term's themes in the junior school. Senior school assemblies usually have a strong moral theme running through them. Through religious education lessons pupils develop an insight into the values and beliefs of other faiths in addition to Christianity.

6.4 The caring ethos that pervades the whole school. The staff know their pupils well and help them in very positive ways to develop a moral code in every day exchange and interaction. Pupils are encouraged to make responsible and reasoned judgements within a framework of respect for others. Throughout the whole school, consistently good management of behaviour, with high expectations, exists. Staff consistently emphasise the positive. House points reward good citizenship. Staff provide good role models. Pupils learn to be responsible and to accept responsibility.

6.5 Pupils' awareness of cultural traditions, and their diversity, is apparent within the curriculum, from the Foundation Stage through to Year 11. In the senior school multicultural issues are more limited within the schemes of work. In the junior school, visits have been undertaken to an Islamic temple and Christian churches. All pupils have opportunities to celebrate English and Christian festivals including harvest, Christmas

and Easter. Diwali and Eid are celebrated too. All pupils are cherished for their different contributions to school life.

6.6 The social development of pupils throughout the school is good. The caring, helpful approach of the staff encourages pupils to develop similar attitudes to those around them. Pupils clearly respect each other, show tolerance towards various ranges of ability and are sympathetic to the values and beliefs of others. The personal, social and health education programme in the junior school includes issues such as drug abuse and is linked to the positive behaviour policy, whilst in the senior school the good policy for health and sex education is carried out within the context of caring relationships and values.

6.7 Whilst a high priority is placed on personal development throughout the whole school, the time allocated to the teaching of religious education, personal, social and health education and citizenship in the senior school curriculum is limited and does not allow sufficient opportunity for the full development of these areas within the curriculum.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils?

6.8 Yes.

Pastoral Care, including Welfare and Health & Safety

6.9 Overall, the provision for pupils' pastoral care, welfare, health and safety right across the whole school is good.

6.10 Throughout, pupils are well cared for and they are firmly supported in their academic and personal development. The ethos of the school is one of care and consideration for others and this is evident in the relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils. Pupils are well known, both formally and informally by the staff and this, together with the good relationships that exist, contributes effectively to promoting educational standards and the provision of pastoral care.

6.11 Measures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are sound and policies exist to cover risks and potential threats. Some of these policies are very new and not all, as yet, are fully effective. A health and safety committee has been instituted but it does not make a formal report to the governing body each term. The school complies with health and safety regulations.

6.12 Pastoral care is the responsibility of the class teachers who liaise effectively with the heads of school. A clearly defined chain of responsibility is in place, and any important matter is passed to the principal. Records show that parents are kept fully informed if their children experience any medical, social or behavioural difficulties. Links between home and school are strong and effective, and the school promotes a relationship of partnership and trust. A special needs co-ordinator ensures that the needs

of those who require learning support are well met. Given the large number of part-time staff in the senior school, good communication systems are essential. At present, information regarding pastoral matters is often transmitted verbally and sometimes in writing. In addition, there is a booklet in the staff room which gives regularly updated information on pupils. Although annual pastoral evaluations are also undertaken in there is, nevertheless, a need for a more formalised approach to the sharing of information is needed.

6.13 Support for pupils is also provided through the careful monitoring of their progress. Continuity of communication is maintained in good record keeping and the annual transmission of relevant information to new teachers. Nationally recognised assessment schemes are used in the Foundation Stage. From Years 2 to 9, a series of National Curriculum tests and interim tests promote the objective tracking of pupils' academic progress. Annual pastoral evaluations and regularly filed accounts of any significant developments, ensure the continuous assessment of personal development, particularly in the junior school.

6.14 A good, positive behaviour policy is made clear to parents and pupils and it operates successfully throughout the school. The policy is adjusted to meet the different age-related needs of pupils in each section of the school. It is well supported by work in personal, social and health education lessons. In the junior school, for example, posters draw attention to the anti-social nature of bullying and an appropriate anti-bullying policy exists for the whole school. The 'Childline' contact number is clearly displayed on both sites. Pupils know whom to turn to in case of bullying and are convinced that it would be dealt with in a prompt and effective manner. However, a copy of the policy is not displayed in the school, nor is it sent to parents, unless they request it. Measures against bullying would be strengthened by a wider dissemination of the policy. Regular staff training in dealing with bullying is not yet routine.

6.15 Little unacceptable behaviour is apparent, but records show that, on those occasions when it does occur, it is dealt with effectively and firmly. A good policy document makes clear the sanctions to be applied in the event of serious misdemeanours, and major incidents are appropriately recorded.

6.16 Measures to promote pupils' health and well-being are effective and they are given advice on healthy eating; this message is reinforced at lunchtimes by supervisory staff. Lunches on both sites are good and offer a variety of choice, including Halal food, which is available every day. Wall displays and the personal and social education programme transmit anti-smoking information and encourage healthy lifestyles. Teachers are required to complete questionnaires relating to health and safety in classrooms. Pupils work safely in the science rooms and are well aware of all relevant procedures, such as wearing goggles when conducting experiments. However, there are inherent risks, which are well known and catered for, in the location of some of the equipment in the home economics room.

6.17 Twenty-one members of staff are trained in first aid on the two sites and measures are taken to ensure that qualifications are kept up to date. There is an accident book for staff and for pupils. The first aid policy works well in practice but arrangements for the care of sick pupils, though satisfactory, could be improved on both sites. Pupils would benefit from a bed to lie on in the event of illness at school and in Years 1 and 2 a more private area should be provided for sick pupils.

6.18 Arrangements for the storage, administration and recording of medication are satisfactory. Pupils with particular medical requirements are clearly identified to all staff and relevant information about treatment is clear. Child protection policies are in place and appear to be effective. The principal is the designated child protection co-ordinator, although, on occasions, he may delegate this role to one of the heads of school. All staff are provided with detailed information regarding child protection.

6.19 Fire appliances throughout the school are regularly serviced and checked and a record is kept. Fire drills are carried out and are recorded. Pupils know the routines and are aware of the need for fire safety. The school takes its responsibilities seriously and has recently received an advisory visit by the fire authority. Fire exit signs are also checked regularly to ensure that they meet the latest requirements. Although fire awareness is high among the pupils, on two occasions in the junior school, teachers used fire extinguishers as doorstops. On both sites, all appropriate measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fire; in the senior school for example, the old oak doors have been treated with fire retardant material.

6.20 Electrical equipment throughout the school has been checked and all appliances tested are listed with dates of testing recorded. However, a few appliances have nothing to indicate that they have been checked. Any appliance brought into school might easily escape the testing procedure in the short term.

6.21 Overall, the pupils enjoy a healthy and as safe an environment as the sites allow; car park arrangements are not ideal on either site. Security is good and coded key door locks protect all obvious exterior doors. The school playgrounds are well supervised and secure, but the area for pupils in Years 3 to 6 has only a low fence as a boundary and balls have frequently to be retrieved from outside the school perimeter.

6.22 Guidelines for the use of the school's minibuses and risk assessments relating to school visits and outdoor pursuits are in place and are good.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils?

5.64 Yes.

7. The Management and Efficiency of the School

Governance and Management

7.1 The overall governance and leadership of the school are good. Certain aspects are particularly good, notably the ethos of the school, the pastoral care provided for pupils and, in the junior school in particular, many of the systems that are in place to ensure that pupils attain good standards in many subjects. However, some areas of the school's management need to be improved. The school is not as effective in implementing systems to monitor the quality of education it provides, particularly in the senior school, although these are being put into place.

7.2 Governors of the school have a good oversight of its work. They are kept well informed by their own governor representatives and by information given to them by the principal and other senior teachers. A good system is in place for them to be regularly informed of developments in many areas, including the curriculum. Such a system means that governors have a good oversight of the long-term development needs of the school.

7.3 The principal has a good understanding of the needs of the school and its pupils. He has a vision for the school that is based upon good standards of pupil behaviour and personal development. He is keen that pupils make good progress and attain high academic standards. In addition, his vision for the development of the school is based upon a thorough understanding of the priority needs of both pupils and staff. Furthermore he has an effective leadership style that is capable of motivating both staff and pupils alike.

7.4 The management structure of the school includes the three heads of the different sections of the school, as well as other senior members of staff as appropriate. These make up the senior management team. In addition, curriculum leaders and curriculum co-ordinators are identified for all subjects. In some subjects this involves one member of staff, in others two or three. At present, the roles and functions of all are insufficiently clear in relation to the development of a subject right across the school or an area within it. Greater clarification of role is needed, so that all have a clear understanding of what their role is and how and when they can carry out that role.

