

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Sancton Wood School

Full Name of the School	Sancton Wood School		
DfES Number	873/6009		
Address	2 St Paul's Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EZ		
Telephone Number	01223 359488		
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E-mail Address	sturdy@sturdy.demon.co.uk		
Name of Head	Mrs Julia Hewerdine		
Directors	Dr Harriet and Dr Daniel Sturdy		
Age Range	1-16 years	Gender	Mixed
Number of Pupils	221	Number of Boarders	N/A
Inspection Dates	9-13th May, 2005		

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 inspection does not examine the financial viability 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.

MAIN FINDINGS

Overall Summary

Sancton Wood School is a school for pupils between one and sixteen years old, with a strong emphasis on tolerance and respect for the views and needs of others. The very good provision for pastoral care and the committed staff provide a supportive family environment in which pupils learn well and enjoy their school life. Links with parents and the community are strong and great care is taken to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) or English as an additional language (EAL). Management responsibilities are not clearly defined and curriculum links are not sufficiently developed to ensure continuity across the whole school. Assessment is not yet used consistently to monitor pupils' progress or as a means of developing future planning. The senior library is unsatisfactory.

What the School Does Well

The school has many strengths, the most significant of which are as follows:

The very good quality of the pastoral care and the commitment of the staff enable pupils to feel confident so that they achieve good standards and enjoy their education.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and work hard. They are considerate and courteous to each other and to their teachers.

The provision for SEN and EAL pupils is very good.

Strong links have been forged with the parents and the community.

The Foundation Stage, languages across the school, and art in the Senior Department are particularly strong.

What the School Should Do Better

Although the school has no major weaknesses, the following should be considered in order to enhance the existing provision:

Management responsibilities are not clearly defined, and curriculum links are not sufficiently developed to ensure continuity in pupils' learning across the whole school.

Assessment is not yet used consistently throughout the school to monitor pupils' progress or as a means of developing future planning.

The senior library is unsatisfactory and does not provide effective support for the curriculum.

Standards of Attainment and Progress in Subjects

Pupils achieve good standards and progress well. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Achievement was particularly high in 2004 in mathematics. GCSE performance over the last three years has been well above the national average for all maintained schools. An inconsistent approach to promoting sufficient challenge for the most able pupils restricts their attainment at times. Pupils with SEN or EAL make good progress.

The Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and their Behaviour

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal development and behaviour are very good and make a major contribution to the quality of learning.

The Quality of Teaching

The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. In the lessons observed, almost all the teaching was at least sound; in three-quarters it was good or better; and in nearly a third it was very good and on occasions excellent.

Other Aspects of the School

Attendance

The level of pupils' attendance is good, enabling them to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school. Pupils are not always punctual to lessons. The school's admission and attendance registers comply with statutory requirements.

Assessment and Recording

Methods used for assessing and recording pupils' achievement, progress and needs in the Foundation Stage are very good, and in the rest of the school they are sound. They are efficient and

generally accurate. Systems are in place which record achievement and progress. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well understood by their class teachers, but the information from assessment is not yet used consistently across the school to track pupils' progress, and to assist in future curriculum planning.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is sound. Throughout the whole school it is suited to all pupils across the full age and ability range. It is generally broad and balanced and promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and prepares them for the next stage of their education. The provision for languages is a strength across the school.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

The quality of teaching and non-teaching staff is good. Overall, the teaching staff are sufficiently qualified for their roles and they are effectively deployed.

Resources for Learning

The quality of resources needed to support the teaching, learning and recreation of the pupils at all levels is sound. Resources are adequate, in quantity and quality and are well used. ICT provision is sound overall, but not enough computers are available in the Junior Department nor to support individual study in the Senior Department.

Libraries

The quality of library facilities is uneven. The senior library is unsatisfactory. It does not offer appropriate support to the curriculum and is not used effectively. The junior library provision is satisfactory, but its use as both library and staff room inevitably restricts access. The infant department library is good and its organisation and use are appropriate for pupils in this age range.

Premises and Accommodation

Overall, the buildings and accommodation and facilities provide a sound environment for learning. The school is situated on two sites, Baby Unicorns, the Infant and Senior Departments in one, and the Junior Department approximately a third of a mile away. Extensive developments have taken place during the last five years which have improved facilities significantly, and imaginative use has been made of all areas of the school.

Links with Parents and the Community

Links with parents and the community are very good and a strength of the school. This was reflected in the very positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaire completed by over three-quarters of the parents and in a meeting with a group of them. They expressed overwhelming support for nearly all areas of school life. A few concerns were expressed about the information that they received on their children's progress and the opportunities for discussing it and the extra-curricular activities provided for senior pupils. Inspection evidence demonstrates that parents have good opportunities to discuss their children's progress, although the quality of reports is inconsistent. The range and quality of the extra-curricular activities provided is appropriate for senior pupils.

Pupils' Personal Development

The school's provision for personal development is very good. Throughout the school very good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal, social and cultural development, which help them consolidate their system of spiritual beliefs and moral code.

Pastoral Care

The quality of the provision for pastoral care is very good. The school's pastoral, tutorial, support and guidance systems make a very positive contribution to the educational standards and personal growth achieved by the pupils. Overall, the quality of provision for pupils' welfare, including health and safety, is sound. However aspects of the measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and safety are unsatisfactory.

Governance and Management

The quality of leadership and management are sound overall, with some strengths and some weaknesses. The Managing and Education Directors have a clear vision for the ethos of the school as a caring community in which all individuals are greatly valued. This vision is shared by the whole community. Leadership is caring and compassionate. Management structures are in a transitional stage and are not always sufficiently defined to provide clear direction. Subject leadership is in the early stages of development through much of the school. However, this is not securely established to ensure consistent continuity across the curriculum. The very good quality of pastoral care provided by the committed, caring staff ensures that the schools' aims are well met.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

The achievement and quality in the activities provided is good. The programme provided is suitable and appropriate to the ages and abilities of the pupils. A satisfactory proportion of pupils and staff participate, and activities provide beneficial curriculum enrichment.

Progress Made by the School since its Last Inspection

This is the first time that the school has been inspected by ISI.

Compliance with the Regulations for Registration

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		It meets most of the requirements
4. Suitability of proprietors and staff		Yes
5. Premises and accommodation		It meets almost all of the requirements
6. Provision of information		Yes
7. Manner in which complaints are to be handled		Yes

Actions Required for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements

In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:

Attend to a number of health and safety issues as a matter of urgency. [Regulation 3.(4)]

Ensure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety. [Regulation 3.(5)]

Provide an additional washbasin in the Junior Department. [Regulation 5.(k)]

In addition to the actions set out above, the school is asked to address 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.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

The actions needed to comply fully with the regulatory requirements are specified in paragraph 1.20 of the report. The recommendations arising from this inspection that are considered the most important in respect of the school's continuing development are set out below.

Review management structures and curriculum links to ensure a consistent approach to all areas of school life, and in order to enhance continuity in pupils' learning.

Use assessment to monitor pupils' progress consistently and as a means to develop future planning.

Develop the senior library to provide effective support for the curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

Sancton Wood School was founded in 1976 as a primary school by its first headmistress. In 1979 an additional site was acquired and a Senior Department was opened. The Infant and Senior Departments are housed together and the Juniors are within easy walking distance. Recently the Baby Unicorns for children aged one and two was opened. The Infant Department comprises a nursery and reception class for children between the ages of three to five years and classes for pupils from five to seven years of age. Pupils from seven to eleven are part of the Junior Department, and the Senior Department is for those aged eleven to sixteen. The school is still family owned, and some of the family remain closely involved on a day-to-day basis. The school seeks to provide a broad, balanced education which caters for individual pupils' needs. This is set within a supportive family environment with a strong emphasis on tolerance and respect for the views and needs of others. The headmistress has been in post since 1998, and since September 2004 her role has developed. She has become director of education of Sancton Wood in addition to a separate school outside Cambridge, opened by the proprietors for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

The number on roll at the time of the inspection was 221. The Infant Department consists of the Foundation Stage with 53 pupils, 7 boys and 12 girls full-time, and 19 boys and 15 girls part-time. Also Years 1 and 2 with 24 pupils, 15 boys and 9 girls. The Junior Department of Years 3 to 6 consists of 72 pupils, 40 boys and 32 girls. The Senior Department of Years 7 to 11 has 72 pupils, 38 boys and 34 girls. The school has generous provision for bursaries and a competitive fee structure so that pupils come from widely diverse families, many of whom are new to independent education. A number come from within the city, but many also travel significant distances from surrounding areas. Six per cent of pupils come from ethnic minorities and most of them do not have English as their first language. Two girls and three boys have statements of SEN and the school has also identified an additional 33 pupils, 22 boys, 11 girls, who require additional help. A significant number of pupils receive financial assistance in the form of bursaries, sibling and staff discounts.

Entry is non-selective to the Baby Unicorns and nursery classes. For Reception and Years 1 and 2, pupils spend time in school to be observed to assess their ability to work within the ability band of the class. The majority of pupils transfer to the Junior Department at the age of seven, subject to satisfactory results in entrance tests. These comprise standardised tests in verbal reasoning, mathematics and a piece of factual or creative writing. Similar tests are used for entry to the Senior Department. Pupils' average ability is above that of the national average. A very few are below average and a significant number are well above.

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

Key Indicators

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

Subject		Most recent year		Average for the last three years	
		Level 4 or higher (%)	Level 5 or higher (%)	Level 4 or higher (%)	Level 5 or higher (%)
English	Boys	100	38	96	39
	Girls	100	43	100	65
	All	100	40	98	51
Mathematics	Boys	100	100	100	67
	Girls	100	43	100	45
	All	100	73	100	57
Science	Boys	100	100	100	71
	Girls	86	57	95	60
	All	93	80	98	66

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

Subject		2003	
		Level 5 or higher (%)	Level 6 or higher (%)
English	Boys	100	n/a
	Girls	100	50
	All	100	14
Mathematics	Boys	100	80
	Girls	100	50
	All	100	65
Science	Boys	100	80
	Girls	100	50
	All	100	65

2003 data only; no further data available.

GCSE

	Most recently completed Year 11			Average for the last three years		
	Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Entered for 5+ subjects (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Achieved 5+ @ A* - C (%)	73	100	87	66	80	73
Achieved 5+ @ A* - G (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Average score per candidate	56.5	67.8	60.1	54.2	52.5	53.5
Average score per entry	9.8	10.0	9.9	9.4	8.7	9.1

* Scoring is 8 for GCSE grade A*, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for grades A – G.