7.5 The school's aims are good and rightly identify the need for pupils to attain high academic and personal standards. This approach is well reflected in many of the policies and values of the school. However, as a result of the merger of the two schools, not all the recently developed whole school policies are reflected in practice.

7.6 Whilst much of the monitoring of the work of the school has been carried out on an informal basis, a more structured system is now needed. This, once fully developed, will enable the senior managers of the school to be more closely involved in monitoring the ongoing work of the whole school, particularly in respect of monitoring the quality of teaching pupils receive, the work they produce, the standards pupils attain as well as the

progress they are making. Such closer monitoring will contribute further to the whole-school feeling and develop even better continuity and progression in the work of pupils and, as a result, in the amount of progress they make and the standards they attain right across the school from the Nursery to Year 11.

7.7 The principal and staff co-operate appropriately in the decision making progress. However, the nature of the split site and number of part-time teachers in the senior school in particular, means that whole-school staff meetings and briefings are difficult. Less formal consultations take place and the school has a sound approach to ensuring that all staff are aware of developments. It is in this area that extra care has to be taken to ensure that systems are in place to keep all staff involved and as fully informed as they need to be.

7.8 After appropriate staff consultations a carefully planned and detailed school development plan is in place for the junior school. Similar strategies have been adopted to produce such a plan for the senior part of the school. Once finalised these need to be produced as one document so that the development of the whole school can be planned, monitored and reviewed as necessary.

7.9 The school has a good, positive ethos that reflects a commitment to establishing a warm, friendly environment, as well as good relationships with pupils. In this it is most successful. Consultation with parents and many pupils showed that pupils enjoy coming to the school. Satisfactory systems are in place to monitor the deployment of human and material resources in most areas of the junior school and, as a result, most subjects of the curriculum are adequately resourced, and some are well resourced. However, in the senior school greater clarification and rationalisation of the deployment of staff is needed. In addition, closer links to the development planning process are necessary, particularly in relation to the effect of any spending made on particular resources, and the impact that spending is having on the levels of pupils' attainment and progress.

7.10 The school has systems in place to cover parental complaints and appeals and these are readily available on request. Good plans are being put into place with regard to accessibility to the school for disabled pupils.

7.11 Efficient and effective daily administrative procedures and routines are well known by staff and pupil. Members of the school's administrative staff make good contributions to the smooth running of the school, as a result of their high degree of competency and efficiency.

8. Achievement and Quality in Subjects and Activities

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Junior School

The Foundation Stage

8.1 The very good start given to children in the Foundation Stage is a strength of the school.

8.2 Children enter Hill House St Mary's nursery classes from the age of two and a half and begin working towards the Early Learning Goals of the six areas for the Foundation Stage curriculum. Nursery children attend at least two sessions per week, and these gradually increase over time. On entry to the reception classes, children attend full-time and continue working to complete the Early Learning Goals. By the end of the Reception Year most children will have attained these and some will already be working towards the early stages of the National Curriculum in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' planning is thorough, methodical and of a very high standard. It clearly indicates what children are required to learn. Collaborative planning between the nursery and reception classes provides a secure framework for teachers to follow throughout the Foundation Stage.

Personal, social and emotional development

8.3 By the end of the Foundation Stage, children attain the Early Learning Goal in this area. In the nursery classes children learn to co-operate, take turns and help each other, for example in snack time a girl was trying to open the wrapper around a chocolate biscuit for a younger child. Such cooperation is strongly reinforced by the care and encouragement shown to children by the staff. Children are well supported in their activities and are given many opportunities to become independent. Expectations of good behaviour, kindness and thoughtfulness are high. Children clear up well and put toys away in the allotted space. All equipment is clearly labelled and easily accessible and this further encourages independence. Children are well behaved and concentrate on the task in hand, according to their age and ability. In the reception classes the behaviour is also good. Children listen carefully and follow instructions. They are keen to participate, take turns and co-operate well. As in the nursery classes, expectations of good behaviour, courtesy and kindness are high and the children react accordingly. Pupils are taught to value each other. The use of positive praise, transfers, 'a smiley face' and house points promote very high standards of personal, social and emotional development. An awareness of ideas, cultures and traditions, different to their own, are introduced at appropriate festivals during the year, for example, at Diwali and Eid.

Communication, Language and Literacy.

8.4 Children's attainment in communication, language and literacy is high, given their abilities, and they make good progress. Most children attain this Early Learning Goal by the end of the Reception Year and some move on to the National Curriculum

programmes of study for English. Throughout, most children talk confidently and listen attentively. Some reception class children are able to read with appropriate levels of fluency. Nursery children learn letter sounds and the names of key words and good opportunities exist across the Foundation Stage for children to extend and develop their language skills.

8.5 Throughout, good use is made of role-play. In the Blue Room of the nursery a 'post office' had been set up and children happily put 'stamps' on envelopes and wrote letters to friends. In reception, children bought teddies in for a teddy bears' picnic, which was enjoyed by all. There is a good deal of sustained, interested and cooperative play, promoting the good use of language and communication skills throughout the Foundation Stage.

8.6 Published reading schemes are introduced in the Reception Year. The use of this and other published material promotes high standards of letter recognition. The children in the reception classes know about rhyming word families, for example light and flight, cat and mat. In handwriting, most children are able to form letters correctly, though some are still learning. Many are attempting independent writing and some by the end of the Foundation Stage are able to write a sentence with little or no help.

Mathematical Development

8.7 Across the Foundation Stage children's mathematical development is good and by the end of it, most have attained this Early Learning Goal. In addition, many are working towards the early National Curriculum programmes of study for mathematics.

8.8 In the nursery classes, many opportunities are provided to reinforce the children's knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. Opportunities to practise the skills of sorting, matching and counting are plentiful. For example, children in the nursery had birthday cards with numbers one to six on and counted out candles on a birthday cake to match each number. Mathematical language is well used to describe position, with the children participating well. A water tray activity promotes the concept of capacity. A very good range of practical tasks helps to reinforce mathematical awareness. In reception classes, accessible number lines and displays further enhance the acquisition of mathematical skills. Children take part enthusiastically in counting games, number rhymes and stories. Careful planning meets the needs of pupils' different ability levels and good support is given to each child. For example, a good lesson was seen where number sequencing in a reception class included the concept of 'more' and 'less'. Clear and careful explanations by the teacher enabled children to make good progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

8.9 Children throughout the Foundation Stage make good progress in this area, so that, by the age of five, they attain this Early Learning Goal and some exceed it. Well-organised activities in the nursery classrooms provide opportunities for children to investigate objects and materials, explore how things work, and build and construct in a

variety of ways. The children know about the life cycle of frogs, butterflies and ladybirds and have planted bulbs and seeds and observed them growing. Reception children are actively encouraged to find out, explore and question, with easily accessible items being available to aid further investigation. A good lesson was seen on the differences between old toys from 1900 to new ones played with now. Children realised that their parents and grandparents had played with the old toys as they were brought in from home. Good questioning, extension of answers and reinforcement of explanations, enabled all children to make progress in their learning. A variety of visits within the local environment make a positive contribution to this area of learning.

Physical development

8.10 Children throughout the Foundation Stage make good progress and attain the Early Learning Goals in this area. Many opportunities are provided for physical development and children's attainment is good. Use of the hall, two outdoor areas, together with the good provision of large and small toys and apparatus, ensure that children are able to develop well. Varied and exciting challenges to promote physical development are provided by a good range of outdoor equipment, which sets appropriate challenges for all children. For example, a good selection of wheeled toys was well used in the play area on a racetrack painted on the ground. Children are encouraged to use the space effectively and safely. Children throughout the Foundation Stage are required to handle a wide range of tools as well as manipulative and constructional apparatus, in order to develop their hand-eye coordination. The use of ICT is apparent in all classes and children know how to operate a variety of programmes.

Creative development

8.11 Children make very good progress through an excellent range of activities, including printing and painting, so that, by the age of five, most attain the Early Learning Goals in this area with many exceeding them. For example, nursery children are able to fill a page with strips and shapes of coloured paper, sticking these and then drawing lines in between the strips with a gold and silver coloured pen. Reception children are able to make Christmas cards and colour nativity scenes in crayon. An awareness of colour, pattern and shape is apparent from work exhibited in the classrooms. Children have good opportunities to work with a variety of materials such as clay, fabrics and natural materials. Creative development through music, movement and percussion is also good. Singing is brought into many aspects of the curriculum throughout the Foundation Stage, for example, when pupils sang 'ten in a bed' when tidying up.

8.12 The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and sometimes very good. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the 'stepping stones' which lead to the Early Learning Goals. Teaching is enthusiastic and is carried out in a pleasant and lively manner. Support staff are well trained, well deployed and make a valuable contribution to children's learning. Possible special educational needs pupils are identified early and appropriate planning for them is put into place. The curriculum is broad, balanced and well matched to the age and ability of the children.

Very good records of attainment and personal profiles are kept, with good supportive pictorial evidence from all classes. Reports are well written and strong links with parents are in place.

English

8.13 The standards pupils attain by the end of Year 2 are high in relation to their abilities. Pupils take National Curriculum tests for seven year olds and the results are well above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. Pupils listen carefully with a good level of understanding, make suitable responses and speak with confidence. They also show good understanding when reading simple passages and can express opinions about stories and poems. They write simple sentences confidently and can develop their ideas well. The vocabulary they use in speaking and in writing is well developed.

8.14 By the age of 11 pupils' standards are high in relation to their abilities. Their results in National Curriculum tests are well above the national average and of those of broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. Pupils attain high standards in all aspects of the subject, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing. Presentation of work is usually of a good standard for pupils' ages and by Year 6 handwriting is well formed and neat.

8.15 In Years 1 and 2 pupils make rapid progress in relation to their abilities. Pupils who are finding it difficult to master basic spelling, reading or writing are taught effectively in small groups whilst higher attaining pupils are well challenged to attain good standards. In Year 1, close attention is given to letter and word recognition. Parents are made aware of the approach adopted by the teachers and close co-operation and monitoring of reading at home and school enhances pupils' progress. Handwriting is mostly clear and well formed. Spelling is reinforced through regular testing, supported by the learning of word lists taken home by the pupils. Most pupils spell the most common and more specialised words correctly. For any pupils experiencing difficulty with English, effective and well-monitored individual education programmes are drawn up and specialist help is available for pupils with dyslexia. Pupils are articulate and confident in speaking and when a Year 2 teacher asked for the opposite of "explode" the whole class was able to answer instantly and with relish, "implode." In Year 2, pupils write quickly and neatly and there are many examples of lively stories and imaginative poetry in the classroom displays. Although little use of ICT is evident, examples of word-processed work are to be found in pupils' files. Dictionaries are used routinely and pupils know how to access information from books by using contents and index pages.

8.16 In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make rapid progress and a high level of expectation from teachers ensures that sufficient challenge is provided for the higher attaining pupils, whilst, for lower attaining pupils, appropriate material is used and their progress is carefully monitored. Work in pupils' books indicates the clear development in their knowledge and use of similes, metaphors, and alliteration. Use of descriptive adjectives and adverbs increases from Years 3 to 6, so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils

are able to write in appropriate idioms and with a broad vocabulary. Spelling and grammar points are emphasised and tested by all teachers. Pupils are used to, and enjoy regular, brief tests of their competence. Presentation of written work is neat and most pupils take great care over this aspect of English.

8.17 Learning and behaviour are good and pupils are keen and enthusiastic about the subject. They share and develop ideas together, work well in pairs, in small groups and individually. Levels of concentration are high. Several pupils, for example, had continued with their schoolwork at home and had used the internet to help them discover more. A recent visit by an actor, retelling the story of Guy Fawkes, had inspired some good writing and individual research.

8.18 The quality of teaching is good and, on occasions, very good and despite the large number of teachers who take the subject there is a consistency of approach. Good ideas are shared and comparisons of standards made, so that assessment informs teachers' future planning. High and low attaining pupils are identified and the individual education programmes provided for them are regularly updated. Lesson planning is thorough and detailed, so that all aspects of teaching and learning are covered. Lessons are taught at a good pace, with challenge for the higher attaining pupils and support for those who need it. For example, pupils in Year 5 were absorbed by their work on play scripts and quickly mastered the use of dramatic conventions such as stage directions, division by scenes and acts, as well as characterisation through dialogue. The prospect of performing their completed scripts appealed to them and pupils were confident about speaking and performing in front of their colleagues. Homework is appropriately set and is well matched to pupils' abilities, so that expectations are realistic.

8.19 Assessment and recording procedures are very good. Careful reading and spelling records are kept and National Curriculum and diagnostic tests, as well as routine weekly tests, are recorded and analysed in order to assist the planning of work for each pupil and to provide targeted action plans. The marking of written work is constructive and encouraging with precise comments and targets being given. The school has a marking policy, but it is not always followed by all teachers, particularly with regard to the marking of spelling.

8.20 The subject is well managed by two English co-ordinators. The co-ordinator in Years 3 to 6 also acts as the special educational needs coordinator and both responsibilities are discharged with efficiency and skill. She has good links with the senior school and also meets regularly with colleagues having responsibility for the youngest pupils as well as with a visiting learning support teacher. Little time is available for monitoring the work of class teachers. Planning across Years 1 to 6 and within year groups is good but a whole school subject document, indicating the work pupils are required to cover from Year 1 to Year 11, is lacking. The subject is well resourced with sufficient fiction and reference books.

Mathematics

8.21 Overall, pupils achieve standards that are in line with their abilities by the time they leave the junior school. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 are above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained schools. Results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 are in line with pupils' abilities and slightly above the national average for broadly equivalent primary schools.

8.22 By the end of Year 2, pupils can multiply in 2s to 30 and can write and order numbers to 100. They know simple table facts and can carry out addition and subtraction sums with tens and units. They can also recognise the names of two and three-dimensional shapes and can construct pictograms. This good understanding of concepts is developed further in Years 3 to 6, so that by Year 6, they can reduce fractions such as $\frac{27}{57}$ to $\frac{9}{19}$, draw accurately isosceles and equilateral triangles with a ruler and protractor and calculate long multiplication sums.

8.23 The progress pupils make in Years 1 and 2 is good. The higher attaining pupils are encouraged to develop quickly in line with their ability and lower attaining pupils are given support and encouragement. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, the higher attaining group were able to calculate $\frac{1}{3}$ of 12 while two lower attaining pupils were required to shade in half a square. Pupils make sound progress in Years 3 to 6, where more emphasis is placed on class teaching than on group work, as found in Years 1 and 2. Where work is well matched to pupils' abilities, as seen in a good Year 4 lesson, progress is faster. In this lesson, the lower attaining pupils learnt to calculate $\frac{3}{5}$ of 100 metres while the higher attaining group attempted $\frac{1}{3}$ of 144 by finding $\frac{1}{3}$ of 150 and subtracting $\frac{1}{3}$ of 6.

8.24 Pupils are good learners who respond positively in lessons and set about their written and oral tasks with enthusiasm. Most ask appropriate questions and collaborate quietly and efficiently, with boys and girls mixing together well. Interest is maintained throughout as a result of the lessons having good pace and appropriate tasks. Presentation is good and pupils use a pen, pencil and ruler neatly, and generally follow the rules pasted in the front of their exercise books. Learning is further encouraged and confidence built through the use of activities such as master classes for the higher attaining pupils and booster groups for those who find the subject difficult.

8.25 Overall the quality of teaching is good with very good teaching found in Years 2 and 3, where pupils make the most rapid progress. All teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and the curriculum for the pupils they teach. In Years 4 to 6, teachers' awareness of what is being taught in other age groups is less secure and a greater understanding of the progression of curriculum is needed.

8.26 The balance and planning of the curriculum are sound, but are confined to National Curriculum topics, with little additional planning, teaching strategy or style being mentioned in the documentation. The time allocated is satisfactory, although not all classes have mathematics each day. Resources are good and two different, but useful, core textbooks are used during lessons to support group work. These provide a strong foundation and maintain the continuity in pupils' learning. Marking is thorough,

although few helpful comments are made on the pupils' work. Those that are made are positive and encouraging. Assessment and recording are very good and this enables planning and target setting to be conducted thoroughly. Displays in classrooms are attractive. Limited use is made of neither the computers in the classrooms during lessons, nor of the ICT suite.

8.27 The subject is managed very well within year groups, as the respective teachers meet once a week to assess progress and plan future lessons. The same topic is taught and classes move ahead at the same pace. The subject co-ordinator is new to the school and only became responsible for the subject during the course of the term. He has had little opportunity to provide the leadership and overall perspective that is needed from Year 1 to Year 6.