Attendance for Second First Half of Spring Term 2005

	Authorised	Unauthorised
Percentage absence	8.1	0

Exclusions Over the Previous 12 Months

Temporary exclusions	Permanent exclusions
0	0

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and Progress

Pupils achieve good standards throughout the school.

In the Foundation Stage, attainment and progress are good. Standards and progress are particularly good in knowledge and understanding of the world as well as personal and social development. By the end of Reception, most children, including those needing additional support, have successfully achieved the early learning goals. Many have already begun work on the first stage of the National Curriculum.

In the Infant Department attainment is good. By the age of 7 attainment and progress are good in English, mathematics and science. The majority of pupils transfer to the Junior Department.

In the Junior Department pupils' attainment is good. Attainment in national tests is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Achievement was particularly high in 2004 in mathematics. Evidently, pupils are very well prepared for these tests. The majority of pupils transfer to the Senior Department at the age of eleven.

Attainment in the Senior Department is usually good. GCSE performance over the last three years has been well above the national average for all maintained schools. In lessons and work, attainment is good in English, mathematics and languages, and high in art. Attainment is uneven in science.

An inconsistent approach to promoting sufficient challenge for the most able pupils restricts their attainment at times. Good practice which challenges able pupils was seen in mathematics and art in the Senior Department, and in many lessons in the Junior Department.

Pupils of all ages make good progress. The best progress in lessons was observed in the Junior Department. Pupils with SEN or EAL progress well.

Pupils of all ages are articulate and take part in discussions, putting their point of view effectively. They have good reading skills, and most pupils usually listen well. Pupils are numerate, although in many years opportunities for problem solving are insufficient so that these skills are less well developed. This, however, is an area of strength in the Junior Department. Pupils are generally creative in their art, particularly in the Senior Department. Their design skills are under-developed, as design technology (DT) is not taught. Presentation, handwriting and organisation of work in pupils' books are of a good quality. Much of the pupils' work on display is of a good standard. Pupils' ICT competence is good, and their athletic skills are developing well.

Pupils are well prepared academically for each stage of their education.

Quality of Pupils' Learning, Attitudes and Behaviour

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their personal development and behaviour are very good and make a major contribution to the quality of learning.

Pupils are generally competent learners. Most settle to their work quickly, efficiently and independently, responding well to their teachers. They are keen to ask and answer questions and generally sustain their concentration throughout lessons. They work well collaboratively.

Foundation Stage and Junior Department pupils demonstrate a strong sense of independence in organising themselves for work. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' independence is less well developed as they have limited opportunities in which they can take the initiative. Most pupils throughout the school are articulate, expressing their opinions successfully. The majority have good listening skills, showing respect for the views of others.

The quality of learning in lessons was usually good. On the few occasions when behaviour in lessons was unsatisfactory, the pace was too slow, tasks were not sufficiently challenging and pupils lost interest. However this was unusual and pupils generally gave of their best. In many subjects opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills are limited. Good practice, however, was observed in a Year 8 English class and all aspects of art lessons in the Senior Department. In addition, the unsatisfactory senior library and the limited access to the library in the Junior Department impede pupils' ability to develop their independent learning skills.

Pupils form good, constructive relationships with one another and with their teachers. One pupil was quick to provide support for another who did not have English as a first language. He offered a possible explanation for a word used in order to support his peer. Pupils take the initiative in class when asking searching questions of their teachers to make sure that they understand. This was clearly shown in a biology lesson when Year 10 pupils kept asking questions about photosynthesis until they were clear in their minds about the processes. They are confident to ask for help when necessary.

Pupils' behaviour reflects the caring ethos of the school. They are friendly and generally considerate, often greeting their teachers. Pupils of different ages are seen together, enhancing the family community of the school. Pupils move around the compact buildings in a sensible manner. They clearly enjoy the school day.

Attendance

The level of pupils' attendance is good, enabling them to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school. Authorised absences in the second half of the spring term include a significant proportion of pupils who were unable to attend school because of severe weather conditions. Although daily registers are properly completed, they are not always returned promptly to an agreed central location. They remain in classrooms so that they are not easily accessible in case of emergency evacuation. An appropriate system is in place for late arrivals and for checking absentees.

Pupils are punctual in arriving at school, but there is little sense of urgency about arriving at, or beginning lessons on time.

The schools' admission and attendance registers comply with statutory requirements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. In the lessons observed almost all the teaching was at least sound; in nearly three-quarters it was good or better, and in nearly a third it was very good and on occasions excellent.

The best teaching was seen in the Junior Department, and in art, languages and mathematics in the Senior Department. A significant amount of teaching was of a very good standard in the Senior Department, but in a few lessons classroom management was not as effective as it should be and teachers' expectations for behaviour were not high enough.

The best teaching was characterised by clear objectives and the setting of a brisk working pace. This pace was sustained by effective use of time targets so that pupils remain focused on the task, eager to complete and start something fresh. This was seen in a Year 7 art lesson when pupils were encouraged to complete one experimental design for a book cover in a limited time, and to begin another which encouraged them to extend their ideas and improve their standards. Also in a Year 4 science lesson, pupils were set clear time targets to complete their experiments to test friction and they worked quickly and efficiently. At times in the Junior Department teacher exposition at the start of the lessons was too long and pupils were restrained from starting their work, although they were ready to begin.

Teachers know their pupils extremely well. They understand the needs of most of the pupils, including those with SEN or EAL. Great care is taken to ensure that tasks and resources are carefully prepared and well matched to meet the needs of these pupils. Lesson plans are frequently accompanied by excellent advice sheets for teachers which identify needs and suggest suitable teaching strategies. In the Junior Department additional tasks are provided in many subjects to extend the most able pupils, enabling them to achieve successfully. This is also true in mathematics, languages and art in the Senior Department. However, on occasions limited opportunities for challenge are provided for the most able pupils in other subjects in the Senior Department and in Years 1 and 2. Expectations are not always high enough and pupils' attainment is inevitably restricted.

Nearly all teachers are knowledgeable, and their specialist skills give much value to their teaching and to their pupils' achievement and enjoyment. All teachers are unfailingly patient, giving attention and time to individuals. Pupils and teachers enjoy very good relationships, which enable pupils to ask for help when necessary. Teachers plan lessons carefully, linking them to schemes of work.

Much regular testing takes place, and pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well understood by their class teachers. However, this assessment information is not used consistently to track pupils' progress nor used to help in planning subsequent work in all subjects.

Teachers usually organise time and resources efficiently. They use a variety of teaching strategies to enhance their teaching and their pupils' learning. Homework complements relevant classwork and matches pupils' needs.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for teaching?

Yes.

Assessment and Recording

Methods used for assessing and recording pupils' achievement, progress and needs in the Foundation Stage are very good and in the rest of the school they are sound. They are efficient and generally accurate. Systems are in place which record achievement and progress. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well understood by their class teachers, but the information

from assessment is not yet used consistently across the school to track pupils' progress, and to assist in future curriculum planning.

In the Infant Department the analysis of test results is not yet fully developed. In the Junior Department, assessment through standardised tests is thorough, and results are used effectively in aspects of English. However, assessments of pupils' ongoing work is informal and variable, and these are insufficient to track pupils' progress consistently. The frequency of testing in the Junior Department limits the time available for teaching. Application is equally inconsistent in the Senior Department. Individual departments have their own separate continuous assessment systems.

Attainment is first assessed informally at the Foundation Stage on entry. Subsequent entry into the Infant Department is preceded by assessments in reading, mental mathematics and written work. In the Junior Department, national tests are taken at the end of Year 6 in addition to a rotation of annual standardised tests.

On entry to the Senior Department pupils take a range of standardised tests which are analysed by Midyis. They are recorded on pupil files, which are maintained throughout the Senior Department. Annual examination results are also recorded. A good framework is in place and test results are recorded systematically.

The use of this wealth of assessment information to inform curriculum planning is not consistent across the school. For example, Midyis tests provide useful information about a pupil's innate ability and potential, but they are not used to set and record targets for pupils and departments, although they are discussed and analysed in staff meetings. Records show no audit of achievement to support teaching.

In the Senior Department, module tests are not recorded centrally but are left to individual teachers. Tracking in art, drama, ICT and mathematics is effective within those departments.

Provision for the assessment and tracking of pupils with SEN is highly effective. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are thoroughly detailed and data from assessments are used to set targets and inform teaching.

In discussion, pupils felt that they understood the assessment criteria. Senior Department pupils were aware of National Curriculum levels as well as their own levels, and pupils in Years 10 and 11 also understood the examination grading system.

The school marking policy gives a generalised overview of desirable procedures. However, it gives no specific instructions on a unified system of marking across the school, and therefore systems are inconsistent across the departments. Most marking is satisfactory, and good practice is widespread in the Infant and Junior departments. It is helpful, constructive and detailed. In the Senior Department it is inconsistent. Sometimes it is perfunctory, giving little guidance on possible areas for improvement. However, good practice was seen in mathematics where marking gave positive, detailed and specific comments which enabled pupils to progress.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is sound. Throughout the whole school it is suited to all pupils across the full age and ability range. It is generally broad and balanced, and promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and prepares them for the next stage of their education. In the Foundation Stage the balanced curriculum covers the national early learning goals for children of five years of age.

The provision for languages is a strength across the school. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, Spanish is taught from Reception and French from Year 2. Latin is added in Year 7.

and German in Year 9. In the Junior Department the teaching time is short and the allocation for subjects is erratic: insufficient time is allowed for geography, technology is absent; some of the maths lessons are too long and personal social and health education (PSHE) is not timetabled.

Within each section of the school the curriculum is well planned for continuity and progression, but planning for progression between stages is inconsistent: it happens in some subjects but not in all. Planning always includes different tasks to match the needs of those pupils who need additional support. Sometimes challenges for the most able are also provided, but this practice is inconsistent across the school.

All pupils, including those who need additional support, have equal access to the curriculum, including those pupils with visual impairment, enabling them to learn and make good progress. The provision for pupils who need support with their learning is very good and a strength of the school. The combination of specialist support teaching, good tracking systems, small classes and dedicated and caring teaching is very effective. Pupils with statements have annual reviews. Parents are kept well informed at all stages of the process. Assistance within lessons in the Infant and Junior Departments is very good, although on occasions pupils have to leave key lessons for individual support.

In the Senior Department several pupils have individual support in core subjects and EAL pupils receive help from specialised teachers. A few individuals are identified as gifted and talented and their needs are met by a combination of fast tracking and extension work. However, the curriculum is insufficiently developed and enriched to address the needs of other more able pupils.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of activities. These include a good number of clubs and educational visits.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the curriculum?

Yes.

Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

The quality of teaching and non-teaching staff is good. Overall the committed teaching staff are sufficiently qualified for the roles they are required to undertake and are effectively deployed. In the Infant and Junior Departments they form cohesive teams, demonstrating good communication and promoting the positive ethos of the school. In the Senior Department, where the majority of staff work part-time, it is harder for them to work as a team, although individual commitment to the school remains high.

Teaching staff are effectively deployed within the departments. Younger pupils' learning is enhanced by some senior teachers who also work in the Junior Department. Full-time music and PE specialists teach throughout the school. The systems for the part-time staff to share work in the Infant Department are highly effective. Teachers know their pupils well and work together to create a caring environment.

Classroom assistants in the Infant Department play a significant support role in supporting pupils. Staff to pupil ratios are good throughout the school, enabling pupils to receive individual attention. Ratios for children under five years of age meet current guidelines. Support staff help successfully to integrate visually impaired pupils into all aspects of school life.

The majority of staff have job descriptions outlining their responsibilities, although the role of the subject leaders has yet to be formalised in writing. Induction systems for new staff are effective. No NQT teachers are employed. A sound start has been made in producing a staff

handbook. A day book in each department which informs staff of alterations to daily routines and aids communication, is circulated and easily accessible.

The policy for professional development is appropriate and the amount spent in the last year has been adequate. Early years' support staff benefit from training and material provided by the Local Authority Early Years' Partnership. Teacher appraisal has been effectively implemented and training needs have been identified. It is planned to develop appropriate monitoring for administration and other non-teaching staff. The school is well supported by hard working secretarial and maintenance staff on both school sites.

The school has complied with its duty to carry out criminal record and other checks on its new employees.

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

Yes.

Resources for Learning

The quality of resources which are needed to support the teaching, learning and recreation of the pupils at all levels is sound. They are adequate in quantity and quality and are used effectively.

A designated computer suite is sited in the Senior Department. However, this is quite cramped and in much demand from the whole school. ICT provision is sound for the Infant Department, and good use is made of computers as a cross-curricular tool for learning. Insufficient computers are available for the effective use of ICT within the Junior Department curriculum. Provision for senior ICT lessons is just adequate, but for senior pupils who need ICT support for the other subjects it is unsatisfactory.

Staff appreciate the significant increase in the provision of resources over the last few years. Storage for resources is limited, although staff make best use of all facilities available. There are minor shortcomings in subject areas.

Libraries

The quality of library facilities is uneven. The senior library is unsatisfactory. It does not offer appropriate support to the curriculum and is not used effectively. The junior library is satisfactory, but its use as both library and staff room inevitably restricts access. The infant library is good and its organisation and use are appropriate for pupils in this age range.

The senior library room and its location are good, but the range, availability, quality and accessibility of library stock are insufficient and do not support pupils' attainment, progress and the quality of their learning. No arrangements exist for management of the library. Books are not catalogued nor has a system for the issue of books been established. ICT is not available for pupils' independent learning.

Staff and pupils make very limited use of the library. The school has identified the need for its future development.

The quality, quantity and range of fiction and non-fiction books in the junior library are satisfactory and offer appropriate support to the curriculum. However, the dual function of the room as both staff room and library inevitably restricts its use. Spontaneous use of the library is very limited, and pupils do not take part in its organisation. Books are well displayed and carefully organised, and pupils benefit from a regular timetabled library lesson. Supervision by class

teachers of borrowing works well. Collections of books for particular topics are withdrawn from the library for ease of access and are used effectively in the classroom.

The quality of the infant library is good. An appropriate range of good non-fiction books, supplemented by topic books of similar quality and a good range of fiction, including picture books, is available in infant classrooms. They offer good support to key areas of the curriculum. Books are well displayed in a bright and attractive environment. Good use is made of the limited space in a small room, part of which forms a main thoroughfare. Library use is good and appropriate for pupils of this age. Books are classified and colour coded for ease of access. Pupils' enthusiasm for reading is fostered well through events such as the infant and junior book weeks and visits by authors.

Premises and Accommodation

Overall the buildings and accommodation and facilities provide a sound environment for learning.

The school is situated on two sites, Baby Unicorns, the Infant and Senior Departments in one, and the Junior Department in rented accommodation, approximately half a mile away. Extensive developments have taken place during the last five years which have improved facilities significantly, and imaginative use has been made of all areas of the school. Planning permission is being sought to implement a roof extension in the new building to create a large Arts Centre.

The multi-purpose hall is a useful resource for infant PE, music, drama and lunches for senior and infant pupils. Resources include a small kitchen, storage, a good sound system and mobile staging. The multiple uses of this facility impose considerable timetable constraints.

The hall and outdoor play area are adequate for the Foundation Stage and Infant PE lessons. Very good provision for PE is made for junior and senior pupils at Kelsey Kerridge Sports Hall, Parkside Pools and Fenner's playing fields.

The number of classrooms in the Junior Department is appropriate to the ages of the pupils, although their small size makes practical activities in science, art and music difficult. The dual use of the staffroom as a library imposes timetable constraints on its use. The Senior Department building has dedicated accommodation for art, ICT and science. It is difficult for the Junior Department pupils to access the IT suite and this has an impact on their attainment in this subject.

Outdoor play areas are sound. The playgrounds have significant areas covered by a safety surface. The infant play area has a good range of play equipment and the carved 'dragon' is a feature of the school. The junior playground includes a memorial garden to the school's founder and contains a small amphitheatre, which is well used and much appreciated by the staff and children.

Areas for office and staff rooms are of limited size, but are well kept and adequate for the numbers using them. Provision for pupils who are unwell is satisfactory. Storage space across the school is limited, although new cupboards have been fitted in several areas to alleviate this problem. The school is clean, well maintained and enhanced by good quality pupils' work, which is attractively displayed

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

The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:

- (a) Provide an additional washbasin in the Junior Department. [Regulation 5.(k)].

Links with Parents and the Community

Links with parents and the community are very good and a strength of the school. This was reflected in the very positive response to the pre-inspection questionnaire completed by over three-quarters of the parents and in a meeting with a group of them. They expressed overwhelming support for their children's attainment, progress, the teaching and guidance they received and the high standards of behaviour promoted in the school. In addition, they welcomed the opportunities for them to be involved and the way their complaints were handled. A few parents had concerns about the information that they received on their children's progress and the opportunities for discussing it, and they were also concerned about the range of extra-curricular activities provided for senior pupils.

Inspection evidence demonstrates that parents have good opportunities to discuss their children's progress, although the quality of reports is inconsistent. Some are informative and comprehensive, while others are brief and give little advice on areas for improvement or information about work undertaken. The range and quality of the extra-curricular activities provided is appropriate for senior pupils.

Staff in Baby Unicorns give daily written feedback. Parents receive satisfactory full termly reports. In addition, Years 7 to 11 have an autumn assessment summary. References are also provided for Year 11 in preparation for college entry.

A variety of formal parent-teacher meetings is held to discuss pupils' progress, and parents at the inspection meeting felt that staff are easily accessible if they have any concerns. Reading records and homework diaries contain much useful information, and are used as a means of daily home/school communication. Regular, friendly newsletters give details of school events and visits, and celebrate pupils' achievements. Contact is also maintained through email, the school web site and 'The Unicorn' magazine.

An active Parents' Association organises social events and raises money to provide extra equipment for the school. Parents in the Junior and Infant Departments attend assemblies. Parental support at other special events throughout the school is appreciated.

Strong links have been developed with the local and wider communities. Much use is made of local facilities, and a strong relationship with the local church of St. Paul's enhances pupils' experiences. The local parish priest regularly takes assemblies and the community police liaison officer and the ambulance service visit the school. Workshops with a local dance company, 'Bodywork', enrich the creative curriculum and the infants benefited from a visit by an Indian dance troupe.

Pupils are involved directly in the local community in a wide variety of ways. Years 7 and 8 pupils regularly produce illustrated articles for a county careers paper. Senior school pupils help with a Christmas lunch for local senior citizens and work with handicapped children. The senior choir performs at Thaxted church and they have also sung at Ely Cathedral. The junior choir performs locally for the Salvation Army. Pupils are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and work hard for charities. Money has been raised for local projects such as the children's hospice, and in the wider community pupils have supported the Tsunami appeal and 'Operation Christmas Child'.

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

Yes.

Does the school meet the regulatory requirements for the manner in which complaints are to be handled?

Yes.

PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PASTORAL CARE

Pupils' Personal Development

The school's provision for personal development is very good. Throughout the school very good opportunities are provided for pupils' personal, social and cultural development which help them consolidate a system of spiritual beliefs and a moral code.

Provision for spiritual development is very good. Regular and inclusive assemblies help pupils to develop an understanding of their own and others' beliefs and values. Major festivals are celebrated in nearby St Paul's Church and the vicar is a regular visitor to both the Senior and Junior Departments. Very good opportunities are given in many areas of the curriculum including religious studies (RS), for pupils to develop spiritual awareness through their responses to music, art and poetry. The outdoor environment is also a source of inspiration; in the Junior Department pupils frequently enjoy lessons such as drama and science in their 'outdoor classroom'.

Provision for moral education is very good. The values of mutual respect and courtesy are central to the school's ethos. Throughout the school, staff provide clear moral leadership and pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. In the Senior Department a well structured PSHE programme, involving a weekly timetabled lesson, provides good planned opportunities for the development of moral education, and an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Elections are held for a head boy and girl.

PSHE is not timetabled in the Junior Department, although a sense of moral responsibility is nurtured very well. Weekly house meetings provide a useful forum and good opportunities arise in assemblies, RS lessons and across the curriculum. In the Infant Department moral issues are explored in ways to suit the ages of the pupils through a planned programme of PSHE lessons and during circle times.

Cultural development is very good. Pupils are offered valuable opportunities within the curriculum and through an extensive and very stimulating programme of extra-curricular visits to develop an awareness of their own and other cultures. In RS lessons pupils learn about important world faiths, and their work is enriched by visits to centres of worship. Infant Department pupils learn about important family festivals around the world. Visits to art galleries, museums and theatres are frequent. The whole school enjoyed a concert by the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican Centre in London. Senior Department pupils studying the history and poetry of the First World War gained valuable insights through a visit to Ypres.

An awareness of those less fortunate is nurtured through a broad range of charitable fund-raising opportunities. As well as generous support for major charities, pupils frequently choose charities with more local or personal appeal.

Provision for pupils' social development is very good. A very strong sense of community is evident throughout the school, and pupils are encouraged frequently to support younger members of the school community. For example, Year 7 pupils help Year 6 to make a happy transition to the Senior Department by participating in a reassuring question and answer session. Older pupils visit the Infant Department to help with reading as part of their Duke of Edinburgh course. Year 11 pupils assume positions of responsibility as prefects and house captains. From Year 7 onwards representatives from each form serve on the school council.

Self-reliance is encouraged in younger pupils as they assume responsibilities appropriate to their age. Year 6 pupils assist in the smooth running of the Junior Department by performing various regular duties. Year 2 pupils serve as library monitors and in the Foundation Stage children

confirm their arrival at school by identifying their picture or name card and placing it in the appropriate place.

Throughout the school pupils benefit through their participation in a broad programme of extra-curricular activities ranging from chess to karate and including a popular ICT club.

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

Yes.

Pastoral Care

The quality of the provision for pastoral care is very good. The school's pastoral, tutorial, support and guidance systems make a very positive contribution to the educational standards and personal growth achieved by the pupils. Detailed monitoring of academic progress and personal development enables the school to provide effective support, advice and guidance. The careers education programme in the Senior Department is very good. Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are in place and are very effective.

A satisfactory system is in place to monitor pupils' progress. It works particularly well in the Junior Department. Homework diaries provide a useful channel of communication between school and parents for whom the class teacher is the first point of contact and the key figure in the system. Rewards, such as house points or merits, provide valued incentives, and sanctions such as white slips or detentions provide effective deterrents.

The strength of the system is the staff who know their pupils very well. They are always accessible to them and give generously of their free time to help and advise. The quality of staff-pupil relationships is generally high and it is appreciated by the pupils. The pastoral care of SEN pupils is particularly good.

Careers education forms part of the PSHE programme from Year 7. Structured lessons supported by outside speakers and other relevant information provide a comprehensive and effective initial careers education. Personal careers' profiles are produced by the pupils in Years 7 to 9 and updated annually. In Years 10 and 11 the local Connexions office provides advice and interviews for pupils and their parents, which enable well informed choices to be made by pupils about life beyond the school. Work experience or shadowing is organised in Year 10.

Policies contain clear expectations of good discipline and behaviour, and any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with promptly and constructively. The anti-bullying policy is detailed and sanctions are rigorously applied. Instances are almost unknown. The ethos laid down by the school's founder remains strong. Pupils accept and applaud it as something which makes their school special. In general, they consider that the rules are reasonable and the sanctions fair. Any inconsistency in their application is minor.

Welfare, including Health & Safety

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, including health and safety, is sound. Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health are satisfactory. All necessary child protection measures have been taken and are effective. Although many measures to reduce risk from fire have been taken, the present risk assessment with regard to fire safety is unsatisfactory. Arrangements to ensure a healthy, safe environment are generally effective, although some deficiencies remain. The school complies with most of the health and safety regulations.

Nearly all the staff have received basic training in first aid. Three fully trained first aiders provide good cover, although none of them works at the Junior Department. Minor accidents are dealt with adequately and arrangements for the storage, administration and recording of medication

are satisfactory. Arrangements for pupils who are taken ill at school are adequate. The records of pupils with medical problems are comprehensive. All staff are aware of pupils' needs and have received relevant training where necessary. As a result of parental requests, hot meals are provided twice a week in the Junior and Senior Departments. These are pleasant and nutritious.

A written policy on child protection issues is known and understood by staff. Four fully trained staff act as child protection officers and a fifth will be trained shortly. All other staff have received recent training. A confidential system exists for logging concerns, and valuable informal contact with the local director of child guidance enables anxieties to be shared.

All fire safety equipment is in place and is maintained regularly by external contractors. Regular fire practices are held and recorded. However, the Fire Safety Log is inadequate.

A comprehensive health and safety policy exists and the issue is a standing item on the agenda of the weekly management committee meeting. Much work has been done, but awareness of health and safety issues among staff is inconsistent and insufficient. The atmosphere of calm and the good behaviour of the pupils around the school, however, reduce the potential for accidents.

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

The school meets most of the regulatory requirements, but there are serious shortfalls. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:

- (b) Ensure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure a satisfactory level of fire safety. [Regulation 3.(5)]
- (c) Attend to a number of health and safety issues as a matter of urgency. [Regulation 3.(4)]

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Governance and Management

The quality of leadership and management are sound overall with some strengths and some weaknesses. The managing and education directors have a clear vision for the ethos of the school, a caring community in which all individuals are greatly valued. This vision is shared by the whole community. Leadership is caring and compassionate. Management structures are in a transitional stage and are not always sufficiently defined to provide clear direction within the school. Subject leadership is in the early stages of development across much of the school. It is not established securely enough to ensure consistent continuity across the curriculum. The very good quality of pastoral care provided by the committed, caring staff ensures that the school's aims are well met.

The commitment of the family, who own the school, is recognised in the new developments within the school and the time and energy given by one of the family who is the managing director. The director of education is appointed with responsibility for the educational direction of the school. The latter role has been extended recently. It now involves additional oversight of education at both Sancton Wood, and another school recently opened by the school's proprietors. Department heads take day-to-day responsibility for their sections and are responsible to the director of education. In the absence of the director of education, who spends a significant proportion of the week at the other school, the managing director takes on the overall management of all aspects of school. At times this leads to some confusion in understanding the roles and responsibilities of senior management.

The management committee consists of the managing director, the director of education and the heads of the separate departments and the school administrator. They meet weekly, as do the heads of the departments. Regular meetings are held within all departments. A significant proportion of the staff are part-time. In the Senior Department weekly staff meetings rotate to provide opportunities for as many people to be involved as possible in discussions. Concerns relating to individual pupils are discussed at these meetings, reflecting the caring ethos of the school.

A great deal of work has been undertaken to improve communication across the school. Comprehensive policies, schemes of work and procedures for all areas of school life have been developed, and management structures have been more clearly defined. Informal contacts across the departments are frequent. Formal meetings in subject areas have been introduced, which are providing opportunities to begin the development of a consistent approach to the curriculum and assessment across the whole school. However, subject leaders do not have job descriptions, and they are not always clear about their roles and responsibilities. This lack of clarity impedes effective monitoring of the curriculum, and the sharing of good practice in order to raise standards higher. This has been identified as an area of development by the school.

Day-to-day management of the school is generally efficient, supported by the recently developed staff handbook. The school is well supported by the administrative staff, who play a vital role through their friendly and positive contact with the whole community.

All staff have been involved in evaluating the areas for improvement within the school. This has been the starting point for the development of the school improvement plan. This is a useful document which is comprehensive in its details for improving many areas, although the priorities for whole school development are not clearly identified. The school recognises that further strategic planning will identify these areas and link them clearly to staff professional needs, as well as evaluating the impact of development on teaching and the raising of the quality of pupils' learning.

ACHIEVEMENT AND QUALITY IN SUBJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Infant Department

The Foundation Stage

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. Excellent teamwork amongst the staff is a notable strength. Children are taught in the pre-school facility known as 'Baby Unicorns', the Nursery and the Reception class. They attain satisfactory standards in relation to their capabilities. Standards are particularly good in personal, social and emotional development and knowledge and understanding of the world. Progress is good in all areas of learning, which stems from good teaching and good coverage of the curriculum.

Children enter the 'Baby Unicorns' department at the age of one year and stay until they are three years old, when they transfer to the Nursery. They settle happily and learn to take part in activities, so that by the time they transfer they use words and gestures to communicate with adults and each other. They are often curious about the world around them and eager to explore colours, patterns and textures when sticking paper shapes or playing with construction bricks. Children have very good opportunities for indoor and outdoor play, and are nurtured well in a friendly, welcoming environment. Adults who care for them work as an excellent team to provide a safe, reassuring and purposeful environment in which very good teaching and learning prevail. Very careful planning and record-keeping aid learning effectively and staff make regular observations of children's successes. Daily reports for each child are given to parents after each session and these maintain strong links between home and pre-school.

The provision is led and managed effectively, and future plans aim to improve facilities by providing a sleep room for the very youngest children.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, children attain high standards in personal, social and emotional development and their progress is good. They develop self-respect and become increasingly independent. They are courteous to each other and towards staff. Children were observed sharing toys and equipment confidently. They play co-operatively, take turns and deal with their toileting and hygiene needs well. At lunchtime children display good manners when at table. They celebrate cultural and religious events; for example, the Chinese New Year. Children in the Nursery particularly enjoy taking part in the parachute activity in which they increase their personal and social skills.

Children achieve satisfactory standards in communication, language and literacy and they make good progress. They display good listening skills and speak confidently. Children use suitable language to express feelings and ideas, as well as to question when something is unclear. Children in the Nursery were observed having animated conversations in the 'Baby Clinic' and discussing nappies, bottles and babies, prompted by the very good guidance provided by the nursery nurse. Children in the Reception class recognise and name letters of the alphabet and they write their own names by the time they reach Year 1. They display sound pencil control and some good progress is made through the copy-writing and handwriting practise. As a result, many children form letters well and are confident learners. They ask questions and respond eagerly to prompts about stories, such as '*The Bad-Tempered Ladybird*'. Parents are encouraged to share in their children's learning through daily reading work based on the school's reading scheme, which helps to promote children's literacy skills and maintain strong home-school links.

Children make sound progress in mathematical development. By the end of the Foundation Stage they count, recognise and use numbers to 20. They talk about shapes, use positional language and take part in number games and songs. In the Nursery, children are encouraged to use appropriate language when counting, sharing or playing games. They work with numbers during practical activities, such as cookery, when they count out ingredients and utensils for making apple pies. Children in Reception count up the number of spots on toy ladybirds and sequence numbers. They understand the concept of time when they discuss day and night with their teacher, and they know the difference between mid-day and mid-night. Children fill measuring cups with water and weigh dolls on the scales.

Children's attainment and progress in knowledge and understanding of the world is high. They talk about their families and their significant events. Children in the Nursery learn about healthy eating and discover how to make sandwiches and porridge through practical activities. They see how plants and flowers grow and they learn about the life cycles of small creatures. Reception children are encouraged to explore and select materials and construction equipment from the apparatus available. They explore the natural world of mini-beasts by looking at the similarities and differences of insects such as ladybirds. Resources for learning are labelled and easily accessible to the children. Computers are used well to extend children's understanding of technology and numeracy.

Standards of attainment in physical development are satisfactory and children make sound progress. Children move confidently and imaginatively with increasing control and co-ordination. They listened intently to instructions and, as a result, built up increasing body control and movement. Nursery children took part in a well-organised outdoor play session. They were able to run confidently, move across surfaces, such as wooden bridges, and climb up and over the large wooden dragon in the playground. Children in the Reception class are challenged well to improve their skills in throwing, catching and jumping. Fine motor skills are developed suitably and a variety of construction and malleable materials are handled with confidence. The most capable children exhibit good pencil and scissor control by the time they reach the end of Reception.