Science

8.28 Pupils' overall attainment in science is good in relation to their abilities. The outcomes of teacher assessment at the end of Year 2 in 2003 show that pupils' attainment is above the national average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools. The 2003 National Curriculum externally moderated tests at the end of Year 6 show a similar and improving picture, with pupils' attainment being well above the average for broadly equivalent maintained primary schools.

8.29 By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge of the topics they have studied. They learn to use scientific terminology such as energy, transparency and forces correctly. They can relate previous work to new investigations and experiences. Year 2 pupils have a good knowledge of circuits and electricity. They also know how to make and break circuits and have a good grasp of the notion of switches. In addition, pupils make accurate records of procedures and equipment they use in their tests. They learn to predict, observe and record their findings. They accurately record and present data, using a variety of techniques such as graphs.

8.30 By the age of 11, pupils' attainment is high in relation to their abilities and they can carry out a wide range of scientific operations. They have a clear understanding of the importance and design of fair tests. They can accurately record and display data in a variety of ways. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of condensation, evaporation, distillation and filtration and know about the main functions of human and plant organs.

8.31 Throughout Years 1 to 6, pupils make good and often very good progress in the development of their scientific skills and knowledge. In Years 5 and 6, where science is taught by a specialist teacher, progress is particularly rapid. Year 5 pupils built on their knowledge of evaporation and condensation to learn about ways substances change their state, particularly when affected by a heat source. This led to them having a clear understanding of the process of distillation. Of particular quality is the development of pupils' skills of investigation throughout Years 3 to 6 and particularly in Years 5 and 6.

They learn to hypothesise, devise and carry out fair tests, and record the results accurately.

8.32 Pupils are highly motivated and keen to play a full part in all aspects of science. They work well on their own, but increasingly, as they move through the school, learn to work with their peers and collaborate, particularly in conducting experiments and practical tasks. Year 6 pupils, for example, worked most effectively in small groups while conducting an experiment to purify rock salt. Equally, Year 1 pupils helped each other to predict whether surfaces were reflective or non-reflective. Pupils listen carefully and respond positively to the teacher's instructions and explanations. Older pupils are fully aware of the safety regulations and issues in the laboratory. Most pupils observe carefully and record accurately, and older pupils look for similarities and differences, as well as for patterns emerging through their experiments.

8.33 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory, most is good and a significant amount, particularly in Years 5 and 6, is very good. Much of the enthusiasm and interest pupils have for the subject is closely linked to the good and imaginative teaching they receive. Lessons have an appropriate structure, are carefully planned and all have clear objectives; this ensures that they proceed at a good rate. Very effective demonstrations by the teacher illuminate lessons and Year 5 pupils were mesmerised by the changing state of popcorn under heat, as part of a lesson on atoms and particles. During lessons teachers ask key, penetrating questions that provoke pupils to think. This has a very positive effect on their learning. Pupils are managed firmly but sensitively, and all lessons are characterised by a constructive and supportive approach from the teachers. Pupils respond well. In a minority of the less effective lessons, limited experimental and practical work, combined with the completion of a low level recording task, constrained the development of skills and knowledge.

8.34 The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic, energetic and knowledgeable science coordinator. All staff collaborate well and share ideas effectively. Over the past three years the development of detailed, effective guidelines, incorporating commercial schemes, has ensured a good degree of progression and continuity in the development of pupils' scientific knowledge and skill. Regular assessments of pupils' work tracks their achievement and progress, and detailed records as well as the analysis from a range of test data help in the planning of new work.

8.35 Resources are good and are effectively used to ensure the subject is taught in a practical and investigative way. Occasionally, an overuse of worksheets inhibits the development of more personal and original ways of recording. The development and refurbishment of the science laboratory used by Years 5 and 6 is a very positive feature. Its layout enables a wide range of practical and more sedentary tasks to develop together.

8.36 A development plan for the subject is closely dovetailed with key whole school issues in the school development plan. Clear priorities have been identified for the development of the subject. The co-ordinator has recently attended a course that has

helped him in the development of his role and, in this, he is now becoming most effective.

Short Subject Reports

Short subject reports contain concise evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of provision in the school.

Art and design

8.37 Four lessons were observed in Key Stage 1 and two in Key Stage 2, as well as a range of work on display and in files provided by the school. Photographic evidence was also used.

8.38 The teaching of the subject was never less than sound but was mostly good. Lessons were generally planned effectively and clear aims were shared with pupils. The specialist teacher has a good level of technical knowledge and all teachers related well to pupils, sharing their enthusiasm for the subject. The topics chosen often link to other areas of the curriculum. For example, a tropical garden linked to the history and geography of Egypt in Year 5. The subject relates well to literacy, with good use being made of topic related vocabulary and character profiles. Displays around school showed a clear awareness of colour and shape and indicated the use of a range of materials. However, insufficient two- and three-dimensional work was evident, but there was photographic evidence of the previous term's work. Emphasis was placed on line, shape, proportion, shading and texture, as was evident in lessons on drawing a plant in one Year 5 class, and a shoe in another. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development and in particular the cultural aspect, as displayed in Indonesian masks and batik displays.

8.39 Pupils' attitudes to art and design are good. In lessons, concentration was good and motivation high. The good relationships pupils had with their teachers and their peers assisted their creativity. Pupils respected one another and their resources, and consistently behaved well.

8.40 The policy and schemes of work in Years 1 to 6 are good, with appropriate cross-curricular links. These ensure that there is a consistency and continuity to pupils' learning. The assessment of pupils' artistic development is undertaken at regular intervals during the term. Years 3 to 6 are taught in a specialist room where appropriate resources are available. Similarly, resources for Years 1 and 2 are also good. Pupils' work is well displayed in public areas and corridors.

Design and Technology

8.41 One lesson was observed and a small amount of work from Years 1 to 3 was scrutinized. Evidence of three-dimensional work and photographic evidence of sculpture was also considered.

8.42 Teaching in the lesson observed was good. The lesson was well planned and catered for the differing ability levels of the pupils. The opening question and answer session fired pupils' enthusiasm and they were eager to continue the work they had begun in a different lesson on designing a 'pop-up' card. Relationships within the lesson between the teacher and pupils were very good. The time was well used and much was achieved during the course of the lesson.

8.43 Pupils behaved well during the lesson and were most enthusiastic about their work. They were eager to discuss what they were doing and willingly supported each other with ideas and suggestions.

8.44 Design and technology is not taught as a separate subject in Years 1 to 5 but Year 6 join the senior school to be taught the subject on a weekly basis. The situation in Years 1 to 5 is unsatisfactory and a full review of the allocation of time being devoted to the subject is needed.

8.45 The policy and scheme of work need to be extended to cover the whole school. The resources available for the teaching of the subject are unsatisfactory.

French

8.46 Two lessons were observed and a range of pupils' books was scrutinised.

8.47 Teaching was never less than satisfactory and there were some good features. In lessons, pupils were encouraged to speak the language and grammatical points were introduced in a structured and appropriate manner. Good teaching was evident in Year 6 where pupils were able to tell the time confidently and showed a sound knowledge of the use of possessive adjectives. Similarly, in a Year 3 lesson, pupils enjoyed singing an alphabet song and picked up individual letter sounds quickly. The teaching was sympathetic and encouraging and the teacher had a good relationship with the pupils, ensuring that even those uncertain of being correct were prepared to offer answers. Lessons proceeded at a good pace and the work was well matched to the pupils' different ability levels.

8.48 Pupils were co-operative and well behaved in lessons. They listened carefully to the teacher and to one another. Work in exercise books was well presented and carefully marked.

8.49 Resources are good and an overhead projector is well used to support teaching. An annual visit to France helps to encourage pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. Wall displays in the French room create an appropriate atmosphere for the teaching of the subject.

History

8.50 Four lessons were observed and a full range of pupils' books, folders and work on display was scrutinised.

8.51 Teaching was never less than satisfactory and in two lessons observed it was good. Teachers planned their lessons well and generated interest among their pupils. Resources were well used to support pupils' learning. Text books are modern and well illustrated and extensive use was made of photographs, artefacts and classroom displays. Work sheets that were used took account of the pupils' different abilities. Lessons were characterised by some high quality questioning by teachers and knowledgeable answers from pupils. Several were motivated to continue their historical research outside school.

8.52 Pupils responded with enthusiasm to the teaching. They showed considerable interest in the subject and many of them talked readily about their visits to historical sites. They remembered much about their experience of "being" Victorian children and had been excited by dressing up as Vikings in York. Written work was neat, well illustrated and often displayed their good knowledge of world and local history. Pupils were well able to empathise with historical figures.