Attainment and progress in creative development are sound, with some good standards achieved by the most capable. Children explore colour, texture and shape eagerly. They have good opportunities to bake, paint and take part in imaginative play. A very good cooking lesson with the Nursery children was seen where concentration levels were well-developed and children displayed good ability to use tools for mashing avocados and apples. In the Reception class children enjoy creating two- and three-dimensional models from playdough.

Other Aspects of the Foundation Stage

Throughout the Foundation Stage the quality of learning is good and sometimes very good. Children are enthusiastic and well-motivated. They concentrate very well and show increasing independence, which is encouraged from entry into school. All children settle in quickly each morning and are happy to talk to adults and each other.

Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall, and often very good. Members of staff have a very good understanding of all areas of learning. Planning and preparation are thorough, which leads to a good balance between formal and practical work. Expectations are high and staff work hard as an excellent team to promote the education of the children. All adults are aware of children's needs and have a very friendly and approachable style, as well as a calm manner and a sense of humour. Children with SEN or EAL are supported closely to help them achieve success. Good praise, plenty of encouragement and frequent reassurance are used extensively to help increase children's confidence and develop their independence.

The Foundation Stage is led and managed well. Curricular planning is thorough and learning is well organised within the six areas of learning. Planning is carefully linked to record-keeping. Assessment is very good, with records frequently updated and used to aid planning. All members of staff are involved in this process and the information collected is used effectively to complete children's individual Foundation Stage profiles. Parents are well informed of their children's progress through daytime contact, as well as through parents' evenings and an end-of-year report.

English

Pupils achieve good standards. Their attainment in reading is good. A strong focus on developing a love of reading encourages pupils to read both fiction and non-fiction 'real' books as soon as possible. A good range of books is available in the classroom, including collections related to topic work being undertaken such as the Tudors, and books made at home by the pupils. Non-fiction books are used to gather information on such topics as minibeasts for Year 2.

Pupils' attainment in writing is good. At the end of Year 2 they are able to write at length in a variety of genre, and work is often cross-curricular and linked to topics in other areas of the curriculum. Year 2 wrote letters to Queen Mary whilst she was imprisoned in the Tower of London, as if they were Princess Elizabeth. However, insufficient opportunities exist for pupils to write creatively enabling them to become 'real authors'. Pupils observe the conventions of writing and spell high frequency words matched to their reading ability, and make constructive use of simple dictionaries. Handwriting is developing into a good cursive joined style.

Overall, pupils' progress, including those who need additional help or with EAL, is good. However, pupils' progress in written work in some lessons is restricted, as insufficient opportunity exists for appropriate individual learning and challenge.

Most pupils have very good speaking and listening skills. Pupils are listened to attentively by teachers, and in turn they listen carefully to their teachers and each other. Less able pupils are encouraged to contribute ideas and the more able are challenged to extend their vocabulary and explain ideas in detail.

The quality of pupils' learning and behaviour is good. Pupils are competent learners who use a variety of learning strategies to advance their learning. They are enthusiastic and well-motivated, they work quietly and ask questions for clarification. Work is well presented.

The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan thoroughly. Pupils are well-supported by specific praise for their achievements. However, written tasks are often very prescriptive and open-ended tasks are not always provided, particularly for more able pupils, which limits their progress and attainment. A significant number of lessons lack pace as pupils spend too long sitting on the carpet in a plenary session, and an over-reliance on worksheets restricts attainment. Marking is conscientious and consistent. Regular assessments are made and national tests are moderated internally at the end of Year 2. However analysis of assessment data and individual targets are not yet in place. ICT is used effectively to extend learning opportunities.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The role of subject co-ordinator is in the early stages of development. Co-ordinator files are embryonic, but are developing well. Monitoring is done informally and through discussion with colleagues. Resources are sound and are well used.

Mathematics

Pupils achieve good standards. They make good progress and increase their skills well in number, shape, space and measure. Pupils add and subtract two-digit numbers accurately. They understand the concept of 'more' and 'less than' and can double three- and four-digit numbers confidently. During a Year 2 lesson about money, pupils displayed good skills when calculating amounts and they knew where to place the decimal point to show pounds and pence. The most capable pupils are very confident when using numbers up to 1000 during mental agility sessions. Pupils in Year 1 recognise, name and know the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes such as squares, rectangles and cubes. They know that number squares are useful to help them identify sequences and patterns when working with numbers up to 40. Problem solving skills are not as well developed as they might be because opportunities for pupils to conduct their own investigations and find out for themselves are limited.

The quality of learning is good and pupils are usually well-motivated and enthusiastic. Behaviour is good and pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate well and contribute well to discussions.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have high expectations of behaviour. Work is marked regularly and teachers use assessment information to assist with planning. This works best for SEN pupils because these groups are particularly well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and, as a result, they achieve well in number work. The sound range of resources is used efficiently to aid learning, and numeracy skills are promoted well in other subjects, such as science and ICT.

Leadership and management are sound. The role of the subject leader, however, is not yet fully established in terms of monitoring the standards and progress of pupils across the infant department. Results of national tests which are marked internally are not analysed by the subject leader as a means to identify areas of improvement. This has been recognised as an area for development.

Science

Pupils achieve good standards. They make good progress and know about life processes and living things. They find out about the life cycles of mini-beasts, such as frogs, woodlice and butterflies, and they understand that small creatures have different habitats. They particularly enjoy finding out about snails and they use numeracy skills well to help them study the length of slime trails. Recording skills are good, so that by the time they reach the end of Year 2,

many pupils set out the results of their investigations clearly and neatly, showing good literacy skills. Pupils know about materials and their properties. They classify substances such as plastic, wood and metal. They know about healthy eating and understand that certain types of food give them energy and help them grow.

Learning and behaviour are good. Pupils are well motivated and keen to participate in all activities, practical work, and discussions. They answer questions and express their ideas with confidence. Pupils have good skills and know the correct procedures for a variety of scientific activities. They co-operate with each other and collaborate well, displaying good relationships.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned carefully. Teachers have high expectations and challenge most groups of pupils to do well, although the most capable pupils are not always given enough opportunities for independent learning or to conduct their own research. Nevertheless, pupils who need extra help are very well supported by teachers and assistants. Marking is up-to-date and used effectively to assist future planning. Resources are sound and the library, although limited in size, has a useful range of appropriate books. Computers are used effectively to help pupils record their work.

Leadership and management are sound. The new subject leader has great expertise, but has only just been appointed and has not yet had time to conduct an audit of resources or review the scheme of work and policy.

Short Subject Reports

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

Art

Two lessons were observed. Pupils' sketchbooks and work on display were scrutinised and a discussion held with the subject co-ordinator.

Teaching was good, and lessons were well planned with clear learning objectives. Work in Year 1 was effectively linked to their seaside topic. Year 2 were given the opportunity to respond to Klimt's '*Tree of Life*'. However, although skills are well taught, few opportunities exist for the development of individual creativity and independent learning.

Learning and behaviour were very good. Pupils showed interest and enthusiasm and related well to their teachers. Less able pupils were well supported, but the more able lacked challenge and their attainment was restricted.

Provision is satisfactory. Good use is made of available resources including a designated art room. The sink is too high to enable pupils to develop independent skills by washing their own paint brushes, and this has been identified as an area for improvement by the school. Art teaching is well supported by an assistant. ICT is used effectively.

History/ Geography

Two history lessons were observed, a range of pupil's work on display and in books was scrutinised, and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinators.

Teaching was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, high expectations and plan effectively. Much of the work is topic based and cross-curricular links are effectively used. For example, Year 1 discussed holidays at the seaside and located venues on a map of the UK before going on to discuss the differences between holidays now and in the past.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning were very good and this contributed effectively to their progress. Pupils were keen to answer questions and to share their knowledge.

Provision is satisfactory. Policies and schemes of work are in place and appropriate resources, including ICT, support these areas of the curriculum. Relevant educational visits extend the pupils' experiences.

Information and Communication Technology

One lesson was observed and pupils' books were scrutinised.

The quality of teaching was good. Planning appropriately follows the nationally recognised scheme of work. Pupils have good opportunities to use ICT and they learn appropriate skills. Good use is made of computers as a cross-curricular tool for word processing and artwork.

Learning and behaviour were good. Pupils were well-motivated and sustained good levels of concentration. The most capable pupils were competent learners who demonstrated very positive attitudes and enthusiasm. Pupils worked together co-operatively, and the relationships between teachers and pupils were good.

Resources are sound. The school has a computer suite and one computer in each classroom. All are networked, but pupils do not yet have access to a digital camera to help them extend their creative skills.

Physical Education

No lessons were observed, but departmental documentation was considered.

The school provides an appropriate curriculum for pupils which includes all the required elements, despite the limited amount of outdoor space and the lack of a suitable field. Pupils in Year 2 have access to the local swimming pool where they are taught by a qualified specialist coach. The annual Sports' Day is well attended and is very popular with staff, parents and pupils.

RS / PSHE / Music

Two music lessons and two assemblies were observed and discussions held with the co-ordinators.

Music teaching was very good and incorporates elements of dance. Children in Year 1 were observed clapping rhythms of objects seen at the seaside such as 'ice cream', and varying the sound of the percussion instruments. Children in Year 2 have the opportunity to play the recorder in addition to a variety of other instruments. Children listen to a range of music at the beginning of the daily assembly. Assertive discipline is used and the children are rewarded with praise and stickers.

RS and PSHE are taught using a range of teaching styles. Much of the PSHE is incorporated into the daily activities of the school. Children are taught to listen to, and respect each other. Effective use of role play in the story of 'Jesus at a wedding' was seen in an assembly.

Learning and behaviour were good. Pupils were enthusiastic and co-operative and could take turns, for example when they played percussion instruments during a music lesson. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures and celebrate Jewish Festivals with a Jewish member of staff. Prayers are said at the end of assembly and grace before lunch.

Provision for these subjects is satisfactory and includes a full-time specialist music teacher. No recorded work is kept for these areas of the curriculum, although clear policies and schemes of work exist, often well linked to topic work in other curriculum areas. Posters, displays and labels stimulate pupils' interest in other countries and faiths, such as the display of Hindu artefacts in Year 2, and a delightful range of dolls displayed on the main staircase.

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Junior Department

English

Pupils achieve good standards. Attainment in national tests is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained primary schools.

By the age of 11 pupils' attainment in work observed is good. Pupils express themselves clearly and can explain their ideas confidently. Year 6 pupils identified and discussed the range of emotions felt by children experiencing an air raid during the Second World War. They read fluently and show an appreciation of the underlying messages of text. Written work is well-structured and technically accurate. Writing is adapted well for various purposes ranging from play scripts to letters of complaint. Imaginative writing shows skilful use of imagery. Describing a frightening castle, a Year 6 pupil wrote, 'The mournful whisper sucked me into the deep and mossy walls'.

Pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. Progress in reading is carefully monitored. In an effective group reading lesson in Year 4 texts were well-matched to pupils' reading levels. The range and quality of writing develop well. Year 5 pupils used persuasive language to write in leaflets on healthy eating.

The quality of pupils' learning and behaviour is good. They listen carefully and respond well during oral lessons. They settle down quickly to tasks and work well, both independently and with one another.

The quality of teaching is always sound. It was good in three-quarters of lessons seen and was sometimes very good. The best lessons are very carefully planned; the pace is brisk and objectives are clear. Good provision is made for pupils' differing abilities, particularly for those who need additional support. However, on occasions the most able are not sufficiently challenged and their attainment is restricted.

Assessment is thorough. Standardised tests are used regularly to monitor pupils' levels in reading, writing and spelling. Results are used well in planning. Marking is regular and comments are constructive. The quality of teachers' own records of pupils' day-to-day progress varies.

The broad and balanced curriculum is securely based on the National Curriculum. The extensive programme of testing sometimes reduces available teaching time, and too much time is given to lessons in verbal and non-verbal reasoning. This leaves insufficient time for timetabled drama lessons and sometimes limits the frequency of opportunities for extended writing. ICT is well used occasionally, but the location of the ICT suite in the Senior Department prevents wider use.

Resources are generally satisfactory. Reading materials for Year 3 are insufficient for effective support of teaching and learning during transition from use of a structured scheme in Years 1 and 2 to a wide range of personal reading in Years 5 and 6.

Leadership and management are sound. The recently established role of co-ordinator is developing well and much hard work has been done. However, a consistent approach across the department to areas such as marking, spelling and presentation is not yet established.

Mathematics

Pupils achieve good standards. Attainment in national tests is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in national tests at age 11 over the last three years have been far above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Results have improved significantly over the past two years, with all Year 6 boys achieving Level 5 in 2004.

Attainment in books and lessons is good. Opportunities are provided for all pupils to attain high standards including those needing additional support. Numeracy is well developed. Pupils are secure in their recall of facts about shapes and are confident in the use of measures and spatial concepts. They understand the use of graphs, diagrams and charts, and their skills are competently applied to other areas of the curriculum such as science.

Pupils' progress is good, and rapid for many less-able pupils. In Year 4 pupils used their knowledge of 2-dimensional shapes to investigate properties of 3-dimensional shapes. In Year 6 pupils perceptively apply the skills they have learned to solve a variety of problems. They used their knowledge of multiplication to find the area of tiles with decimal measurements. A lower ability group of Year 5 pupils were able to analyse their answers and apply methods to check for accuracy. Good warm up activities start lessons, which are effective in developing pupils' mental agility.

The quality of pupils' learning and behaviour is always good and often very good. Pupils are keen to learn and remain well-focused. They work co-operatively and are secure in their independent learning skills. ICT was not used by pupils in classrooms, but mathematical skills were applied in discrete lessons in the Senior Department.

The quality of teaching is good. All teaching is at least good and usually very good. Teachers are competent and demonstrate confidence in their subject knowledge. Lessons are carefully structured, conducted at a brisk pace, with a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Work is planned to challenge the more able. Those needing more help are well supported, both within the classroom and by the learning support teacher. Practical apparatus and games help to reinforce concepts. Marking is efficient, although comments do not always inform pupils about future targets. Appropriate homework is set.

No cohesive method exists to monitor pupils' progress in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Apart from the use of national and standardised tests, assessment is informal, with individual teachers using their own methods to inform planning. Resources are sound. Subject time allocation is appropriate, although the length of some lessons is too long to ensure that pupils are able to maintain concentration and gain maximum benefit from each session.

Leadership and management of the subject are not yet fully effective although a very good start has been made. No formalised job description is in place for the newly appointed subject leader, who is well placed to take a more prominent role in co-ordinating the sharing of good practice. Schemes of work are clear and appropriate and informative planning benefits pupils. Although the policy documentation omits a section on provision for SEN pupils, this is not reflected in the very good practice within the department.

Most pupils transfer to the Senior Department at the end of Year 6. Good continuity is ensured as the senior department specialist takes Year 6 and liaises closely with the Junior Department.

Science

Pupils achieve good standards. Attainment in national tests is good in relation to pupils' abilities. Results in national tests age 11 over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained primary schools. Results have improved steadily over the past five years. In 2004 all boys achieved a level 5.

Pupils' attainment is good. Pupils understand the topics and record both facts and experimental work competently. They understand a fair test. Pupils are able to apply knowledge previously learned and to predict possible outcomes for the results of related experiments. Year 3 pupils suggested that white carnations would become coloured when placed in blue dye as liquid moves up the stem of the plant. Year 5 used data gained from an experiment designed to test

pulse rates to record successfully using appropriate result tables. Written work is well presented.

Pupils' progress is good. Good opportunities are provided for more able pupils to expand their ideas, and work is planned to support the less able. Year 5 pupils were keen to apply past knowledge to debate which organ in the body is the most important. By Year 6 pupils applied their knowledge and skills to overcome problems encountered when devising a pressure switch to prevent unauthorised entry. Pupils make good progress in their levels of recording, use of diagrams, tables, charts and written explanation.

The quality of learning and behaviour is good and often very good. Pupils are well focused, listening carefully to explanations and instructions. They interact well with their teachers and are prepared to share ideas and work towards a successful common goal. They carry out practical investigation efficiently despite the restricted classroom space.

The quality of teaching is good. Particularly effective support was given to a visually impaired pupil in a lesson on flowering plants, with the aid of a member of the support staff and carefully developed tactile aids. Lessons are carefully planned and well structured. Good questioning techniques are used and clear explanations given, demonstrating well researched subject knowledge. Constructive marking shows pupils' targets for improvement. Relevant homework is set.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Schemes of work are well planned and in line with National Curriculum guidelines. It is enriched by visits to such places as the Natural Space and Natural History museums. No ICT was used during the inspection, and none observed in pupils' books. Year 6 benefit from the teaching of a senior department specialist which allows for occasional access to laboratory facilities and some liaison between the departments. Experimental work in other years has to be adapted within junior classrooms, some of which are cramped. Assessment for monitoring pupil progress and to inform planning has not yet been developed, and has rightly been identified by the department as an area for development. Resources are sound.

Management and leadership of the department are not yet fully effective. No job description exists for the newly appointed co-ordinator, although she is aware that this needs to be part of an action plan to develop the department and the need to share good practice to raise standards. The clear subject policy does not include a section on health and safety procedures.

Music

Pupils' achieve good standards. By Year 6 pupils have a sound grasp of basic musical notation and theory. They play the recorder tunefully and rhythmically. They perform simple pieces and can sustain their independent playing in duets. Pupils sing with sound diction and pitch.

Pupils' progress is always sound, and at times good. Pupils with EAL or SEN play a full part in music lessons and make sound progress.

The overall quality of learning and behaviour is always good. Pupils are keen to take part in practical work and most are determined to do their best. They enjoy the activities and are generally efficient in preparing to work with their recorders or with instruments.

The quality of teaching is always good and teachers are knowledgeable. Lessons are carefully planned and well linked to the scheme of work. Teachers are extremely patient and take care to support the needs of pupils who need additional support. Good use is made of resources. Informal assessment takes place during lessons, which is used in preparation for parents' meetings and reports.

The curriculum is appropriate and balanced. It has been enhanced recently by a visit to the Barbican to hear a professional orchestra. Tuition is offered on five instruments and a few pupils take up the opportunities offered. Music is taught in a classroom which does not provide much storage. An additional room is available for individual instrumental lessons. Resources are satisfactory.

Links with parents are good. They support concerts, and use the music practice diaries as a means of communication with instrumental teachers.

A number of musical activities take place. A samba group and choirs make an important contribution to the life of the school, often achieving high standards of performance. Christmas concerts and musical parts in school productions enhance pupils' musical experiences.

The subject leader is the specialist who teaches across the whole school, ensuring efficient continuity of pupils' learning.

Short Subject Reports

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

Art

Two lessons were observed, work in sketch books and displays was scrutinised and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator.

Teaching seen ranged from sound to good. Lessons were well planned and tasks were explained clearly. The organisation of activities was good. Very good use is made of sketch books for planning, observational drawing and colour studies. In a lesson inspired by the Bayeux tapestry, Year 5 pupils made careful sketchbook plans of picture sequences before recreating them in textiles.

Learning was good. Pupils responded well and were enthusiastic. They listened carefully and approached tasks thoughtfully. They co-operated well with one another, sharing equipment and materials sensibly. Year 6 pupils worked carefully and accurately to produce miniature models of wartime rations.

The art room is too small to accommodate whole classes for more than small scale art work and has little space for storage or display. A limited amount of time is given in art lessons to some design and technology skills, but the time allocation for art, the quality of accommodation and the limited range of resources preclude effective coverage of the design and technology curriculum.

Cross-curricular links are strong. For example, Year 5 pupils used textiles effectively to create costumed figures and a Tudor banner for their history work.

French/Spanish

Three lessons were observed and pupils' work was scrutinised. A discussion was held with the French co-ordinator.

Teaching was good. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching from a native French speaker. Planning was thorough and teaching objectives were clear. The pace of lessons was good and activities were varied. Lessons were conducted mainly in French and key vocabulary was repeated frequently. Expectations were high and the emphasis throughout was on good listening and speaking skills. Effective use was made of an overhead projector.

Pupils were attentive and enthusiastic. They clearly enjoyed using a wide range of vocabulary in songs, games and simple conversations. They made good use of the frequent opportunities to practise their speaking and worked hard to develop accurate pronunciation.

Good resources were used very effectively. A comprehensive commercial scheme with appropriate workbooks forms a useful basis, and is supplemented by games prepared by the teacher.

Limited classroom space, particularly in the Year 3 room, sometimes inhibits free movement during games and role play activities.

The curriculum is enriched by the addition of Spanish. One lesson was observed in which teaching was very good. Time and resources were used well in a broad range of activities to develop basic vocabulary. Pupils were attentive and enthusiastic.

History/ Geography

Two lessons were observed, a range of work in books and on display were scrutinised, and discussions were held with the subject co-ordinators.

Teaching was good or very good. Teachers' enthusiasm was evident. Lesson preparation was thorough and good questioning techniques were used. A broad range of strategies stimulated pupils' interest. In a lesson on English counties pupils were directed to make and use very quickly some flashcards to test one another.