8.53 The subject has a good scheme of work which supports non-specialist teachers. Resources are plentiful but they are not catalogued and individual teachers are not always aware of what is available.

Geography

8.54 Five lessons were observed and a wide range of pupils' work in exercise books and on display was scrutinised.

8.55 In almost all the lessons the quality of teaching was good. Lessons were carefully planned and effective use was made of maps, atlases and other resources. The interesting introductions and clear explanations effectively supported pupils' work. Penetrating questions made pupils think about geographical ideas, such as rural and urban migration and helped teachers assess pupils' understanding.

8.56 Pupils responded very well to the teaching. They listened intently and answered their teachers' questions willingly. For example, Year 6 pupils responded enthusiastically to a discussion on settlement and the migration of populations to and from the city. They showed a keen interest in the comparison of buildings and activities within an inner city and a suburban area. Pupils take a pride in their written work, and maps, plans and diagrams are carefully drawn. Marking in lessons is regular and helpful and the best indicates ways in which improvements can be made.

8.57 Schemes of work are clear and detailed. They ensure, together with effective medium and short term planning, a good degree of continuity and progression in the development of geographical knowledge and skills from Year 1 to Year 6. In Years 1 and 2, specific geographical topics may be studied separately or developed within an overarching topic. In Years 3 to 6, good use is made of nationally produced guidelines

that are appropriately modified to meet pupils' needs. Pupils have access to sufficient resources including maps, atlases and globes. Resources are sufficient for the current programme of work but when finances permit a modern computer in each classroom would enhance the provision. Occasionally, the use of low level worksheets limits opportunities for pupils to respond in a variety of ways. Regular tests at the end of each topic track pupils' achievement and progress and help teachers plan the next piece of work.

Information and Communication Technology

8.58 Two lessons were observed, samples of written work were scrutinised and a discussion was held with the subject coordinator.

8.59 The quality of teaching was sound. Both lessons were efficiently organised and objectives were made clear to the pupils. Clear instructions were provided at the beginning of each lesson. Good use was made of the digital projector to illustrate the teaching points. The pupils worked independently and their pace varied according to their skills and ability. The teacher kept a close eye on their progress and provided help and encouragement when necessary. Summing up at the end of the lessons was sound.

8.60 Pupils responded positively to their lessons and were enthusiastic learners. Most pupils set about their tasks willingly and with understanding. Pupils readily helped each other overcome problems. However a few children, who found the tasks difficult, accomplished little until they received help.

8.61 The quality of the ICT provision is good. The system has the potential to be an excellent teaching resource even though the accommodation is rather cramped. However, at present resources are not being sufficiently well used to support other areas of the curriculum.

Music

8.62 Three lessons were observed together with music in assembly. In addition, a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised.

8.63 The teaching of music overall was very good. It was carried out by a well-qualified specialist teacher. He was ably supported by peripatetic instrumental teachers who made a most valuable contribution to the teaching of the subject. Music lessons were well planned and challenged pupils of all abilities. As a result, good quality work was covered during lessons. The good quality music resources were used very effectively to support pupils' learning.

8.64 Pupils were keen to participate in lessons as a result of the teaching they received. They showed particular enthusiasm for performances. Pupils had good constructive relationships with the teacher and had considerable respect for each other.

These features, together with good teaching, contributed strongly to the progress being made.

8.65 The scheme of work for the subject, which is nearly finished, and the teachers' planning are very good. Considerable numbers of pupils are learning to play an instrument and many are successful in external examinations. Extra-curricular music and outside school performances make a significant contribution to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of the pupils.

Physical Education/Games

8.66 One physical education lesson and two games lessons were observed. A discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator and a colleague.

8.67 The quality of teaching overall was very good and because of large numbers more than one teacher was present in two of the lessons. Teachers' lesson planning was good. Warm up sessions were well used and the aim of each lesson was explained to the pupils. Group work was used to ensure that an efficient use of skill training and teachers provided very good guidance and encouragement. Simple competitions tested the newly taught skills and lessons concluded, as they were conducted throughout, in an orderly manner. Discipline was excellent.

8.68 The response of the pupils was very good. They were keen and willing participants at all times. The pupils responded to group work readily and co-operated very well, thus allowing lessons to progress smoothly from stage to stage. Pupils without tracksuits or warm clothing on cold afternoons do not enjoy games lessons as much and mouth guards for hockey should be encouraged.

8.69 Resources for the subject are restricted to a large hall/gymnasium and the playground. The changing room and storage facilities are also severely limited. To overcome this, very good use is made of the nearby, excellent commercial facilities to provide pupils with a comprehensive and broad curriculum. However, the need to use transport together with the resultant loss of useful teaching time, inevitably inhibit the progress that pupils make.

Religious Education

8.70 Three lessons were observed and a range of books and folders was scrutinised. There were many examples of work on show in classrooms and corridors including a display of pupils' baptismal and first communion vestments.

8.71 Teaching was good. Teachers related well to pupils and they were prepared to answer difficult philosophical questions in an open manner. Teachers guided pupils into thinking for themselves and encouraged individual study and research. Good use was made of pupils' different religious backgrounds and a teacher who succeeded in drawing from the pupils their own experiences of prayer chaired an effective discussion. Different

faiths were acknowledged and respected as, for example, when a teacher explained how, on her own trip to Egypt, she had shown respect for the Moslem faith.

8.72 The quality of pupils' learning and behaviour was very good. Pupils talked freely about their own beliefs and they listened with interest to the views of others. Written work in books and folders was well presented and displays throughout the school emphasised the importance of religious education as a subject central to the school's curriculum.

8.73 Resources are satisfactory. However, the school lacks a central store, for artefacts and teaching materials, which would allow teachers to have access to a wider range of teaching aids.

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Senior School

English

8.74 Pupils achieve good standards in relation to their abilities by the time they leave the senior school. At the age of 14, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests is in line with the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Performance in GCSE examinations was above those in all maintained secondary schools in 2003 and in the preceding two years.

8.75 Pupils' attainment is in line with their abilities at the age of 14 and good in relation to their abilities at the age of 16. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a sound knowledge of metaphor and can draw understanding from a sub-text. By Year 11, they can speak convincingly from minimum notes in attempting a GCSE type oral activity. Pupils write clearly, speak confidently and listen attentively to their teacher and to one another. Grammar and spelling are generally good for their age and abilities. Pupils throughout have a good knowledge of technical terms, particularly when used as an aid to literary criticism.

8.76 Pupils' make sound progress during Years 7 to 9 and good progress in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in understanding the texts they study and in writing with considerable depth and fluency. For example, pupils in Year 7 made rapid progress in analysing the form and structure of two poems and in a Year 10 class they successfully transferred learning taken from discussion of a text to their own writing. Lower attaining pupils, including those with learning difficulties, progress well with spelling, grammar and punctuation. This group of pupils in Year 8 made good progress in the fluency and accuracy of their reading aloud and in the use of dictionaries during the course of a particular lesson.

8.77 The quality of pupils' learning and their behaviour is very good and enhances their learning. Pupils are co-operative listeners, support one another and concentrate well. Pupils become immersed in the texts they study, and discuss their ideas confidently. In a Year 8 class, for example, pupils debated the identity of the main

character in a book, listening constructively to different points of view. However, more opportunities need to be provided for pupils to carry out independent research and be more responsible for organising their own learning.

8.78 Teaching is good and on occasions is very good. It contributes significantly to pupils' attainment and progress. Objectives are made clear at the beginning of lessons, which are well planned, effectively linked to preceding and succeeding class or homework and delivered at a pace well suited to the different abilities in each class. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and know their pupils very well. They focus positively upon accuracy of speech and writing and make good use of praise for effort as well as achievement. In a few lessons there was a high proportion of whole-class teaching with an insufficient variety of tasks and use of open-ended questions to challenge the higher attaining pupils.

8.79 Clear assessment policies support pupils' progress and attainment effectively, though they do not, as yet, make a strong contribution to curriculum planning. Reading and spelling ages, assessed on entry to the school, are not monitored thereafter and, overall, insufficient recording of pupils' personal reading takes place. Meeting the requirements of the optional national testing system in Years 7 and 8, as well as at age 14, on occasions narrows the range of teaching. Written work is conscientiously and consistently marked. Errors are noted and corrections are usually completed. Good use is made of praise and pupils understand what marks mean. In Years 7 to 9, marking is generally used to review the work that has been done with less guidance to help pupils improve. In Years 10 and 11, helpful advice is frequently given.