Pupils' responded well and they answered questions thoughtfully. In a discussion on Tudor society a Year 5 pupil drew a distinction between wealth and real importance. They were enthusiastic and settled to tasks quickly.

For some classes the balance of time allocated to history and geography is uneven and favours history. The small quantity of geography written work in some pupils' books reflects this imbalance. In Year 6, where a commercially produced workbook is used instead of an exercise book, opportunities for independent writing are limited.

No formal systems of assessment to track pupils' progress in history and geography exist.

The history and geography curriculum is enriched by many events such as the Cambridge Water Board's recent visit to the school. Year 4 also visited Ely Cathedral to experience for a day the life of a mediaeval monk.

Information and *Communications Technology (ICT)*

Two lessons were observed, pupils' work was scrutinised and a discussion held with the subject co-ordinator.

Teaching was very good. Teaching across Years 3 to 6 is skill based and planning for these lessons is good. Pupils are sometimes encouraged to explore applications of other subjects in their lessons. Teaching was adapted skilfully to meet the varying aptitudes of pupils. Varied tasks and a brisk pace combine to make lessons interesting and enjoyable for pupils.

Learning and behaviour was good or very good. Pupils were very well motivated and responsive to the challenges set by the teacher. They worked well individually and in support of each other, although the cramped nature of the room led to occasional restlessness.

From Year 4 lessons take place in the senior department's computer room which necessitates a walk from one site to another. The sound provision of computers in the designated ICT suite is not matched by provision in the Junior Department. This limits the use of ICT across the curriculum as a tool for learning. Pupils are unable to practise their computing skills as often as they need.

Physical Education (PE)

One session of PE and games was seen at Fenner's Recreation Ground. The pupils were split into three different groups and took part in a variety of activities.

Teaching was very good. Subject knowledge was secure, lessons were carefully planned and time and resources used effectively. All activities were well taught and delivered at a brisk pace catering for pupils of all capabilities. Issues relating to health, fitness and safety were well addressed.

Learning and behaviour was very good. Pupils were enthusiastic participators. They were eager to learn and to improve their skills. They were well disciplined, concentrated on instructions and worked co-operatively in pairs, small groups and in a team. When questioned, they gave constructive answers, showing knowledge of skills learned.

Clear policies are in place and a detailed scheme of work is under review. Junior pupils participate with younger seniors in clubs and activities which enrich the PE curriculum. This has enabled individuals to gain accolades in inter-schools competitions. Pictorial records of pupils' achievements are proudly displayed in scrap books. Regular informal assessment is simple, but effective.

Achievement and Quality in Subjects: Senior Department

English

Pupils achieve good standards. Pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools in both English and English Literature. At age 14, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national averages.

By the age of 14 pupils have a good grasp of language and are able to write with accuracy and imagination. Spelling, grammar and vocabulary are usually good for all ages, and oral activities build confidence. Pupils in Year 10 took part confidently in a role play activity based on a set text. All year groups study a wide range of texts written for a variety of purposes. Their responses to material, which is often challenging, are competent and on occasions of a high standard. Pupils are confident and explore moral and social issues with maturity and perception. Personal reading is encouraged and pupils discuss their reading with the class. English supports other subjects and develops good writing standards.

Most pupils make good progress. Their skills improve, and their ability to use increasingly complex language when writing and speaking develops well across the school. Overall provision for pupils with SEN or EAL is satisfactory. A Year 9 oral activity was sufficiently open-ended to allow equal access and participation for all.

The quality of learning and behaviour is always good. Pupils are enthusiastic and well motivated. They concentrate well and are supportive towards each other in collaborative activities. In all lessons observed pupils responded positively to the task and settled down to work quickly.

Teaching is nearly always sound and based on good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. On occasions these objectives were not supported by effective plenary sessions and opportunities were missed in oral activities to evaluate presentations in a written format. The oral evaluation of activities was helpful and allowed pupils to improve and develop their skills. In a few lessons the most able pupils had insufficient challenge to enable them to achieve the highest standards. Work is clearly marked with appropriate supportive and diagnostic comments, and at GCSE level it is helpfully graded in line with examination board requirements.

All pupils study English Literature at GCSE encouraging analytical processes and allowing an important element of enrichment. Departmental planning is not yet fully developed nor sufficiently detailed. It does not focus on the balance between the provision of the main elements of reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, lesson observations and scrutiny of work showed that all these aspects are adequately covered.

The designated classroom is flexible enough for group work and drama. Resources and text books are adequate, although there is no ICT facility in the classroom. Much of the ICT based work is completed at home and is optional, although one pupil uses a personal laptop efficiently in some lessons.

The main library does not support the curriculum. No class library or any resources for extension activities exist to provide additional opportunities for individual learning, although limited additional books are available in the library.

Management and leadership in a department consisting of one person do not provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice. Formal links with the Junior Department are not fully established to ensure continuity and progress in the curriculum. However, there is good continuity across the Senior Department.

Mathematics

Pupils achieve high standards in national tests and good standards in class and written work. Pupils' attainment in GCSE is good in relation their abilities. Results in GCSE over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. Boys and girls achieve similar results and the results are consistent with those of other subjects in the school.

In work observed, pupils' attainment is good. In Years 7 to 9, pupils display good mental arithmetic skills. They can evaluate data and record it accurately and quickly, as demonstrated by Year 7 when working on probability. Their understanding of numerical terminology is good and they use appropriate language to ask and answer questions. Years 10 and 11 can plot graphs accurately and make correct deductions from them. Some aspects of their spatial work are less good, although some written work achieves 'exceptional performance' standards in National Curriculum levels in several areas. Limited use of ICT is evident other than for word processing.

Progress is good. In Years 7 to 9, less able pupils sometimes make greater progress in class than their peers. In some classes, girls make faster progress than boys; in others there is no difference. In all classes, EAL or SEN pupils are particularly well supported and they make considerable progress. In Years 10 and 11, progress continues to be good. Some able pupils progress rapidly to high GCSE standard, as was observed in a Year 10 lesson on data analysis.

The quality of learning and behaviour is good. Pupils are competent learners and they respond positively in lessons. They usually show interest, and often insight, in the way they tackle their work. They are very willing to ask and answer questions. Concentration in lessons is generally good, and sustained. They listen to each other courteously and learn from their own mistakes. Relationships between pupils and their teacher are very good.

The quality of teaching is good. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils, but is particularly good for the lower or middle ability pupils. Presentation is clear and a variety of strategies is used to present learning tasks to pupils, although no use is made of ICT in teaching. Subject knowledge is very good, and confident use is made of illustrative examples to assist pupils' understanding. Questions are dealt with skilfully and sensitively, and the teacher's enthusiasm enhances pupils' learning. Discipline is good overall, and very good in Years 7 to 9. Expectations are quite high, and pupils of lower and middle ability receive considerable challenge in class. High achievers are appropriately challenged by their courses. Schemes of work are detailed and well planned for all abilities. Assessment of previous work is

frequently used as a starting point or to provide a lesson's objective. Marking is frequent and supportive. Time is generally well used, although topics overrun in some lessons. Simple teaching aids, often made by the teacher, add to the effectiveness of lessons. Reports are comprehensive and candid.

The curriculum is well planned and provides good continuity between the Junior and Senior Departments. Early entry at GCSE enables the most able pupils to achieve valuable additional mathematical qualifications. Curriculum enrichment is achieved by the increasingly successful participation in the UK Maths Challenge. However, the present level of staff training in ICT is insufficient, and the mathematics provision in the library is unsatisfactory which limits the opportunities available for pupils' independent learning.

Leadership is good, but management is not yet effective. The subject leader has no job description to clarify her role in performance evaluation or curriculum development. Teaching and learning has clear direction and a sense of purpose. It aims to maximise pupil achievement while maintaining a sense of enjoyment. Departmental paperwork is pupil centred and pragmatic. Whole school aims and policies are incorporated, although long term planning is in the early stages of development. Routine administration and informal communication are good.

Science

Pupils achieve good standards. Their attainment in national tests is good in relation to their abilities. GCSE examination results over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. In the written work scrutinised and the lessons observed, standards were variable.

Pupils' achieve well and progress well in biology and chemistry lessons. In a Year 9 lesson pupils were able to refer to a molecular model to make predictions about the rate of diffusion. In a Year 8 lesson pupils understand why positive tests with lime water and cobalt chloride paper on the products of alcohol combustion indicate the presence of hydrogen and carbon. The quality and quantity of pupils' written work is satisfactory, with well organised notebooks.

Pupils' attainment and progress in physics is variable. At times it is satisfactory. For example Year 8 understood the difference between 'heat' and 'hot air', but in a Year 11 revision lesson pupils were confused about the definitions of common physical terms. Pupils' written work is unsatisfactory and it is disorganised.

The quality of pupils' behaviour and learning is good. They are interested in science and take an active part in lessons when they can. Even when the lessons lack direction they usually listen patiently. They ask questions to refine their own understanding, for instance in a Year 10 lesson on photosynthesis. In practical work they are keen and dexterous; observant and good at recording their results.

The quality of teaching is uneven. It is good or very good in biology and chemistry, but in physics it is sometimes unsatisfactory. In successful lessons well organised practicals are supported by careful explanation and clear summaries. In the unsatisfactory lessons the teaching is unclear and the definitions of a number of key terms are imprecise. Most lessons are adequately planned with appropriate expectations of average and less able pupils. However, at times opportunities are missed to challenge the ablest pupils, expectations are too low, and their attainment is restricted.

Assessment is often perfunctory. Most work is marked with ticks, but there is no systematic requirement for pupils to correct work that is wrong. End-of-topic tests take place about twice a term, but their results are not reported to management and they are not used systematically to help in future planning.

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. It includes significant components of health and sex education, and parents are kept informed when sensitive subjects are being taught.

Resources for learning including practical equipment are sound. However, library facilities are inadequate and do not provide support for pupils' independent learning. The science laboratory is satisfactory.

Management and leadership of science are unsatisfactory. The three well-qualified teachers work independently, but no overall management system exists to provide for effective monitoring of the curriculum and pupils' learning, and the future development of science within the school.

Art

Pupils achieve high standards. Their attainment in GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools.

Pupils' attainment is high. Pupils' show their skills in class and in work on display in a wide variety of areas, including drawing, painting, printing, collage, photography and film. It is rich in variety and shows imagination and very good levels of technical skill.

Pupils make rapid progress. In a Year 7 class, pupils experimented with possible designs for a book cover using their previous experience of self-portraits. They were confident in their use of materials and extremely articulate in explaining their ideas. They showed a mature approach to evaluating their own work and identified how they would improve it next time.