8.80 The department is generally effectively managed mainly through an informal liaison between the teachers, though some formal meetings are held. Curriculum planning concentrates on preparation for all aspects of national tests and examinations. It also takes account of the different ability groups within each year and is effective within its aims. The department is adequately resourced to support teaching and learning. A small English library augments the main school library and the department is taking necessary steps to improve the provision of texts for private reading. Information and communication technology is used only for simple word processing.

Mathematics

8.81 In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, pupils' results were in line with the national average for all maintained secondary schools in 2000 and 2002 and above the national average for them in 2001 and 2003. At GCSE all pupils are entered for higher or intermediate level and the results are well above the results for maintained secondary schools across the country.

8.82 By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment in mathematics is at least in line with their abilities. This was reflected in the lessons observed and in the work seen. By that age, pupils are generally confident with basic mathematical processes, are able to express them in suitable mathematical language, estimate answers and make mental calculations

when necessary. When pupils leave the school, their attainment levels are high in relation to their abilities. Most have a good understanding of algebra and can solve simultaneous linear equations. Levels of numeracy are high. Pupils' knowledge of shape, space and measures is good and they are able to hypothesise and test their hypotheses when handling data in a variety of forms. The work in pupils' books, throughout the senior school, shows a reasonable standard of accuracy, depth and breadth and is generally well organised and well presented.

8.83 Pupils' overall progress in mathematics in Years 7 to 9, including those pupils with special educational needs, is sound in relation to their abilities, being good in Years 10 and 11. Some good examples of oral question and answer sessions worked particularly effectively in helping pupils to make the progress that they did. In several lessons, progress was particularly good. In Year 10 for example, pupils during a short space of time made good progress in their understanding of rational and irrational numbers.

8.84 The quality of pupils' learning and their behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are motivated by interesting work. They listen to the responses of other pupils and interact well with each other and with their teachers. They concentrate well and willingly share apparatus as required.

8.85 The quality of teaching overall is sound and on occasions is good or very good. It is at its best when the expertise of the teacher is adequate for the level at which the pupils are working. Good practice was seen a Year 7 lesson, where averages were taught in an effective way, enabling the pupils to distinguish clearly between the different measures 'mean', 'mode' and 'median'. In the best practice, teaching challenges the pupils. The difference in pupils' abilities within teaching groups is wide. This is understood by the teachers, who ensure that pupils are working at an appropriate level by giving different work to individuals or to groups within the class. Homework is marked regularly and, where errors occur, the teacher gives an indication of why it is wrong and what should be done to correct it.

8.86 The subject is taught in two rooms in close proximity. They are both very pleasant teaching areas. Access to ICT is limited and more opportunity to use computers in mathematics lessons is needed.

8.87 No head of department is in place. One teacher teaches all the Year 7 to 9 classes and another teaches Years 10 and 11. Each works independently and plans the scheme of work for their own year groups. To ensure the continuity and progression in pupils' learning, a subject coordinator, who has an overview of whole school planning for mathematics, should be appointed.

Science

8.88 By the end of Year 9 pupils attain standards that are in line with their ability. Results in national tests from 2000 to 2002 are in line with those of equivalent

maintained secondary schools across the country. The results for 2003 do show an improvement but comparison figures are not yet available.

8.89 By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment in science is in line with their abilities. The GCSE results over the last three years do show some variation, but are generally in line with those of similar maintained secondary schools across the country. In 2002, results were above the national average in science double award and chemistry, but below the national average in biology and physics for similar maintained secondary schools. Sixty per cent of the pupils achieved A* or A in science double award and half the pupils achieved A* or A in chemistry. Comparison figures are not available for 2003. Across all four science subjects taken, the proportion not achieving at least grade C is relatively small. Girls' performance is similar to that of boys but the small numbers make valid comparisons difficult.

8.90 The progress in science of pupils from Year 7 to 11 is sound overall. Pupils' work in all years is well presented and they record data neatly and accurately. They handle a range of basic laboratory equipment well and have developed a wide range of practical skills. There were many instances of pupils making good progress in individual lessons, for example where Year 11 pupils were carrying out an experiment to calculate the acceleration due to gravity. They measured accurately and used ticker-tape timers efficiently. Similarly, Year 8 pupils, during a lesson on elements and compounds, were able to name a variety of elements from their chemical symbols and predict the names of the compounds formed. They were also able to write a balanced equation for the combustion of magnesium.

8.91 Pupils' learning and behaviour are very good. They are very well motivated and are keen to do well. They collaborate well in the laboratory and work in a safe, structured manner. The attitude of pupils when working in the subject is good. They enjoy it and have a high regard for their teachers. Opportunities are given to pupils to develop individually devised science experiments. In addition, pupils are asked to make predictions of the outcomes of experiments and they suggest some very well thought out answers. A pupil in Year 7, asked to predict the final volume after mixing 50ml of water and 50ml of ethanol, suggested that the volume would be less. He thought the heavier ethanol particles would sink down to the bottom, because they were heavy, thus leaving more room for the water molecules. The actual final volume was 97ml.

8.92 The quality of teaching is generally good. The relationships between teachers and pupils are good and the classes respond well to directions. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects. Much of the teaching is very effective but in a minority of cases it is over directed and has a slow pace. Nevertheless, expectations are high and pupils rise to the challenge. Objectives of lessons are always clear and teaching meets the needs of most pupils, although, on some occasions, it does not stretch the higher attaining pupils. Homework is regularly set and the tasks given are appropriate.

8.93 The marking of pupils' work is carried out regularly but is generally quite cursory and does not follow a marking policy. Marking is largely based on impression rather than

criteria, although there are some examples of this in physics. Nevertheless, a more standardised assessment system is needed.

8.94 The department is well resourced and allows for a range of scientific experiments to be carried out. New equipment, such as a camera which enables close up pictures of experiments to be shown on a TV screen, as well as new data logging apparatus, have been acquired and enhance the teaching of science in all years. The laboratory is pleasant and well equipped but small. It is adequate for the majority of classes, which are small, but practical lessons with Years 10 and 11 present problems, because of the cramped conditions. The smooth running of the department is greatly helped by the presence of an experienced part-time laboratory technician.

8.95 The leadership and management of the department is good overall. A teacher from the junior school teaches Year 7 pupils on both sites but generally links between the two sectors are limited. There is a need for a co-ordinator to oversee the teaching of science to all pupils across the whole age range.

History

8.96 Pupils achieve good standards overall in relation to their abilities by the time they leave the school. The results gained in GCSE examinations in the last three years are above the average for all maintained schools, and particularly in the proportion of pupils gaining A* and A.

8.97 By the end of Year 9, pupils attain standards that are in line with their abilities and are developing a satisfactory range of historical skills and understanding. This was clearly seen amongst Year 9 pupils who were studying the perils of working in the coalmines during the Industrial Revolution. They displayed an ability to empathise and to grasp, not only the reasons for danger, the reality of the risk to life and limb, but also worked out possible solutions.

8.98 By the time pupils reach the end of Year 11, the standards they attain are good in relation to their abilities. Most pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of history, use accurate terminology, and grasp key concepts. They understand historical cause and effect. This was seen in a thoughtful and challenging Year 11 lesson, which allowed students to display a mature grasp of Cold War issues in discussion, analyse cause and effect, and develop areas of knowledge in research tasks.

8.99 Pupils' progress is good in Years 9 to 11. In Years 7 and 8 it is sound overall but on occasions, in some lessons, it is unsatisfactory. The development of historical skills and understanding advances at a good rate as pupils move through the school, particularly in the older year groups. In Years 9 to 11, higher and lower attaining pupils make good progress, largely as a result of the good teaching they receive. Pupils, in most classes, are challenged by the teaching they receive. Written work demonstrates consistent marking and shows progress in an increasing complexity of tasks and research undertaken. Project work in the lower school is well designed and presented. Coursework is thorough and

well presented in Years 10 and 11. Appropriate tasks are undertaken in class to enhance coursework outcome in Years 10 and 11.

8.100 Pupils in lessons display an enthusiasm for the subject and a particular enjoyment in developing their historical skills. The quality of learning and behaviour is good and very good in some lessons. However, in isolated examples, largely where the work set was insufficiently challenging, pupils' learning was unsatisfactory. On most occasions, however, pupils work hard, persevere and are well motivated to attain the highest possible standards. They work well with each other and, as the need arises, willingly share resources.

8.101 The quality of teaching is good overall but ranges from that which is often very good in Years 9 to 11, to that which is satisfactory and occasionally unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8. In the less effective lessons, in the lower part of the school, the teacher's own historical knowledge and understanding were insufficient to be able to set appropriately challenging work, particularly for the high attaining pupils. In Years 9 to 11, lessons are well planned and taught at a good pace. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and a variety of teaching methods is used to challenge, encourage and support pupils at their own ability level, as well as to increase their awareness of historical fact and cause and effect. The lively discussions in Years 9, 10 and 11 are a particular strength of the lessons. The teaching in these classes encourages historical enquiry, understanding and personal research.

8.102 Resources are well used and textbooks, in most classes, are appropriate and plentiful. The subject base has a small resource of additional books, videos and material which enrich the learning experience. However, insufficient use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

8.103 The management of the subject lack an overall structured system and this is unsatisfactory. Individual teachers are responsible for their own teaching and curriculum. In Years 9 to 11, very good, clear policies and supporting documentation underpin good standards, curriculum review and development.

Modern Foreign Languages

8.104 By the time pupils leave the school they attain standards that are good in relation to their abilities. The results in French and Spanish at GCSE in 2003 were well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. However, care needs to be taken with this comparison as small numbers of pupils are involved.

8.105 By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is in line with their abilities. By the age of 14, pupils understand oral extracts and complete reading comprehension exercises. Their pronunciation is sound and sometimes good. However, when questions are posed in English, as they frequently are, pupils' opportunities to gain confidence in speaking the foreign language are significantly reduced. Replies given orally in French or Spanish are often limited to one or two word utterances, normally without a verb. Pupils can provide

answers to highly structured questions in writing, but little evidence was observed of free personal or extended writing in their exercise books. Pupils take care to note what is written on the board, show good recall of the vocabulary previously acquired, but are often lacking in confidence when manipulating the language independently of their teacher's prompting.

8.106 Attainment levels in French amongst the current Year 11 pupils are barely high enough, given their abilities. More opportunities are needed for pupils to develop independence, to learn from their mistakes and to acquire the confidence to use the language actively. In Spanish in Year 11, attainment is in line with pupils' abilities. Pupils can reply to questions posed in general conversation and can construct a letter in the language, although they are still very dependent on notes taken in class.

8.107 Pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 is sound overall in both French and Spanish. They also make sound progress overall in Years 10 and 11. However in some lessons their rate of progress in French is too slow. In Spanish, progress is sound, but is hindered by pupils' reluctance to use the language independently. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on offering pupils more freedom to construct their own sentences and to complete extended pieces of free writing. This would be likely to lead to greater confidence, better progress and, as a result, higher standards. Similarly, increased care in doing corrections consistently would also aid progress.

8.108 The overall quality of learning and behaviour is good and never less than satisfactory. Pupils are well motivated and co-operative, keen to contribute and to succeed. They have good working relationships with their teachers and are eager to work collaboratively. When given the opportunity to work in pairs they do so with great enthusiasm and, as a result, much learning takes place.

8.109 The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is sound. In Years 10 and 11, it is satisfactory overall in French, but there are, on occasions, some unsatisfactory elements to it. The teaching of Spanish is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and are enthusiastic. Whilst teaching plans incorporate varied activities that address the four skill areas of listening, reading, speaking and writing, the planning of individual lessons is not always sufficiently focussed and, on these occasions, does not always take into account the need to ensure continuity of learning. Marking is supportive of pupils, although it often lacks detailed comments to help pupils to improve.

8.110 Overall, the management of the subject is barely satisfactory. The department does not have sufficiently well developed and detailed planning, in order to improve the delivery of the curriculum, to increase pupils' attainment and to ensure subject co-ordination. Resources are good in both subjects and, when well used, have a significant impact on pupils' progress.

Short Subject Reports

Short subject reports contain concise evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of provision in the school.

Art and Design

8.111 Two lessons were observed and a sample of work of pupils in Years 7 to 11 was scrutinised.

8.112 The overall quality of teaching was good. Lessons were well prepared and appropriate tasks were chosen. Good guidance was given to individuals, suited to the ability of each pupil. Ideas were fed to the whole class as each lesson progressed. The tasks that were set were well chosen and matched the different ability levels of the pupils. Lessons proceeded at a good pace and much was achieved. The pupils were well managed and the resources available were well chosen in order to support the pupils' learning. All pupils were appropriately encouraged to work to the best of their abilities.

8.113 Relationships were good between the teacher and pupils as well as between the pupils themselves, who cooperated particularly well on one occasion when they were setting up the work for the lesson. They were well motivated and had good levels of concentration. Pupils clearly enjoyed the subject and worked hard. They also demonstrated the skill of evaluating their work.

8.114 The department is suitably equipped and accommodation is appropriate. The room is well organised. A clear scheme of work exists for pupils from Year 3 to 11. Artwork is carefully marked, and effort and attainment grades are given.

Design and Technology

8.115 Two lessons were observed, the work of a sample of pupils was seen and discussions took place with the subject co-ordinator.

8.116 The quality of teaching was at least good and in one lesson was excellent. The teacher was very aware of what was going on in the class, knew the pupils well and circulated efficiently, helping individuals constructively and effectively. She allowed them to make decisions, assisting their development as independent learners.

8.117 The pupils were well motivated and focussed. They sought information, shared ideas and learnt from their mistakes. Throughout the lessons, they worked hard, persevered when things became difficult and showed considerable application to their work.

8.118 The policy and scheme of work are good. They are working documents, which are being fine-tuned in the light of changing situations. Resources are appropriate, sufficient and practical, although Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) equipment would be a useful addition to the department. Pupils are well taught how to use the tools and machines safely.

Geography

8.119 One lesson of geography was observed and a sample of pupils' work, as well as classroom displays, were scrutinised.

8.120 The quality of teaching was sound. The lesson was well planned, objectives and lesson targets were shared with pupils and these were well understood. Good quality work sheets were used as additional material. The teaching showed an awareness of the needs of lower attaining pupils and extra support was offered to those who found the tasks more challenging. Pupils finding work difficult were dealt with in a sympathetic and supportive manner, which allowed them to tackle tasks in different or more appropriate ways.

8.121 Pupils' learning and their behaviour were sound. Pupils were well motivated and were enthusiastic learners. Lower attaining pupils were sufficiently confident to ask for support and explanation where required. Pupils worked hard and concentrated well. They generally listened well and had a disciplined approach to the work set during the lesson and to the acquisition of geographical skills in more practical tasks. They co-operated well with each other.

8.122 The classroom has good displays and adequate textbooks. Access to the ICT resources is very limited and therefore is not widely used to enhance teaching and learning.

8.123 Some aspects of the work covered in Years 7, 8 and 9 overlap and, as a result, pupils repeat areas of work. Curriculum documentation, analysis and development does not, at present, enhance the quality of teaching and learning in geography throughout the senior school.

Home Economics

8.124 Four lessons were observed and a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised. Discussions with pupils and the subject coordinator also took place.

8.125 Overall, the teaching of home economics was good. The teacher is secure in the knowledge needed to deliver the subject and displayed an appropriate enthusiasm which clearly influenced pupils. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson, pupils learned about safe working practices and skills, before going on to make bread and butter pudding with great enthusiasm. Pupils coming into lessons with different levels of basic skills received sympathetic and supportive teaching which challenged the higher attaining pupils and supported the lower attaining ones. In addition, lessons were well planned and moved along at a good pace.

8.126 Pupils clearly enjoyed the subject and worked hard to acquire complex skills throughout practical lessons. They were attentive listeners during demonstrations and careful, independent workers. Pupils also worked well together in a space which requires

a disciplined approach to all activities undertaken. Work was well displayed and written work was well planned and well presented.

8.127 The home economics curriculum is appropriate, well planned and supported by appropriate resources. However, the space in which the subject is currently taught is barely satisfactory and is unsatisfactory for some of the larger teaching groups. The restricted circulation, working area, positioning of cookers and lack of storage gives some cause for concern. It also limits the amount of practical lessons to a possible two per day.

Information and Communication Technology

8.128 Four lessons were observed, pupil's work was scrutinized and discussions were held with the ICT co-ordinator. The departmental policy document and schemes of work were also examined. Hard copies of pupils' work and work kept in their files on the computer were scrutinised.

8.129 The teaching of ICT was always good and sometimes very good. Teaching was securely based on good subject knowledge. The activities were well chosen to promote learning and were appropriate to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Planning and organisation were good; the lessons challenged the higher attaining pupils as well as the lower attaining ones.