Pupils' behaviour is very good. They are highly competent learners who clearly enjoy their art. They work with enthusiasm and with considerable imagination. They are questioning and alert to new information and ideas. Pupils move around the room in a sensible manner to discuss ideas and retrieve tools and materials. Relationships with the teacher and between pupils are excellent.

The quality of teaching is always very good and often excellent. The teacher shares his obvious enthusiasm in a charismatic way, and there is a sense of working together as equals in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Care is taken to identify individual pupils' needs, and advice is given where needed to promote learning. Praise and encouragement are important features in all the teaching. Explanations of ideas surrounding pupils' work are lucid and inspiring.

Assessment is very well developed. All pupils' work is evaluated by the whole class in a constructive manner, carefully matched to clearly defined criteria. This is an excellent learning opportunity, and also assists pupils in the development of their own work. Year 10 pupils showed their skills in evaluating work when considering Year 11 GCSE coursework. They understood the scale and complexity of work in a project on board games. Reports to parents are informative.

The department is very well resourced. Good ICT provision supports the broad and balanced curriculum. Accommodation is sound, although storage is limited.

Leadership and management are very good. Departmental documentation is efficient. Continuity across the whole school is improving, and useful formal links with the Junior Department have been established recently.

Languages (Spanish, French, German and Latin)

Pupils achieve good standards. Pupils' attainment in public examinations in French and German is good in relation to their abilities. Results in GCSE over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools.

In written work and lessons pupils often demonstrated good reading and writing skills, and aural work was often very good. For example, a pupil automatically gave his excuse for being late for a lesson, in German.

Pupils' progress is good. Their competence in using the languages improves over time and in written work they are increasingly accurate.

Pupils' behaviour and learning are good. They are competent learners, working well with each other and with their teachers. They behave well in class and co-operate. A particular strength was the ease with which they spoke to each other in the target language.

Teaching is good. It is always at least sound and often good or very good. All teachers use the target language frequently, more so in Spanish, German and French than in Latin, which enhances pupils' learning. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subject. They plan and manage their lessons well, employing a range of effective teaching techniques. For example, in a Spanish lesson, flash cards were used for introducing new vocabulary, and useful mnemonics helped to focus pupil attention on links between the Spanish words, in addition to English words with Latin roots. This was followed with a demonstration clock for quick practice in telling the time. Teachers have high expectations and provide appropriate challenge to match the needs of all pupils across the ability range.

Assessment of work in notebooks is regular. In Spanish there are helpful and encouraging comments. In the other subjects marking is limited, with little indication of how pupils could improve.

The language curriculum is a strength of the school. It is broad with four languages available for pupils. Language lessons contribute effectively to pupils' cultural development as they learn about other societies.

Resources are adequate, with modern textbooks and audio-visual resources. However, library provision is unsatisfactory and does not provide support for pupils' independent learning. The two language teaching rooms are attractive and suitable for their purpose.

Management and leadership of the department are unsatisfactory. Three well-qualified language teachers work well, but separately. They each have different strengths, but no overall management of the department exists. This can lead to unevenness in expectation of pupils, and a failing to share ideas and good practice. For instance, expectations vary between languages as to how much aural work the Year 9 class can do. Links between the individual teachers and the school management are weak.

Short Subject Reports

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

Drama

Two lessons were observed and a discussion held with the co-ordinator.

Teaching was excellent. Lessons were well planned with clear objectives set. Well chosen activities to meet the needs of all pupils, including those needing additional support were carefully incorporated into planning. All pupils were challenged appropriately to enable them to attain the highest standards.

Pupils' behaviour and learning was excellent. They were well-motivated, concentrated on the task in hand and behaved with respect towards their teacher and peers. Pupils supported and advised each other, evaluating performances effectively as the lessons progressed.

Evaluation is undertaken by the teacher and pupils as a plenary activity. Teacher evaluation and record keeping are exemplary and pupils' progress is carefully monitored. Drama lessons provide good opportunities for exploring social and moral issues.

Geography

Three lessons were observed and pupils' books and display material were scrutinised. A discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator.

Teaching was very good. Lessons were well organised and carefully planned. They were well paced and pupils were kept fully engaged. Good humour was used most effectively to motivate and persuade pupils to give of their best. In a Year 11 revision lesson the teacher worked hard to motivate some tired students and succeeded. In Year 7 an interactive demonstration on the effects of glaciation reinforced the lesson's introduction on terminology associated with the topic in an enjoyable way. Pupils were also encouraged to think for themselves by challenging questioning. Detailed schemes of work are in place which ensure continuity and progression. Assessment is ongoing and informs planning. Pupils needing additional help were well supported.

Pupils' behaviour and learning was very good. Pupils are usually well-motivated and respond well to the topics being taught. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers were excellent.

Resources are sound. However, no ICT facility is provided in the designated classroom, which limits access to useful data linked to the subject. Library facilities do not support the curriculum.

History

Two lessons were observed and pupils' *work* was scrutinised. A discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator.

Teaching was sound. It generally stimulated the interest and motivated pupils. However, in one lesson a pupil needing additional help was not well supported. Lessons were well paced, but lacked a clearly defined structure and sometimes work was insufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. Pupil/teacher relationships were good. The quality of marking was poor. Few pieces of work have an actual mark scheme. Most work was simply ticked, with few comments to offer guidance for improvement.

The quality of pupils' learning was usually good. Pupils were well motivated and able to sustain their concentration. Year 8 worked well on collaborative activities.

Schemes of work outline areas to be studied, but lack detail. Assessment is used to check pupils' progress, but there is no clearly defined structure to ensure that continuity is secure.

Information and Communications Technology

Three lessons were observed, an interview was held with the subject teacher, and samples of pupils' work were scrutinised.

Teaching was good. Lessons were very well planned, with clear objectives apparent to pupils. Skilful questioning maintained their concentration and the more able pupils were well extended. Lessons had pace and variety. Knowledge of subject and course requirements was excellent. Maintenance of control was sound, and knowledge of pupils, supported by detailed assessment, was very good.

Pupils were interested in the subject and keen to learn. Concentration was well maintained throughout. Cooperation with teacher was very good and pupils showed good levels of independent action and initiative. Behaviour was generally good and pupils were courteous to each other and prepared to help each other.

The provision for the subject is satisfactory. However, the successful introduction of new courses and the pupils' developing interest already produces some strains on accommodation and facilities. Staff knowledge and use of ICT is expanding and future planning is embryonic.

Music

Two lessons, a choir practice and a hymn practice were observed and a discussion was held with the co-ordinator.

The quality of teaching was sound. Expectations of pupils were generally sound. The teacher is well qualified, with good subject knowledge. Singing was capably led from the piano.

Pupils' behaviour was sound. They enjoyed their lessons and their singing. They usually remained focused on the tasks set. However, on occasions, when the lesson objectives were not clear, or when setting up time was extended, pupils became distracted. The curriculum is not yet sufficiently broad. Pupils undertake project work on topics such as the Royal Albert Hall or Elgar, but they have no other written work, in class or for homework, in either musical theory or history. Teaching takes place in the school hall where a cupboard houses limited resources. The use of the hall for other purposes means that equipment has to be put away and taken out for each lesson. This inevitably limits the time available for teaching.

Physical Education

Three lessons were observed in addition to a PE afternoon, and an interview was held with the subject leader.

Teaching was very good. Lessons were well planned with considerable care given to the needs of the less physically able. Activities were varied and lessons had good pace and structure. Control was excellent, as was the teacher's knowledge of several different areas of the subject. Relationships were very good.

All the pupils were keen to participate and learn. They listened carefully and tried hard. They worked very well together in groups, and they could also perform individually. Behaviour was very good throughout, even when pupils were not directly involved. They encouraged and applauded each other. Efforts were very well sustained.

Local facilities are good, but difficult to access conveniently. Although the curriculum for PE is predominantly games, since the school has limited space of its own, much has been achieved in a very short time in this burgeoning department. This is due to the dedication and hard work of the staff and enthusiasm of the pupils.

Religious Studies

Two lessons were observed, an interview was held with the subject teacher, and a sample of pupils' work was scrutinised.

Teaching was sound. Planning was good, although with limited objectives. Teaching was directed to the majority which did not engage the interest of all pupils. The teacher's knowledge was totally secure and challenging ideas were put to the pupils. Good use was made of external stimuli, although the lessons lacked a variety of activities. Reading aloud was too dominant. Marking of work was frequent, encouraging and supportive.

Pupils responded well in the lessons. They asked incisive questions, and were willing to discuss ideas and cooperate with the spirit of the class. Behaviour and interest were generally good, although the concentration of a few pupils was intermittent in one of the lessons. Pupils were respectful towards each other and the teacher.

The provision for the subject is limited. Resources of timetable time, books and other equipment are scarce. The present place of RS in the curriculum is ill-defined and there is no departmental planning.

Achievement and Quality in Activities

Achievement and quality in the activities provided is good. The programme provided is suitable and appropriate to the ages and abilities of the pupils. A satisfactory proportion of pupils and staff participate, and activities provide beneficial curriculum enrichment.

Teams and individual successes have been achieved in sport at local and county level. In addition, successes in other activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, the UK Mathematics Challenge and music awards have been gained. A good balance between physical, aesthetic, academic and recreational activities is maintained. Activities include samba dancing, drama trips and productions, and the ICT club. Residential trips such as skiing and other trips abroad enhance pupils' experiences. When requests have been made for more activities the school has provided them, but uptake has been small.

The programme is provided by a small group of dedicated staff, with valuable additional help from parents with particular skills or experience. A reasonable number of pupils participate. Parents receive reports on some activities informally; others are included in school reports.

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspection was carried out from 9th to 13th May, 2005. All subjects of the curriculum were inspected, but not in all sections of the school, and all members of the teaching staff present during the time of the inspection 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: Senior Department: drama, geography, history, ICT, music, RS and PE. Junior Department: art, French, geography, history, ICT and PE. Infant Department: art, geography, history, ICT, music and PE. The inspectors visited 112 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 4 assemblies and 16 registration sessions. They observed extra-curricular and sporting activities. They held discussions with 29 teaching and non-teaching staff at various levels in the school. They analysed the responses of 167 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

Lady Fiona Mynors	Reporting Inspector, former IAPS head
Mrs Hilary Bell	Former head IAPS pre-prep school
Mrs Anna Coyle	Educational consultant, Registered Ofsted Inspector
Mr Mark Ellse	Principal ISA school
Mr Peter Larkman	Retired head ISA school
Mrs Lynn Maggs-Welling	Former head of ISA junior school
Mrs Jill Moore	Retired senior teacher GSA junior school

Mrs Janet Timmins

Deputy head ISA school