8.130 Learning and behaviour were very good. The pupils were well-motivated, competent learners who worked well independently. Their levels of concentration were very good. They used previously gained knowledge very well to solve problems in new situations. The subject is well resourced and a designated computer room greatly assists the teaching of the subject.

Music

8.131 Three lessons were observed and pupils' exercise books across all year groups were scrutinised.

8.132 The teaching of music was very good. Teaching objectives were clear to the pupils and activities were well chosen to encourage their learning. The enthusiastic teaching was infectious, so that all pupils were keen to contribute fully in class, to sing heartily when requested to do so and to take an active interest. The pace of lessons was good and the activities chosen for the pupils were well matched to their different ability levels. The planning and organisation of lessons were also very good. Class teaching of music effectively combined rigour with creativity and good use was made of resources.

8.133 Pupils clearly enjoyed music. They responded well to the tasks that were set, and willingly took turns and shared instruments when required to do so. Their behaviour in lessons was very good. Pupils had the confidence to make suggestions and had a considerable desire to develop their learning in an independent way.

8.134 The music that is offered covers a broad and balanced range of experiences. In a Year 8 lesson for example, Italian musical terms were very well integrated into the lesson to improve the quality of the pupils' singing of Christmas songs. Specialist peripatetic music teachers have been invited to demonstrate the range of possibilities afforded by their instruments. The time allocated to music is sufficient overall but is insufficient for Years 7, 8 and 9.

Physical Education/Games

8.135 Two lessons or parts of lessons were observed, together with a scrutiny of the thorough school documentation. Discussions were also held with pupils as well as teachers.

8.136 The quality of teaching was good. Lessons were well planned by knowledgeable and committed staff. The teaching ensured that all pupils were fully involved, a good variety of activities was used and a brisk pace to the lesson was maintained. Pupils with different individual ability levels were well catered for. Praise was successfully used to encourage everyone to raise their level of performance.

8.137 Pupils were willing, and participated enthusiastically. Though the department makes little use of self-assessment as yet, pupils communicated their ideas well and worked well individually or in groups. The support given by the higher attaining pupils to those who were less talented was a feature of the lessons.

8.138 Physical education is available for all pupils and assessment procedures are thorough. The department offers a wide range of additional activities, within and beyond the timetable, as well as the opportunity for individuals and teams to attain excellence. Outdoor space for the teaching of the subject is severely limited and the school makes very good use of excellent off-site facilities. However, the logistics of travelling to widely dispersed sites, though very well managed, significantly limits the teaching and learning time available for pupils.

Religious Education

8.139 Two lessons were observed and a selection of pupils' work was looked at. Documentation related to the subject was scrutinised and discussions were held with pupils as well as teachers.

8.140 The quality of teaching was sound. Lesson objectives were made clear, stimulating materials were provided and global issues were well related to personal life. Teaching was based on a very good knowledge of the pupils and their concerns. Pupils were given considerable licence to choose ways of carrying out tasks and, though few pupils abused this freedom, lessons did lose pace after a sharp beginning.

8.141 Pupils listened well to each other as well as to the teacher. They showed a strong interest in their work, made good contributions to discussions, and were ready to ask and to answer challenging questions.

8.142 The well-structured religious education programme leads from a clearly directed study of Christianity and comparative religions in Years 7 and 8, an increasing exploration of self in Years 9 to 11. Religious education is not studied at GCSE. A clear policy encompasses the religious, personal, social and citizenship elements allocated to the subject but the absence of a clearly defined scheme of work impedes the achievement of objectives of the subject. One lesson per week is insufficient to cover so diverse a range and a subject coordinator is needed to give coherence to the many elements of the subject.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

Junior School

8.143 Achievement and participation in the very good range of activities provided are appropriate for the age and abilities of the pupils and help them to develop their talents, broaden their interests, extend their skills and achieve personal success. 'Wrap Around', team sport and supervised prep also receive considerable support from the pupils. In addition, the extensive holiday activity courses run for pupils during the Summer and most of the Christmas and Easter holidays are very popular and well supported.

8.144 The balance between sporting and non-sporting activities is good and caters for boys and girls equally well. Activities such as mathematics master class, junior lego, paper craft and junior sewing are matched by Tae Kwan Do, fencing and the current term's sports of rugby and netball. Orchestra, choir practice and dance/drama provide an important aesthetic choice.

8.145 Many opportunities are made for pupils to extend their learning through educational visits. For example, there have been visits to Brodsworth Hall and Houlgate Viking village where pupils participated in an active learning experience. The choir sang at a school for the deaf as part of an appeal for the local hospice and a group of children won a challenge competition at a nearby independent senior school. Pupils from the school have been selected to play for the county at a variety of sports and individual and team successes have been achieved on the sports' fields.

8.146 The school's staff charity team organised a successful 'Jeans for Genes' appeal as well as collections for other charitable causes such as 'Children in Need.' The libraries in the school have benefited from two profitable book fairs and a team of pupils was a worthy winner of a triathlon style event in Chesterfield. Two years ago, a pupil won a renowned national art competition and the nursery received the 'Rainbow Award for Excellence.'

8.147 Registers of pupils attending activity sessions are maintained but no monitoring of standards takes place. However, mention may be made in reports of any special achievements.

8.148 All staff are expected to contribute to the activities programme and the enthusiasm they display and the encouragement they give to pupils helps foster good relationships, broadens the curriculum and enhances the school's success.

Senior School

8.149 Achievement and participation in the activities provided for Years 7 to 10 are appropriate for the ages and abilities of the pupils and make a sound contribution to the personal development of the pupils concerned. A weakness of the system is that there is little opportunity for pupils in Year 11 to participate in the activities programme.

8.150 During the inspection, opportunities were limited to observe the wide variety of activities that normally occur. However, discussions took place with pupils and teachers and a study of the good documentation was scrutinised. Most activities take place at local sports' venues or at the junior school: there are more limited opportunities at the senior school itself. A strong contribution from a good number of school staff gives pupils a sufficient choice of activities and encompasses a wide variety of sports as well as board games, craft, drama, music, publishing and reading. Pupils also take advantage of the opportunity to do prep under supervised conditions during the activities programme.

8.151 Compulsory sport for pupils in teams takes place after school and a good variety of matches is played then or in the time allocated for physical education and games. School teams have a good record of success, often against teams from numerically much larger schools as well as in local and regional competitions. For example, this year the under-13 boys won the Doncaster schools' cross country championship; under-14 girls were Doncaster school athletics and netball champions and the under-16 girls won the Doncaster netball championship. Several pupils have represented the county at cricket, football and netball, as well as England age group teams at basketball and hockey.

8.152 The choir has performed in the local community and there are regular musical productions such as 'Oliver!' and 'Bugsy Malone'. The formation of a school orchestra is a good development. The school participates in residential outdoor activities in the United Kingdom and France and several visits are made to theatres, museums and centres of general interest. The school also offers pupils the opportunity to join skiing holidays

8.153 A promising system to record pupils' achievement in activities as part of a personal record, which can also be communicated to parents, has recently been introduced.

9. Summary of inspection evidence

9.1 The inspection was carried out from 24th – 28th November 2003. All subjects of the curriculum were inspected and all members of the teaching staff were observed teaching. However, the size of the team did not permit all subjects to be reported on in full. The following subjects do not have full reports in Section 8: Junior School: history, French, religious education, design and technology, art and design, ICT, physical education, geography and music. Senior School: home economics, ICT, physical education, religious education, music, art and design, design and technology and geography. The inspectors visited 114 lessons or parts of lessons, examined extensive samples of work by pupils of different abilities in each year and held formal discussions with these pupils as well as informal discussions with other pupils. They attended four assemblies and eight registration sessions. They observed several extra-curricular and sporting activities. They held discussions with 21 teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels in the school. They analysed the responses of 211 parents to a questionnaire distributed in advance of the inspection. They examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr G Nunn	Reporting Inspector and Ofsted Registered Inspector
Mr H Davies Jones	Former Headteacher: IAPS Independent Preparatory School
Mrs T Devonside	Former Headteacher ISA Independent Preparatory School
Mr V Hamilton	Former Headteacher, ISA Independent Senior School
Mr J Langdale	Former Headteacher ISA Independent Senior School and IAPS Preparatory school
Mr W Lawton	Headteacher IAPS Independent Preparatory School
Mrs U Stevens	Head of Department, G.S.A. Independent Senior School
Mrs E Swynnerton	Former Headteacher GSA Independent Preparatory and Senior School
Mrs P Watson	Former Headteacher GSA Independent Senior School
Mr K Williams	Former member of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools