

# INSPECTION REPORT

Pixmore Junior School  
Letchworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 117259

Headteacher: Mr S Baker

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Reporting inspector: Terry Elston  
20704

Dates of inspection: 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707427

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
Type of control:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Rushby Mead Letchworth Hertfordshire SG6 1QG
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, Pixmore Junior School.
Name of Chair of Governors:	Mrs I Holland
Date of previous inspection:	December 1995

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

<b>Team members</b>	<b>Subject responsibilities</b>	<b>Aspect responsibilities</b>
Terry Elston, RgI	Mathematics, information technology, design and technology.	Attainment and progress, Teaching, Leadership and management, Efficiency, Pupils with special educational needs, Pupils with English as an additional language.
Sally Hall, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development, Attendance, Support, guidance and pupils' welfare, Partnerships with parents and the community, Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
Arthur Evans	Science, history, geography, physical education.	Curriculum and assessment, Equal opportunities.
Audrey Quinnell	English, art, music, religious education.	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **What the school does well**

- Standards in science in the 1999 national assessment tests were good, and above the national average.
- This is a happy school, and relationships are good. Many parents choose this school for these reasons.
- Parents are well informed about the school's work. Pupils' annual reports are informative, and parents are kept well in touch with new developments by a helpful weekly newsletter.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and this has a positive effect on pupils' personal development.
- The planning of the curriculum has greatly improved from the previous inspection, and pupils' standards in the national assessment tests are rising.
- The school makes very good provision for extracurricular activities, which are well supported by pupils and staff.
- Newly qualified teachers benefit from very good guidance from a mentor.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. Resources for information technology are lacking, and this affects pupils' standards.
- II. Standards in mathematics, whilst improving, are still too low – the pace of mental mathematics sessions is often too slow to extend pupils fully, and not enough is done to address the weaknesses identified in the analysis of the national assessment tests.
- III. One quarter of the lessons observed in Year 4 were unsatisfactory, often because the teachers' strategies for managing pupils' behaviour were ineffective.
- IV. The school does not make the best use of pupils' time. Swimming takes too long, and pupils miss either literacy or numeracy. Too many pupils are late arriving at school and the number of teaching hours is below the recommended minimum.
- V. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who have extra music tuition, spend too much time withdrawn from lessons or assemblies.
- VI. The school has no specific policy to handle complaints, and a few parents feel that notice is not taken of their criticisms of the school.

**The weaknesses are outweighed by the strengths but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school**

· **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, governors and staff have satisfactorily secured improvement in the areas identified as key issues. The quality of teaching has been improved significantly, and is now satisfactory. The headteacher, with good support from the governors, has worked hard with the staff to improve lesson planning, and to align the school's work firmly to the National Curriculum. The school has improved the planning of the curriculum significantly, and all subjects now benefit from appropriate schemes of work. The school has addressed weaknesses in assessment well. The deputy headteacher has taken the lead, and has developed sound procedures which are used effectively by teachers to plan new work. The roles of co-ordinators have been strengthened, and they now have the time and expertise to provide good support to colleagues. Pupils' standards have improved. Compared with the findings of the previous inspection, pupils' attainment is higher in science, religious education, art, design and technology and geography, and has remained similar in all other subjects. The school development planning has improved, and now has costs attached to proposed developments. The role of the governing body has developed well since the previous inspection. Governors now take a more positive role in the management of the school, and governors have been appointed with the necessary expertise to do this well. The length of the school day has been increased, but still falls short of the recommended minimum number of hours. More time is lost when pupils spend nearly all morning swimming, and a significant number arrive late at school. In view of the sound leadership, and good support of governors, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

· **Standards in subjects**

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

<b>Performance in</b>	<b>Compared with all schools</b>	<b>Compared with similar schools</b>	<b>Key</b>
			<i>well above average</i> <b>A</b>
			<i>above average</i> <b>B</b>
			<i>Average</i> <b>C</b>
English	C	C	<i>Below average</i> <b>D</b>
Mathematics	D	D	<i>well below average</i> <b>E</b>
Science	B	C	

The table shows that pupils' attainment in English was in line with that found nationally; in mathematics, it was below but in science, it was above. Compared with similar schools, with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' results were average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. When the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 test results are compared with those reached in 1998 and 1997, they show that standards are rising in all three subjects. The biggest improvement is in science, where the proportion of pupils attaining at least the national standard has increased from 65 per cent in 1997 to 84 per cent in 1999. Improvement in English and mathematics has been steady over three years, but the proportion of pupils attaining the national standard in mathematics jumped from 55 per cent to 65 per cent this year. The findings of the inspection show that pupils' attainment is in line with national averages in all three subjects. Pupils work at levels expected of their ages in all other subjects, although their

swimming and games skills are good.

- **Quality of teaching**

- **Teaching in 7 – 11 years**

English	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Satisfactory
Science	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory
Religious education	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Satisfactory

The teaching at the school is satisfactory overall, with 94 per cent of lessons satisfactory or better; only four lessons out of 62 were unsatisfactory, three in Year 4. Nearly half of the lessons were good, and three lessons were very good. Teaching is best in Year 3. Overall, this represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection, where teaching was unsatisfactory in four out of ten lessons. Following that inspection, teachers have improved their planning, focused more on the requirements of the National Curriculum and raised their expectations of all groups of pupils. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is good, and leads to pupils making good progress.

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

- **Other aspects of the school**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Behaviour	Overall satisfactory. It is good in many lessons, but poor in a few. Behaviour is good around the school, and in the playground.
Attendance	Average overall although too many pupils arrive late.
Ethos*	Sound. Standards are rising; there are good relationships, and most pupils are keen to work hard.
Leadership and management	Sound. The headteacher provides clear direction and manages a happy school. There is sound monitoring of teaching, but it is not followed up rigorously enough to show teachers how to improve. The deputy headteacher gives good support. The governors are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and are well led by a strong Chair of Governors.
Curriculum	This is much improved, and is now satisfactory. Good schemes of work have helped improve the teaching. The curriculum is balanced, but pupils having music tuition are taken from lessons, including literacy and numeracy. Some good use of assessment by teachers is starting to raise standards, but the analysis of national assessment tests is not translated sufficiently into working out how to remedy weaknesses.
Pupils with special	Satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses in organisation.

educational needs	There is good planning in lessons for pupils with special educational needs, but they spend too much time withdrawn from lessons and assemblies.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good. A strength of the school. There are good spiritual opportunities in assemblies and lessons, and pupils are made well aware of right and wrong. There are good social opportunities and good cultural provision.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory. There is a good balance of youth and experience on the staff. Very good support for newly qualified staff means they soon make a good contribution. Classroom assistants are well trained but they are not always used effectively. Accommodation is sound but classrooms are small for practical work. There are sound resources except for shortages in information technology, with too few computers and other essential equipment.
Value for money	Sound. Standards have improved; progress and teaching are satisfactory, but there is still some loss of time and slightly higher than average costs.

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

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### **The parents' views of the school**

#### **What most parents like about the school**

- VII. Happy atmosphere
- VIII. Children enjoy coming to school
- IX. Good teaching
- X. Good values promoted by the school
- XI. Good challenging work for more able pupils
- XII. Good information on the curriculum

#### **What some parents are not happy about**

- XIII. Not all pupils with special
- XIV. Split class in Year 4 a bad idea
- XV. Homework inconsistent

There is, indeed, a happy atmosphere, and the school promotes the idea of pupils respecting one another well. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is sound overall, but they are withdrawn too much for reading work. The split class works reasonably well, but pupils are more fidgety in the afternoons, and take a time to settle.

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### **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

The governors, headteacher and staff should address the following matters when writing the action plan, in order to raise standards and improve the provision the school makes still further. References to these issues can be found in the paragraphs shown in brackets.

- 1. Raise attainment in mathematics further by:**
  - a. quickening the pace of mental mathematics sessions;
  - b. using information from the national assessment tests more effectively to plan work which addresses the weaknesses that this analysis identifies;
  - c. ensuring that all pupils have numeracy lessons each day. (26, 33, 38, 96, 97)



**1. Raise standards in information technology, and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum by:**

- a. seeking ways to provide sufficient computers, so that pupils can apply the skills learned in class lessons;
- b. providing the equipment to enable pupils to monitor changes in materials using sensors, and to direct robots as required by the National Curriculum. (12, 73)

**1. Make more effective use of pupils' time in school by:**

- a. reviewing swimming arrangements so that pupils do not miss so much of the morning;
- b. increasing the teaching time to at least the national average of 23.5 hours per week;
- c. developing more effective ways to ensure that pupils are brought to school on time.

(21, 28, 146)

**1. Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs by:**

- a. reducing the amount of time that pupils are withdrawn from lessons;
- b. using classroom assistants more effectively by providing their support in classes;
- c. ensuring that pupils are not withdrawn from assemblies for special educational needs work. (33, 77, 64, 66)

**1. Improve the quality of teaching still further, focusing first on Year 4, by:**

- a. employing more rigorous monitoring of teachers, which clearly identifies their strengths and weaknesses, sets targets for improvement and monitors their progress towards these targets;
- b. developing consistent strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. (24, 60)

*In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.*

- Develop more effective ways to handle parents' complaints.
- Review the arrangements for music tuition so that pupils do not miss literacy and numeracy lessons.

• **INTRODUCTION**

• **Characteristics of the school**

1. Pixmore Junior School is of average size, with 193 full time pupils from seven to eleven years old. There are 103 boys and 90 girls. The number on the school's roll has steadily increased over recent years.

2. This is a mixed area in social and economic terms, with pupils coming both from privileged homes and hostel accommodation. The attainment of pupils on entry is average, overall, compared with children nationally, but varies widely from a significant proportion of pupils with marked learning difficulties to a similar number who attain high standards. Over one third of pupils are designated as having special educational needs, which is above average, and six pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is above average. Over 15 per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority groups, and over ten per cent of pupils have English as an additional language; both of these figures are high compared with other schools. Over 14 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is average.

3. The school has agreed targets for pupils to achieve in English and mathematics with the Local Education Authority. The school's current priorities focus on introducing the new National

Numeracy Strategy, improving pupils' mathematical skills and investigating the practicality of developing a computer suite. The aims of the school emphasise the need to give all pupils access to a balanced curriculum, and to provide a happy environment, and for pupils to recognise their own achievements and those of others.

#### 4. Key indicators

##### Attainment at Key Stage 2<sup>2</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	98/99	22	15	37

<b>4. National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	16	14	18
	Girls	13	10	13
	Total	29	24	31
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	78 (81)	65 (55)	84 (77)
	National	70(65)	69 (59)	78(69)

<b>4. Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	15	15	21
	Girls	12	10	9
	Total	27	25	30
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	73 (83)	68 (63)	81 (77)
	National	68(65)	69(65)	75(71)

<sup>2</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

#### 4.

##### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
Through absence for the latest complete reporting year: 1998/99	Authorised	School	3.9
	Absence	National comparative data	5.7
	Unauthorised	School	0.9
	Absence	National comparative data	0.5

#### 4.

**4. Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: 1998/99

Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

**4.**

**Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

Very good or better	3
Satisfactory or better	94
Less than satisfactory	6

#### 4. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

#### 4. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### 4. **Attainment and progress**

4. Analysis of the national end of Key Stage 2 assessment tests for 1999 shows that, in English, the proportion of pupils attaining the national standard, at Level 4 and above, was above the national average. The proportion exceeding the national target, at Level 5, was below average, and this is the main reason why pupils' *average* scores were only in line with the national average. In mathematics, pupils' scores were below the national average, both in terms of those achieving Level 4 and Level 5. The school's average scores were also below the national average. In science, pupils' attainment was average at Level 4, but well above average at Level 5, and this lifts pupils' average scores above schools nationally. Compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. Girls perform better than boys in all subjects. When the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 test results are compared with those reached in 1998 and 1997, they show that standards are rising in all three subjects. The biggest improvement is in science, where the proportion of pupils attaining at least the national standard has increased from 65 per cent in 1997 to 84 per cent in 1999. Improvement in English and mathematics has been steady over three years, but the proportion of pupils attaining the national standard in mathematics increased from 55 per cent to 65 per cent this year. The school has agreed suitably challenging targets to raise standards further by the year 2000 in English and mathematics.

5. In English, this inspection found that standards at the end of Key Stage 2, including those for literacy, are broadly in line with the national expectation. This lower attainment compared with the national assessment tests reflects the high number of pupils this year with special educational needs, who have reading difficulties, compared with last year.

6. Standards in speaking and listening are above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Many pupils speak clearly, and have a good vocabulary. Pupils speak well in formal situations, in class discussions and in assemblies. They listen attentively, and often ask good questions to clarify their views.

7. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of attainment in reading are average. Most pupils read accurately, and with good understanding of punctuation. They are able to share their ideas thoughtfully, read suitable books with expression and understanding, and give a simple resume of, and prediction about, events in their books. Pupils are able to name their favourite authors, such as R L Stine, Roald Dahl, and Spike Milligan, and a few are able to identify features of style. The school has made a sound start with the National Literacy Strategy.

8. In writing, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are average. Many pupils write good, extended pieces of work, and spell commonly used words accurately. The presentation of their work is sound, with letters reasonably formed, but many pupils still mix printing with joined writing.

9. In mathematics, the inspection findings indicate that pupils' attainment, by the end of Key Stage 2, is average. This represents a rise in standards since the 1999 national assessment tests. The school's introduction of daily mental mathematics sessions is having a good effect, particularly on pupils' ability to work out sums quickly in their heads. Pupils in Year 6 use their understanding of place value well to multiply and divide by 10 and 100, and have a sound knowledge of the concept of fractions and equivalent fractions. Many recognise and use decimal notation in solving problems involving money, and do so with assurance. Most are confident with their multiplication tables up to 12, and use this knowledge to work out complex problems. They collect data to an average

standard using tally sheets, draw accurate bar charts to record their findings and use this information well to answer questions. Many pupils work out complex problems involving number patterns and sides of shapes, and explain their processes. Pupils have a good knowledge of co-ordinates, and are beginning to work in all four quadrants.

10. In science, the findings of the inspection indicate that attainment, by the end of Key Stage 2, is average. This is lower than in the 1999 national assessment tests, mostly because of the effect that pupils' weaknesses in recording have on their attainment. Most pupils understand the basic concept of magnetic force, although some find it difficult to understand the nature of this force passing through materials. They have a sound understanding of the scientific concepts of prediction and fair testing, and illustrate this well while planning an investigation into the relative strength of different magnets. They have an average awareness of the need to make a series of observations, in order to guarantee more accurate results.

11. In information technology, pupils' attainment is below that found nationally. They produce some sound work using a wordprocessor, but have had little experience of spreadsheets or complex databases. The school has few adventure simulation programs, and no means to sense changes in materials or develop pupils' ability to control robots. In religious education, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, but many have a good knowledge of different religions around the world. Pupils work at levels expected of their ages in all other subjects, although their swimming and games skills are good.

12. The school is improving. Compared with the findings of the previous inspection, pupils' attainment is higher in science, religious education, art, design and technology and geography, and has remained similar in all other subjects.

13. Pupils make sound progress through the school. They begin with average skills, and generally attain average levels by Year 6. In the lessons observed, pupils made at least sound progress in 94 per cent of lessons, and good progress over one quarter. Pupils make at least sound progress in all subjects, and good gains in art and physical education. They make a good start in Year 3, where teaching is good, and lessons are particularly stimulating. They make sound progress overall in Year 4, but often take too long to settle to their work, and this slows down the pace of lessons. Pupils make sound progress in Years 5 and 6, and often learn quickly because of the brisk pace of lessons and teachers' high expectations. A good feature of the learning in Year 6 is that pupils are beginning to ask searching questions, and this speeds up their progress.

14. Higher attaining pupils make steady gains, and profit from some good, stimulating extension work, often requiring research, which deepens their understanding of subjects. This work includes homework, and pupils have produced some high quality research using the Internet at home.

15. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, and most are close to national average levels by Year 6. They make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans, and a significant number are withdrawn from the register for pupils with special educational needs each year. They develop their technical reading skills well, but this is often at the expense of learning in other lessons, including literacy, and this restricts their overall progress. Pupils with statements of special educational need make sound progress and benefit from the additional support which they receive. Pupils with English as an additional language do well, as they are effectively supported by specialist teaching, and all make significant gains in their use and understanding of English.

## **16. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

16.The pupils' attitudes are generally satisfactory, but have declined since the last OFSTED inspection when they were judged to be very good. In the majority of lessons, pupils listen attentively to their teacher, and are keen to answer questions. In some classes, where the pace of lessons is slow, some pupils take little notice of the teacher, and miss the point of lessons. They talk when the teacher is talking, and distract other pupils. Most pupils usually persevere with their work, generate ideas and solve problems with enthusiasm. This was seen in the Year 6 science, when pupils designed experiments to study the effect of magnetism through materials. The last OFSTED report stated that pupils' capacity for independent learning was underdeveloped. Pupils are now able to undertake research in the library, and conduct good research at home, often using the Internet.

17.Overall, the pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, and the school generally operates as an orderly community. Behaviour has deteriorated since the last inspection when it was found to be very good. In most classes, behaviour is good, and lessons are quiet and purposeful. In others, mostly in Year 4, behaviour is occasionally unsatisfactory. When asked to stop working and listen to the teacher, these pupils continue to fiddle with pencils and rulers, often dropping them on the floor. They call out, make silly noises, and not do sit properly on their chairs. Two pupils were seen hitting each other during supervised group work. This type of behaviour has a detrimental effect on learning. It slows down the pace of lessons and stops other pupils from learning. Pupils play well together in the playground, although some play is rough. There were no exclusions during the previous year, and incidents of bullying are rare. Generally, pupils show respect for school property and the environment. There is very little litter, and a gardening group helps to maintain and improve the school grounds. In the cramped cloakrooms, pupils show little respect for others' property; and coats and shoes are scattered on the floor.

18.Relationships throughout the school are generally good. Pupils are usually friendly to each other. They cooperate well and enjoy working in groups and teams. They help each other, for example, when working with computers. In general, there is a good degree of racial harmony, and pupils enjoy socialising at lunchtime. Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and other adults working in the school. They are polite and friendly to visitors and talk to them with confidence.

19.The personal development of the pupils is good. Pupils are keen to take responsibility and enjoy helping in the classroom and around the school. They are able to express their feelings well, and generally listen to what others have to say. They are keen to show initiative, and some Year 6 pupils expressed their disappointment that school council meetings were no longer being held. Pupils gain good social skills from residential visits and take part in extracurricular activities with enthusiasm. They make positive contributions to the life of the community through charity work, and visiting a residential home and the local hospice.

## **20. Attendance**

1.The pupils' attendance is generally satisfactory. The attendance rate for 1997/98, the latest year for which nationally comparative figures are available, of 94.4 per cent is in line with the national average. The unauthorised absence rate of 0.9 per cent is above the national average, and is mainly due to absences condoned by parents, and pupils who had moved but were still on the school's register. The unauthorised absence rates for 1996/97 and 1998/99 are much lower at between 0.1 and 0.2 per cent. Most pupils are punctual, and lessons start and finish on time. A significant minority of parents, however, are not bringing their children to school on time, and these pupils miss the important start to the school day.

## 21. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### 21. Teaching

2.The teaching at the school is satisfactory overall, with 94 per cent of lessons satisfactory or better; only four lessons out of 62 were unsatisfactory, three of these in Year 4. Nearly half of lessons were good, and three lessons were very good. This represents a significant improvement from the previous inspection, where teaching was unsatisfactory in four out of ten lessons. Following that inspection, teachers have improved their planning, focused more on the requirements of the National Curriculum and raised their expectations of all groups of pupils. Teaching is good in Year 3, where lessons are stimulating and planning is particularly precise. Elsewhere, teaching is satisfactory, but Year 4 had one quarter of unsatisfactory lessons.

3.Teachers plan lessons well, with interesting activities which challenge all pupils. The planning usually takes good account of the different levels of attainment in the classes, with some particularly good extension activities for higher attaining pupils. Teachers have clear objectives for their lessons, which, in the most effective practice, are shared with pupils and written on the blackboard. In this way, pupils know what is expected of them from the start, and the teacher can easily assess their progress towards these targets. The school has introduced joint planning sessions which work well, and are particularly helpful to new or inexperienced teachers.

4.Pupils' behaviour is generally managed well, but where a few lessons have shortcomings, pupils take a while to settle and fiddle with pencils and rulers while the teacher is talking. This happens when the pace of lessons is slow, and pupils get bored. In one Year 4 lesson, for example, the teacher's mental mathematics session was too slowly paced to stimulate pupils, and they soon lost interest. A few boys took no notice at all, and were more concerned with aiming objects at each other than listening to the teacher. As a result, they had no idea what to do, and wasted much of the lesson. Mostly, the relationships in the classroom are good, and nearly all lessons have a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Teachers have a sound subject knowledge, and this develops pupils' confidence well.

5.Teachers make good use of resources, and this helps make lessons exciting. They generally make sound use of classroom assistants, who are knowledgeable and well trained, and sometimes they add much to the effectiveness of lessons. In one Year 5 literacy lesson, for example, the classroom assistant played a key role in providing support for pupils in the group reading session. There was an excellent partnership between the assistant and teacher as they moved between the groups, and a buzz of activity in the classroom. As a result, all pupils made good progress, and made use of every minute of the lesson. Some teachers, however, are unsure of how to use classroom assistants in the whole-class part of literacy lessons, and they spend time sitting in the background rather than helping pupils to understand the text. Teachers assess pupils' work carefully by thorough marking, and are keen to say how the work could have been improved. Teachers set homework appropriately. Some parents at the parents' meeting felt that homework was inconsistently set, but the school has responded positively to these criticisms, and the findings of the inspection show that teachers have improved this provision significantly.

6.The teaching of literacy is satisfactory; much of the work is demanding, and pupils make sound progress. Literacy lessons have a clear structure, and teachers are unafraid to move quickly on to the next activity once pupils have grasped a concept. The school has made a sound start to the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons generally have a brisk pace, but not all of the mental mathematics sessions move quickly enough. Teachers make good use of interesting resources, and their use of number cards for pupils to give quick answers works particularly well. In art, the teaching is good, and teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Teaching is also good in physical education, where teachers provide challenging work for all pupils. In all other subjects, the teaching is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, teaching has improved in English, mathematics, religious education, art, geography and physical education, and has remained similar in



other subjects.

7.The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, and pupils make steady progress. Teachers provide clear and challenging individual education plans, which give good guidance to pupils on the targets for them to achieve. Lesson plans provide appropriate tasks for pupils with special educational needs, and pupils work best when supported by classroom assistants. Too often, however, classroom assistants take pupils out of classes for individual work, and this leaves too many pupils in lessons without support. Pupils with English as an additional language benefit from good support. Staff from the Local Education Authority's support service provide skilful teaching in classes, and in small groups. This system works well, and leads to good progress in pupils' understanding and use of English.

## **27. The curriculum and assessment**

8.The school offers a broad curriculum, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. All subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, are taught. Some pupils also have the opportunity for instrumental music tuition. Statutory requirements are met for all subjects, except for information technology, where no provision is made for monitoring changes in materials or for control technology. A key issue from the previous inspection was to increase the total weekly teaching time. This has been increased, but it remains below the nationally recommended minimum for Key Stage 2. All pupils have swimming lessons during the school year and Year 6 pupils participate in outdoor and adventurous activities during a residential visit. The curriculum is reasonably balanced, with an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. Overall, the school is implementing the National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Strategy satisfactorily. However, classes which have swimming are losing one of these sessions each week; this is unsatisfactory, and has an effect on pupils' standards. The curriculum successfully promotes the pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and provides a sound preparation for secondary school.

9.There are no written policies in place for the personal, social and health education of the pupils, nor for drugs education. However, in practice, provision for this aspect of the curriculum is sound. Relevant issues are dealt with in science related topics in each year group and during assemblies. A good, clear sex education policy is in place, with a formal programme of sex education for pupils in Years 5 and 6.

10.The previous inspection found that no subject schemes of work were in place and that planning was lacking in detail. A key issue was to develop schemes of work, and this has been addressed successfully. Teachers' planning is good. A further key issue from the previous inspection was to take more account of pupils' abilities in planning. In their termly plans, the teachers now match work well to the varying needs of the pupils. Teachers in each year group plan carefully together for each week's work. These plans identify the objectives for each lesson clearly, and the activities which should enable the pupils to achieve these targets. The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor plans carefully, take in samples of work regularly and monitor teaching in order to gain a good overview of the curriculum provided by the school.

11.The previous inspection found that the overall involvement of the governing body in the school's curriculum needed to be strengthened. A key issue was to agree a development plan which placed in priority curricular developments. The governors are now more involved in the curriculum. The curriculum committee meets twice a term to review policies and other issues. There are named governors for special educational needs provision, for literacy and for numeracy. Governors visit classrooms whenever possible and useful feedback has been provided following their visits to numeracy and literacy lessons.

12.The school gives parents good information about the work which their children will be doing in a

'meet the teacher' evening in September and through termly newsletters. Most parents are happy with these arrangements. Parents' evenings for literacy and numeracy have been held, and parents have found these helpful. A formal homework policy is being developed. Although some parents feel that homework is inconsistent, most are happy with current provision. The findings of the inspection indicate that the amount of homework being set for English, mathematics, science and topic research is satisfactory. There are good curricular links with the infant school. There has been joint staff training recently in literacy and numeracy, and this has proved useful to all staff. Subject co-ordinators from both schools meet regularly. There are sound curricular links with most local secondary schools. Staff from the nearby secondary school have taught some physical education lessons to Year 6 pupils, and this has provided good preparation for pupils approaching Key Stage 3.

13. A clear equal opportunities policy is in place, but, in practice, equal access and opportunity to the full curriculum are unsatisfactory. Some pupils are missing parts of lessons, including literacy hours, through withdrawal for music tuition or special educational needs support. In addition, a significant number of pupils with special educational needs miss assemblies to take part in extra reading practice. This is unsatisfactory, and means that the school fails to comply with the statutory requirements to offer all pupils opportunities for daily collective worship. Classes which are having swimming lessons are missing a literacy or numeracy hour. The school monitors the performance of boys and girls well, and whilst the results of national tests from 1996 to 1998 show girls to have outperformed boys, the findings of the current inspection indicate no significant differences in attainment by gender.

14. Provision for extracurricular activities is very good, and these are open to both boys and girls. There is a 'Year 6 club' and a first aid club for the older pupils. There are also popular after-school sessions focusing on football, netball, badminton, 'multiskills', recorders, art and literacy, and an environmental club. The teachers make good use of visits and visitors. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have the opportunity to participate in residential visits to, for example, the Peak District.

15. The school makes sound provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school makes good use of information from the infant schools to identify pupils and their particular needs. All eligible pupils have a well-written individual education plan to address their specific needs, which has clear targets and is regularly reviewed. The special educational needs co-ordinator knows each pupil well, and gives good support to teachers when targets are being made. All the requirements of the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs are met. All parents attend the annual review meetings and are seen by the school as partners in the individual education plan. The best provision is in classes where teachers' planning is clearly aimed at different groups of pupils and classroom assistants give support to any pupil who needs help. There is an enthusiastic governor who has recently taken over the responsibility for the oversight of special educational needs. She has a clear understanding of this role and is keen to provide support. The school prospectus and governors' Annual Report give satisfactory details of its arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, and this keeps parents well informed of the school's procedures.

16. The 28 pupils with English as an additional language benefit from good support. Skilled staff from the Local Education Authority's support service provide good teaching in classes, mainly in literacy and numeracy lessons. This system works well; it leads to good progress in pupils' understanding and use of English, and provides an extra resource to teach all pupils about the language and customs of different cultures.

17. The deputy headteacher is responsible for co-ordinating the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. A clear assessment policy is in place and procedures for assessment are sound. A clear marking policy emphasises the need for marking to be regular, positive and helpful. The quality of teachers' marking is generally good. There are examples of detailed marking, suggesting ways in which the pupils might improve their work, for example "just remember, there can be more than one sentence inside the speech marks". Assessment data and the results of national tests are

analysed to highlight areas of weakness, but too little of the information in the national assessment tests is used to address these shortcomings and improve standards, particularly in mathematics. Termly targets are clearly set out for the pupils in English and mathematics and teachers carefully monitor progress towards achieving these targets. Arrangements for the end of key stage national tests meet statutory requirements and these are followed by optional national tests for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5.

18. Teachers are making good use of assessment to plan subsequent work, both on a termly and a weekly basis. Opportunities for assessment are outlined in teachers' plans. These lead to observations, such as "a real need for work on division" (Year 6 mathematics) and "evidence of some scientific misconceptions; ensure clear understanding of new ideas" (Year 6 science). The teachers meet to sample a selection of pupils' work and to agree on National Curriculum levels of attainment. There is a sound school collection of work samples at agreed levels, but the assessment co-ordinator recognises that this needs updating. The school analyses the results of the national assessment tests, and this gives a good idea of the differences between boys and girls. The information about weaknesses in particular subjects, however, is not used rigorously enough to direct teachers and co-ordinators in decisions about how to address these weaknesses. Assessment of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils throughout the school have individual National Curriculum record sheets, which chart their progress in all subjects. Most parents are happy with the information which they receive about their children's progress.

### **38. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

19. The school makes good provision for the spiritual, social and moral and cultural development of its pupils, including those with special educational needs. Good emphasis is placed on the value of every pupil. The school has a caring ethos, which helps every pupil to feel valued. Relationships between pupils and all adults are good. Adults in the school are good role models for pupils, whom they treat with courtesy and respect. Pupils with special educational needs take a full part in the life of the school.

20. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. This awareness is fostered well by the detailed, planned programme of collective worship and religious education lessons. The calm atmosphere and themes expressed during collective worship are conducive to the development of spiritual values and allow pupils to reflect on their own and others' experiences. Although assemblies are broadly Christian in content, they also encompass many principles found in other religions, such as respect for others. Pupils are generally encouraged to see the importance of God in their lives. The previous inspection report highlighted the need for more opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of the religious beliefs and practices of other peoples, and the school has addressed this well. During religious education lessons, pupils are encouraged to understand and respect the many similarities, as well as the differences, in the main religious beliefs of people in this country. Pupils are involved in traditional festivals, such as harvest, Christmas, Easter and Divali. During the latest harvest festival, pupils said prayers in English, Mandarin, Punjabi and Afrikaans, reflecting some of the different nationalities within the school. Pupils are given time to empathise with people from the past, such as the Victorians and Tudors, during their history lessons.

21. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils are made aware of the two school rules of respect for everyone and to move around the school quietly, and they have their own class rules. Most teachers have clear expectations of high standards of behaviour and pupils are given a definite understanding of right and wrong. In a few classes, however, these expectations are unclear, and pupils become confused about whether, for example, they can call out answers or put up their hands. All members of staff set good examples by their consideration for pupils and other staff. Teachers make good use of the system of merits and rewards, which pupils understand and

value especially the 'Silver Leaf' awards. When sanctions are needed, these are clearly explained and fairly and consistently applied.

22. There is good provision for pupils' social development. Pupils are shown how to respect each other and their ideas and feelings, when they are given the opportunity to explore their problems and to share those of others during discussions. Their speaking and listening skills and the ability to relate well to others are also fostered by this method. Pupils are given good opportunities to work together in pairs and groups, such as when Year 6 pupils dramatised life in a Victorian school, which gave them a good opportunity to work together effectively and to reflect on corporal punishment. Pupils are given monitoring responsibilities within their class, and in assemblies. Fund raising for different charities, such as collecting for the British Legion Poppy Appeal, are a regular feature of the school's calendar, and the school has a harvest collection. Year 5 pupils' awareness of citizenship is raised in geography lessons by the study of the quality of the environment and the effect of traffic pollution on the atmosphere. Residential visits are made in Year 6 to Derbyshire, which enables pupils to compare it with their own locality. Such visits offer pupils an opportunity to experience sharing and living together away from their homes. They are encouraged to form close links with the local community by entertaining and visiting local elderly residents and the local hospice. Years 5 and 6 pupils sing at the switching on of the local Christmas lights.

23. The good cultural provision for pupils includes art and music from different traditions and cultures. They study the work of artists like Kandinsky, Monet and Munch and listen to music from such different traditions as classical music by Elgar and Victorian music hall songs. There is good music provision at the school, with well-qualified visiting music teachers offering good extension work. The school choir takes part in the local schools' music festival. Visits to the local church and temple help pupils to gain deeper understanding of different faiths. Pupils also visit the Tower of London, a Victorian school and a Victorian house, where they dress and act as Victorians. They also experience a Tudor day and eat Egyptian and Greek meals as part of their history work. The school makes a good effort to help pupils understand their historical heritage and the diversity and richness of other cultures.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

24. The school's support for its pupils and its arrangements for pupils' guidance are generally satisfactory.

25. Class teachers provide appropriate support for pupils on a day-to-day basis. They relate well to pupils and are responsive to their needs. Other staff, including support staff and lunchtime supervisors, make significant contributions in caring for pupils. The school works closely with the feeder infant school to ensure that new pupils are introduced sensitively into the school community.

Last year, the Year 6 pupils transferred to six local secondary schools, and staff work hard to help families make informed choices about the next stage of their children's education.

26. Over one third of the school's pupils have special educational needs. These pupils benefit from sound support. They are quickly identified, and teachers provide clearly written individual education plans to guide their progress. Too much of the support of classroom assistants, however, takes place outside the classroom with small groups of pupils. Although this helps those who are withdrawn, it leaves many pupils with no extra help, and these arrangements are unsatisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language benefit from good support. Skilled staff from the Local Education Authority's support service provide good teaching in classes, and in small groups. This system works well, and leads to good progress in pupils' understanding and use of English.

27. The school's procedures for monitoring academic progress and personal development are good. The school keeps detailed records of pupils' attainment, and monitors their progress. Teachers set

short term targets for pupils, and at parents' evenings, they discuss ways in which pupils can improve their work.

28.The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are generally satisfactory. The school immediately follows up unexplained absences, and has good links with the educational welfare officer. The previous OFSTED report raised concerns about the completion of registers and the school now fully complies with regulations. The school does not give parents or staff guidance on what types of absence are regarded as unauthorised. Although the school sends clear reminders to parents to bring their children to school on time, the measures are not effective in ensuring that pupils are punctual.

29.The measures for promoting discipline and good behaviour are generally sound, but there are weaknesses. The school has drawn up a brief behaviour policy, but it does not include detailed procedures. There is no consistent system of sanctions, and teachers have devised their own ways of managing behaviour. Some of the strategies used are not effective, and some lessons take place against a background of pupils who call out, talk when the teacher is talking and fiddle with pencils. Assemblies, particularly the 'Silver Leaf' assemblies promote good behaviour, and staff are good role models. The school has drawn up a clear anti-bullying policy, and incidents of anti-social behaviour are dealt with effectively.

30.The school's arrangements for promoting the health, safety and general well being of the pupils are generally good. The headteacher is the member of staff with responsibility for child protection. The school has drawn up a clear policy, and effective procedures are in place. It pays due attention to health and safety, and a helpful policy includes detailed procedures. A governor makes termly checks on the premises, and the governing body draws up an action plan for repairs. Several minor health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the headteacher during the inspection, including the need to review the timing of portable appliance testing. This concern was also raised in the last OFSTED inspection. First aid is well managed, and pupils who are ill or injured are given good care and attention. Two support staff are qualified in first aid, and the senior lunchtime supervisor has received basic training. There is a well-equipped medical room and good procedures are in place for giving medication.

50.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

31.The life of the school is enriched by its partnership with parents and the community. These good links make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. This judgement broadly reflects the finding of the previous OFSTED inspection.

32.The quality of information which the school gives to parents is good. 'Meet the teacher' evenings at the beginning of the school year provide parents with valuable information about topics, routines, equipment and important dates. Parents also have the opportunity to learn more about the curriculum, and had an informative session recently about the literacy hour. Informative newsletters give details of future events and celebrate the school's successes. The school operates an 'open door' policy, and most parents feel able to come into school to discuss their concerns. Most parents are pleased with these arrangements, but a significant minority of parents feel that the school does not handle complaints well. The prospectus contains nearly all the required information, and the governors' Annual Report to parents is of a high quality.

33.The school communicates effectively with parents whose first language is not English through a bi-lingual secretary and specialists from the Local Education Authority. Written translations are also available. Termly consultations provide good opportunities for parents and teachers to discuss progress and to review ways in which pupils can improve their work. The last OFSTED report stated that pupils' report contained insufficient detail about standards. Good quality end-of-year

reports now include information about what pupils can do, and give parents the levels of attainment and effort.

34. Parents' involvement in pupils' learning is good, and their contributions are valued by the school.

A good number of parents help in school on a regular basis, and provide very effective support in the classrooms. Others assist on school visits, and two parents run the recorder club. Parents make significant contributions to the life of the school through the governing body, and the active Parent School Association. A significant number of parents felt that the provision of homework was inconsistent, but the school has improved this provision recently, and the arrangements are now satisfactory. The school takes parents' views of the school into consideration when drawing up the school development plan. This works well, and gives parents the opportunity to contribute to the forward direction of the school. The home school agreement was not in place for the required deadline of September 1999. The school has now drawn up an agreement, but, at the time of the inspection, it had not been sent to parents.

35. The school's partnership with the community is good, and these links make a positive contribution to the pupils' attainment and personal development. The school works closely with the feeder infant school, and has developed beneficial curricular links. The school encourages pupils to think of others through visits to a local residential home, and senior citizens are invited to school productions. Pupils raise money for charities, and work in a garden of a local hospice. There are established links with a local Baptist Church, and the minister regularly takes collective worship. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors, including theatre groups, and pupils visit various local places of interest. Year 4 pupils, for example, visit St Albans as part of their work on the Romans. Year 6 pupils develop social skills on a residential visit to Derbyshire. The school takes part in local festivals and the building is let to the Guides. The school welcomes students and pupils on work experience. As reported in the last OFSTED inspection, pupils still have very little contact with local employers and the world of work.

## 55. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### 55. Leadership and management

36. The leadership of the school is sound, and manages the school effectively. This is an improvement from the findings of the previous inspection when the leadership had significant shortcomings. Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, governors and staff have been largely successful in securing improvement in the areas identified as key issues. The quality of teaching has been improved significantly, and is now satisfactory. The headteacher, with good support from the governors, has worked hard with the staff to improve lesson planning, and to align the school's work firmly to the National Curriculum. The school has made very good use of the Local Education Authority's advisors to review the school's work, observe teachers, and suggest ways to develop their expertise. The school has improved the planning of the curriculum significantly, and all subjects now benefit from appropriate schemes of work. The school has addressed weaknesses in assessment well. The deputy headteacher has taken the lead, and has developed sound procedures which are used effectively by teachers to plan new work. The length of the school day has been increased, but it still falls short of the recommended minimum number of hours. Overall, this thoughtful and positive response to areas identified as weaknesses illustrates sound leadership, clear direction and a determination to improve the school's provision.

37. Parents and governors generally speak highly of the headteacher's leadership. The headteacher has good relationships with parents, pupils and staff. A few parents, however, feel that the leadership is sometimes slow to respond to their criticisms, and that the school lacks a clear policy to deal effectively with parents' complaints. The headteacher clearly demonstrates the requirement that everyone in the school should work to the best of his or her ability, and contribute towards his

aim of providing a happy school. He achieves these goals by effective support, clarity of purpose and sensitivity to individuals' needs and views. The effectiveness of this leadership and direction is illustrated by the steady raising of pupils' standards in the national assessment tests over the past three years. In mathematics, where attainment is lowest, the school has instigated good measures to identify areas of weakness, and has begun to address them. As a result, although still unacceptably low against similar schools, standards in mathematics have risen significantly this year, and are around the national average.

38. A significant strength of the leadership lies in the way the headteacher, in particular, has bonded together new members of staff to form an effective teaching force. The selection of new staff has been astute, and they have been effectively supported as they settle to their new roles. Newly qualified staff are supported well, and have strengthened the teaching in the school with their energy and ideas.

39. The headteacher and senior staff have developed good systems to monitor pupils' standards. The headteacher collects samples of pupils' books each week, and this enables him to keep track of how well different groups of pupils make progress. Together with the subject co-ordinators, the headteacher monitors pupils' performance in the national assessment tests, and then works with teachers to address weaknesses. This process, for example, uncovered shortcomings in pupils' extended writing. The school, therefore, focused on developing this area of pupils' work, and subsequent results in the national assessment tests showed some improvement. The headteacher has worked with the Local Education Authority to set challenging targets for English and mathematics in the national assessment tests. In school, pupils are set targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy, and this is good, effective practice.

40. The monitoring of teaching was criticised as being informal and unsystematic in the previous inspection. This is now sound, and has helped improve the teaching from the previous inspection. The headteacher scrutinises teachers' planning, and, together with the deputy headteacher, monitors all teachers in the classroom. There is, however, a lack of sharpness in this monitoring: observations of teachers are followed by a general feedback, but there are no clear targets for improvement offered, nor further observations planned to review teachers' improvement. This helps to explain continued weaknesses in staff who have been in the school for many years. The co-ordinators monitor little teaching, although the numeracy co-ordinator has monitored lessons to a limited extent.

41. The school development plan is good, and much improved from that criticised in the previous inspection, although it has some shortcomings. The headteacher, governors and staff have produced a plan that clearly identifies priorities which are relevant to the school's needs and circumstances. There is good involvement of parents, who are asked to contribute their ideas. The resulting targets are set in a suitable time scale, and address appropriate issues concerning standards and staff development issues. The plan is reviewed and evaluated regularly, by the staff and governors, and this makes it useful as a working document. The weakness of the plan lies in the fact that it covers proposed developments for the coming year only, and this denies the school a long term vision.

42. The governing body is enthusiastic, and is keen to take the school forward. The Chair is knowledgeable, and provides very strong leadership. Governors are actively involved in the everyday life of the school, and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They act well as critical friends of the school, and are unafraid to give direction.

43. The deputy headteacher works well with the headteacher. He is keen to assume the role of leadership, and sets a good example by his own teaching. His work on the school's assessment procedures has produced good results, and he is very willing to take further responsibility.

44. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs is knowledgeable, and has had the benefit of good recent training. The school gives the co-ordinator sufficient time to help teachers in

the assessment of pupils, and to assist with the formation of individual education plans, which are good. A useful initiative developed by the co-ordinator is the sharing of the targets in these plans with pupils, and this helps them to understand the purpose of the specialised teaching. A weakness in the co-ordinator's leadership lies in the organisation of withdrawal groups, when pupils are taken from lessons such as literacy and music, sometimes unwillingly, and from assemblies, including the special 'Silver Leaf' events. These arrangements are unsatisfactory, and mean that pupils miss important work in music and literacy, and are denied the opportunity for collective worship.

45. The school's ethos is sound. The school's aims express high expectations of the respect all members of the school have for each other, and this aim is met well, but the aims lack an expressed commitment to high standards of attainment. When responding to the questionnaire, a high proportion of parents feel that the school teaches positive values and attitudes to their children. The headteacher and staff have created a stimulating, warm and welcoming learning environment which is greatly appreciated by pupils and parents. They monitor and evaluate the performance of girls and boys and have a policy for equal access and opportunity. In practice, however, pupils who go swimming, attend music tuition or have extra reading lessons in the time for assembly do not enjoy equal opportunity.

46. The governing body does not meet all of the statutory responsibilities which it has for the teaching of the curriculum or for the provision of acts of collective worship. Pupils with special educational needs miss assemblies, and information technology is not fully meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

66.

#### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

47. The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

48. The teaching staff has an appropriate range of experience and expertise, and, between them, provide satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum. The last OFSTED report stated that the role of the co-ordinator was not fully developed. Since then, the school has worked hard to give co-ordinators the time and skills to develop their roles, and they now provide appropriate support to colleagues.

49. The learning support assistants are experienced and well qualified. They work very effectively alongside teachers when they provide good support in the classroom, for example in group work. The school secretary knows the pupils well, and has established very good links with families. Her translation skills are very helpful when communicating with Asian families. The caretaker and midday supervisors also make significant contributions to school life.

50. Arrangements for the professional development of teaching staff are good. Training is related to both the priorities of the school development plan, for example, in numeracy, and to the needs of individual staff. Information gained on courses is passed on effectively to other members of staff. Where appropriate, support staff are invited to whole-school training. Appraisal for all teachers took place a year ago, and the headteacher and deputy are trained appraisers. The appraisal system works well, and provides a good focus for teachers' development. The arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are very good. New teachers feel well supported by their mentor and colleagues, and are able quickly to make a contribution to the teaching in the school.

51. The accommodation is satisfactory, and generally allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The last report commented on the cramped conditions in some classrooms and this problem still exists. A part-time teacher takes a class each morning, but in the afternoons, her pupils are divided amongst three other classes. Working space is even more confined when the numbers of pupils increase in the afternoons, and restrict table space in such activities as art. The school is in good decorative order and well maintained, and the caretaker and cleaners work hard to achieve high standards of cleanliness. The cloakroom areas are very cramped, and coats are often strewn around



the floor. Some partitions in the toilets are in very poor condition. The school has created some useful specialist areas including a craft room, music room, and food technology area. A resources room is well organised and teachers and pupils have easy access to equipment. The non-fiction library is stark and has very little seating. It does not provide a welcoming atmosphere to browse. The grounds are particularly attractive and the environmental areas provide very good resources for many areas of the curriculum. A large playground and an extensive playing field provide good opportunities for physical education and play.

52. The range and quality of equipment and materials to support teaching are generally satisfactory, and have improved since the last OFSTED inspection when there were insufficient resources in many subjects, particularly literature. Resources are good in art, music and religious education. The school has developed its multicultural resources in art and music since they were criticised in the last inspection, and these are now good. New books for literature have been bought recently, and these are now in good supply. In physical education, resources are generally sufficient, but the mats are frayed. There is a shortage of computers: the current ratio is one computer to 24 pupils which represents half the average number of computers normally found in a school this size. There is also no computer equipment to monitor changes in materials with sensors and no robots and these deficiencies affect pupils' progress in information technology. The school makes good use of local amenities, such as a swimming pool and local museums, to enrich the curriculum.

72.

### **The efficiency of the school**

53. The school's use of its funds is sound, as was reported in the previous report. The school development plan has all developments costed annually, and they match the funds available. The school monitors the school development plan well, and the headteacher and subject co-ordinators report regularly on their progress towards the targets, and the money spent. The planning, however, for just the next twelve months is unsatisfactory, and provides too little focus on the long term financial development of the school. This lack of long term planning was also a criticism in the previous report.

54. Governors monitor the school's spending each month, and work with the headteacher and school secretary to ensure that the finances are in good order. Co-ordinators monitor their resources regularly; they advise the headteacher on areas of need, and the benefits gained from their expenditure. This system works well; it ensures that the use of money is closely matched to the school's main priorities, and monitors the benefits.

55. The teaching staff is deployed effectively. The school has made funds available to enable literacy and numeracy co-ordinators to monitor the standards in their subject, and this has helped the successful introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The school uses teachers with specialist skills well, for example, in providing informed teaching of physical education and music. The headteacher takes classes for games each week. This works well, and gives pupils well-informed teaching of games skills, whilst offering teachers the time to monitor their subjects. However, there are weaknesses in the school's use of time. The school has increased the amount of teaching time from the level criticised in the previous inspection, but it still falls an hour short of the recommended minimum. Swimming, although having a good effect on pupils' skills, takes up most of the morning, and pupils miss their day's literacy or numeracy. In addition, too many pupils are brought late to school, and miss the start of the day.

56. Classroom assistants are skilled, but the school makes insufficient use of their talents in classes. Too often, they teach small groups of pupils withdrawn from lessons, and this leaves a substantial number of pupils without support.

57. The accommodation is used well. The school grounds and environmental area are used effectively to give pupils first hand experience of creatures and their habitats for their scientific

work. There is good storage space for resources, and this is used well to ensure that teachers have easy access to books and equipment. The music and craft rooms are a good resource, and are used effectively to compensate for the lack of space in classrooms for practical activities.

58. The school's administration runs smoothly, and supports the organisation and teaching of the curriculum well. Financial planning and monitoring of spending are very thorough, and the school secretary makes every effort to secure the best price for the school's goods. The school makes particularly good use of the secretary's experience and skills, both in her work as a translator for Asian parents, and in her support in lessons about Asian festivals.

59. Taking into account all the above features in this report, including the sound progress of pupils, the satisfactory teaching and improving standards, but set against weaknesses in the school's use of time, the school provides sound value for money.

79.

## 79. PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

### 79. ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

#### 79. English

1.The results of the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 and above was higher than the national average, but that they were below the national average at the higher Level 5. When the average of the school's test data is compared with all schools, it shows that standards in English are average. Although standards in English overall are lower than those in 1998, this is due to there being a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group. Realistic targets for improvement have been set in English and the school is making consistent progress towards achieving them. The findings of the current inspection are that pupils are attaining average standards overall.

2.Standards in speaking and listening are above average at the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of the key stage, pupils speak clearly and confidently, both in small groups and to a wider audience. Most listen attentively both to their teachers and to other pupils. Group and paired discussions are promoted effectively, and pupils use the plenary sessions in the literacy hour well to report back to the class clearly about their work. Progress in speaking and listening is satisfactory. The opportunity to perform before an audience in collective acts of worship and school concerts helps pupils to gain self-confidence, speak clearly and listen with attention. The present standards in speaking and listening are similar to the findings of the last inspection.

3.By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of attainment in reading are average. Most pupils share their ideas thoughtfully and read suitable books with expression and understanding. A few higher attaining pupils read challenging material, use the more advanced reading skills of scanning, prediction and deduction and identify features of style. Pupils name their favourite authors, such as Sue Townsend, Rob Childs, Roald Dahl and Dick King Smith. In order to improve standards further, pupils work on advanced reading skills, such as inference and note taking during the literacy hour, and their attainment is starting to improve as a result. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy effectively. Standards in reading are similar to those in the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are making sound progress in their reading, and most achieve their individual targets set by the teachers.

4.By the end of Key Stage 2, standards of attainment in writing are mainly average, with a few pupils achieving higher attainment. Pupils with special educational needs attain sound standards for their capabilities. Most pupils spell commonly used words accurately. They show sound skills at writing for a variety of purposes, such as lists of nouns and verbs for grammatical work, poems about harvest and 'The Magic Purse', and stories written in the style of Rudyard Kipling, such as 'How the elephant got its trunk'. Most present their work neatly, but they often print their writing. Only a few pupils in each class write in a neat, legible, fluent joined style, even though joined handwriting skills are regularly taught throughout the school. Pupils are developing their writing competence to a reasonable extent across the curriculum, in their scientific work on insulation, for example, and in work in history about the Tudors. Pupils are developing sound skills in spelling, sentence construction and punctuation within appropriate writing contexts.

5.Pupils are making sound progress overall in English, due to the introduction of the literacy hour and the skilful quality of teaching. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but the lack of support from classroom assistants in many lessons inhibits their potential to make good progress. Even when support assistants are present in literacy lessons, teachers are often unsure of how to use them, and they sit too long in the background. Within some classes, there is a high percentage of pupils with special educational needs and this lowers the overall levels of

attainment in these classes.

6. Pupils' attitudes to their work in English are mainly good throughout the school, although there are instances of unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. They are polite and courteous and most are well behaved. Most pupils settle to their work quickly and concentrate well, especially when work is challenging. They are interested and attentive and enjoy opportunities for collaborative work. They are eager to question and reply. Pupils are able to work independently on individual tasks and to work co-operatively, when required. Generally, there is a good working atmosphere in classes.

7. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, with some good, and occasionally very good, teaching. The last inspection reported unsatisfactory teaching in half of the lessons, when expectations were too low, and work was not matched to pupils' different abilities. In this inspection, a significant strength of teaching is the good use of assessment information to plan lessons by all teachers, and this has helped to address the weaknesses in planning identified in the last inspection. There is a good relationship between adults and pupils. A strength of teaching is the effective use of open-ended questioning, coupled with clear explanations, which enables pupils to extend their understanding. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and questions and encourage careful listening skills. In the best lessons, the teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, there is real enthusiasm for teaching English, and time and resources are used extremely well. When teaching is very good, teachers have a thorough understanding of National Curriculum requirements, which enables pupils to attain high standards in line with their ability. Reading skills are generally taught well and, although, in the past, more advanced reading skills were less well developed, these are now being addressed effectively during the literacy hour. The use of paragraphs is an area which is not taught early enough for pupils to attain higher standards in their writing. Punctuation, spelling and grammar are mostly taught well. Handwriting skills are taught well in structured sessions, but teachers pay too little attention in other lessons to promoting the skills that pupils have learned. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory throughout the school.

8. The provision of opportunities for teachers to undertake in-service training is satisfactory and is appropriately linked to the focus in the school's development plan. The co-ordinator enjoys her role, has good knowledge of the subject and manages it efficiently. She has a clear direction for the subject and monitors the teaching and standards across the school through informal discussions with staff and examining teachers' planning. The main weakness in the co-ordinator's role, however, is the lack of monitoring of literacy lessons, even when time was made available.

9. There is a sound English policy and the co-ordinator has amended the satisfactory scheme of work in line with the National Literacy Strategy. This is an improvement on the unsatisfactory long term planning criticised in the previous inspection. However, the scheme of work lacks sufficient reference to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for English to enable higher attaining pupils to achieve the higher levels of which they are capable. Resources for English are good. Literacy is taught daily in most classes, but, when pupils have swimming lessons, they do not have a literacy lesson on that day and this is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and some pupils who have extracurricular music lessons are inappropriately withdrawn from literacy lessons. The teaching of English meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

10. The school library provides a sound resource area for the school, although it is not conducive to browsing and learning to enjoy books. It is well stocked with a sound range of interesting books, which pupils use for research purposes.

## 90. Mathematics

11. In the 1999 Key Stage 2 national assessment tests, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 was close to the national average, but average for those attaining the higher Level 5. Pupils' average scores, however, were below the national average. Compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was below average, both in terms of those attaining Level 4 and those reaching Level 5. Standards have risen steadily over the past three years, and the proportion attaining Level 4 or above rose by ten percentage points this year. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The school has agreed ambitious targets for pupils to achieve over the next three years.

12. This inspection finds that pupils' attainment is in line with the national average, and slightly higher than the average scores of the 1999 national assessment tests. The school's recent focus on developing pupils' mental mathematics skills is starting to have a good effect on standards, although they are still below those of pupils from similar schools. Standards in the previous inspection were generally average, but many pupils had difficulty with basic numeracy operations. The school's introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has improved these skills.

13. By Year 6, most pupils have sound strategies for solving problems involving, for example, factors of numbers, and are beginning to see more complex patterns in numbers. A few move on to explain why these patterns occur, and start to develop their own patterns. Their numeracy skills are average. Most pupils use their sound knowledge of place value to multiply and divide by 100, with a few higher attaining pupils multiplying by 1000. They check the reasonableness of their results by turning the operation around, and this helps pupils' accuracy. Most know their multiplication tables, and perform basic calculations reasonably quickly. They work confidently with co-ordinates, and most plot numbers accurately in three and four quadrants. Most pupils understand probability well, and carry out sound investigations using tally charts to gather data. They have a sound understanding of shape, and are confident when drawing and explaining lines of symmetry.

14. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress in mathematics. Most of them make a sound start in Year 3, but the loss of a whole numeracy lesson each week for six weeks to go swimming reduces their time for mathematics, and restricts their progress. Pupils are, nevertheless, learning the importance of setting work out neatly in order to ensure that they calculate the correct numbers. Pupils develop a sound grasp of decimals early on, and use these skills well to work out money problems. They measure in metres with reasonable accuracy, and begin to estimate values. In Year 4, pupils make sound progress when working out problems involving adding and subtracting, and are starting to gain a feel for larger numbers. In Year 5, pupils move on to problems involving division, and begin to check their results. Their work on area and perimeter is good, and they are starting to ask questions now about how, for example, to work out areas of irregular shapes. Higher attaining pupils make sound progress, helped by teachers' planning of extension work to tackle more difficult tasks.

15. Pupils enjoy mathematics, and work with enthusiasm. They particularly like the mental mathematics sessions at the start, and take part often with great excitement. They behave well on the whole, but poor behaviour was observed when the pace of the lesson was slow, and the teacher's strategies for controlling the pupils were ineffective.

16. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the previous inspection, half the lessons were unsatisfactory whilst, in this inspection, all but one lesson was satisfactory or better, and five out of eleven were good. Teachers have raised their expectations of pupils, particularly those of higher attainment, and there is now a steady progression of skills from Year 3 to Year 6. The new scheme of work, aligned to the National Numeracy Strategy, has helped. Teachers now have a clear source of material to work from, and plan together to make the most of each other's knowledge. This planning is good, and focuses on the needs of all groups of pupils in the class. Teachers are confident in their understanding of mathematics, and this breeds confidence in pupils. The mental

mathematics sessions work well on the whole, and give pupils the necessary skills to work out problems quickly. In the best lesson, for example, the teacher used a game which involved pupils clapping in a rhythm when answering questions about decimals. The game was very successful: pupils were fully stretched to complete the sum in time and, as a result, all pupils made rapid progress. Occasionally, however, these sessions have too slow a pace, pupils lose interest and their progress is too slow. In the poor lesson, the pedestrian pace led to pupils spending more time flicking objects at each other with a ruler than working out their sums. As a result, pupils made far slower progress than those in the parallel class next door, who were challenged appropriately and managed very well. Teachers use mathematics well in other lessons, and pupils produce good graphs in geography as part of their traffic survey, and, in science, to record results of their study of friction.

17. The subject is well led by the mathematics co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has attended courses on the new National Numeracy Strategy, and has given staff good training on its implementation. She has monitored some teaching, teachers' planning and its effects on pupils' work. The national assessment tests are analysed effectively to see where pupils have difficulty, but not enough is then done to plan work to address these weaknesses. The scheme of work is good, and fits in well to the National Numeracy Strategy. Assessment procedures are good, and use everyday assessments effectively alongside annual tests to plot pupils' progress. Resources are adequate, but there is a shortage of information technology programs to reinforce work done in class lessons.

## 97. Science

18. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 national assessment tests, pupils' attainment was above the national average and average compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In the three years from 1997 to 1999, attainment was close to the national average, with girls easily outperforming boys. The findings of the inspection indicate that, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is average, with little above average attainment. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. It differs from the results of the 1999 national tests as a different group of pupils are involved, with a greater proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register. Most pupils understand the basic concept of magnetic force, although some find it difficult to understand the nature of this force passing through materials. They have a sound understanding of the scientific concepts of prediction and fair testing, and illustrate this well while planning an investigation into the relative strength of different magnets. They have an average awareness of the need to make a series of observations, in order to guarantee more accurate results. Pupils investigate the effects of gravity and air resistance well through designing and testing parachutes. Through investigations into the weights of objects in and out of water, pupils show a sound understanding of the concept of an upward force. They use their mathematical skills well to construct accurate block graphs in recording the effects of friction on different types of shoes. Most pupils make sound use of their literacy skills in recording results of practical investigations in written form, although their handwriting is often slow, and untidily presented.

19. The majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress in widening their knowledge and understanding of a variety of scientific concepts. They are developing their ability to undertake practical investigations, for example, into thermal insulation, and they are learning about control in experimental work, altering just one factor at a time. Pupils are making sound progress in their understanding of electrical circuits and how these can be broken with switches. The youngest pupils understand how they have changed since they were babies. They illustrate and write about these changes with growing awareness, and they place magazine pictures of faces appropriately on a human life cycle chart. Many pupils are developing the ability to use correct scientific vocabulary, such as 'attract', 'repel' and 'magnetic force'. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress, particularly where they benefit from additional classroom support.

20. Most pupils show interest in their work in science, especially in practical investigations. They

enjoy working in groups or with a partner, and share the workload fairly. Most pupils listen attentively, and settle down to work quickly. A few are less attentive and there are a small number of disruptive pupils. Many pupils are eager to answer questions and to offer ideas. Many classrooms, particularly in Year 3, have a quiet, working atmosphere. Presentation of work is generally sound, and pupils in Year 6 take great pride in the way in which they present work in the form of text, tables and graphs.

21. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory, although it is variable, and ranges from a majority of good lessons to one that was unsatisfactory. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection. The scientific content of lessons is accurate, and science is often related to everyday life, which makes it relevant to the pupils and stimulates their curiosity. A Year 4 teacher, for example, dealt with thermal insulation by referring to thermos flasks, hot water bottles and her cavity wall insulation at home. This use of everyday processes helped all grasp the concept easily, and led to good progress. The teachers plan their lessons well and there is currently great emphasis on pupils planning investigative work. A Year 6 teacher emphasised the need for the pupils to be clear about precisely what they were going to test, in a lesson on magnetism, and this had a positive effect on the way in which the pupils went about their planning and on their progress. Teachers emphasise and encourage the use of correct scientific vocabulary. They match work well to the varying needs of the pupils, which is an improvement on the last inspection, and they generally have high expectations of presentation. They make effective links with other subjects, such as design and technology and mathematics. Teachers assess pupils' progress appropriately and make good use of this assessment to plan subsequent work, with observations recorded such as "need to be taught how to write clear explanations". There is evidence of teachers setting worthwhile research tasks for homework. Where lessons are less successful, and, in one case, unsatisfactory, the teacher's class control is insecure, the pace of lessons slows down and pupils make insufficient progress. There was no evidence of information technology being used to enhance learning in science.

22. The co-ordinator provides the subject with very good leadership. He monitors plans and samples of work, and gains a good overview of standards throughout the school. He offers informed help and support to colleagues as necessary, and has led some science training for staff. There are sound procedures for assessing pupils' progress, although the co-ordinator recognises the need to update the school's collection of pupils' work at agreed National Curriculum levels. There are adequate resources to aid learning in science, although there are few information technology resources. There is a good range of scientific reference books in the school library. The classrooms are cramped for practical work, but the school grounds provide a very stimulating environment for learning. They include a stream, pond, woods, meadows and butterfly garden. Year 6 pupils were observed following the 'environmental track', which allows them to observe a wide variety of flora and fauna. The subject makes a sound contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are encouraged, for example, to show concern for the environment and for living creatures, and are expected to work co-operatively during practical investigations. Members of a weekly environmental club work hard at maintaining and improving the school grounds.

## 102. OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### 102. Information technology

23. The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 is below average, and similar to that reported in the previous inspection. As was previously reported, pupils spend too little time working productively on computers, and few develop the skills, knowledge or confidence expected of pupils by Year 6. Whilst many of the pupils communicate their ideas soundly on a computer using text and pictures, their work on the keyboard is slow and inaccurate compared with other pupils of their age. In word-processing programs, they display average attainment as they negotiate menus capably, insert pictures into text and change text into columns to create a journalistic effect. Pupils use CD ROM machines with average skill to research information on the Victorian period for history, and print out their findings. Most pupils frame questions sufficiently well to negotiate simple modelling programs and realise the need to use the correct language to obtain the necessary answer. They have a sound knowledge of LOGO, and direct a shape around the screen with a written program. The school has no equipment to monitor changes in materials, or any working robots to develop pupils' control skills.

24. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make slow progress overall. With so few computers in the school, pupils have too little time refining their skills, and few develop the confidence to use computers without considerable help from adults. Following class lessons on new programs or processes, pupils then have to wait days to put the theory into practice, and this reduces the impact of the teaching. When given the opportunity, pupils working in pairs on computers work well for a short time, but soon come to a halt, and time is then wasted waiting for assistance.

25. Pupils enjoy using the computers and appreciate the speed at which changing information is displayed on the screen. Most pupils maintain good levels of interest and concentration for a while when working in pairs, but eventually their lack of skills frustrates them.

26. No teaching was observed in the last inspection. In this inspection, teaching is satisfactory, with all lessons at least satisfactory, and a minority good. Teachers make the best use of the computers at their disposal. Their planning is sound, and clearly indicates the skills that pupils will learn. The direct teaching of new skills is generally good: pupils gather around the computer and teachers show good imagination as they photocopy sheets to illustrate icons and program menus. In the best lessons, this introduction is given at a suitable pace to give time for pupils working in pairs to develop their new skills while the subject is still fresh in their minds, and this works well. Where teaching is least effective, pupils have to wait up to two weeks to have their turn because of the shortage of computers. Teachers have adequate knowledge of information technology, and are generally confident in using computers. They monitor pupils working on computers regularly, and ask good questions to assess their understanding. One teacher teaches keyboard skills; this is good practice, and helps pupils work at a faster rate. Teachers make sound use of computers in other lessons, particularly in history, geography and literacy. Pupils were given a particularly good opportunity to develop their skills in a literacy lesson which required them to write out a play in the style of a published play, with appropriate spacing, paragraphs and indents.

27. The development of information technology is a priority on the school development plan. The scheme of work is sound, and teachers use this well to produce good termly plans. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and this makes good distinction between pupils' experience on computers and their competence. The teacher with responsibility for co-ordinating information technology began this term. He has begun to monitor pupils' work by scrutinising their information technology books, and monitors teachers' termly and weekly plans. Realising the shortcomings in the teaching of information technology, the school is considering different options, including the formation of a computer suite, but the lack of funds stands in the way at present. The main problem is the shortage of computers and associated hardware. In the previous inspection, resources were poor, but the



school has recently bought a number of new, powerful computers. Classes, however, still have just one computer, and this is insufficient to provide pupils with the range of experiences and time using computers to attain national levels of competence. Consequently, the subject does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

107.

### **Religious education**

28. Pupils' work is average for their ages, and meets the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus, which is similar to the findings of the school's previous OFSTED inspection report. Pupils have an average understanding of Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and Buddhism. They have a sound understanding of the similarities and differences between religions, such as the understanding of the Creation and naming ceremonies of babies.

29. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their religious education. All pupils know that Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God, but that he is recognised as being only a prophet by some other religions. Younger pupils have a sound knowledge of celebrations, such as harvest, Divali and the wise men bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. Year 4 pupils know that a Rabbi and a vicar are religious leaders for the Jewish and Christian faiths. Older pupils have a good awareness of the five pillars of Islam and make good comparisons between the Koran and the Bible. They know that trees are important to Buddhists and that Jews have a festival connected with trees. Staff, pupils and their parents from other religious faiths contribute well to class work on beliefs, practices and traditions, which is good, and enhances all pupils' understanding.

30. Most pupils are interested in the subject, are attentive and concentrate well. They are eager to contribute to discussions and are respectful of others' ideas and faiths. Pupils are generally well behaved and have good relationships with adults, as well as other pupils.

31. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. This is better than the generally weak teaching noted in the previous inspection, when lessons lacked appropriate planning. All lessons are now well planned and resources, including good religious artefacts, are well prepared. In the best lessons, there are clear objectives, which are successfully related to the ability of the pupils. Teachers use effective questioning techniques, combined with clear explanations, which enable pupils to learn. There is good pace to the lessons and teachers have a good relationship with the pupils.

32. The subject is ably led by the co-ordinator, who has attended useful in-service training to ensure that she provides good leadership of the subject within the school. She has reviewed the sound policy and has developed the good scheme of work for religious education, which is in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus. The co-ordinator monitors religious education effectively through discussions with staff and looking at teachers' planning. Visits to places of worship enhance the provision of religious education within the school. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### **112. Art**

33. Nearly all pupils, including those with special educational needs, attain average standards for their age and make satisfactory progress. They experience a wide range of media and develop their skills of drawing, painting, textiles and modelling. Standards have improved since the last OFSTED inspection, when they were found to be mainly below those expected for their age.

34. Pupils produce a variety of sound work in two and three dimensions, using different media and techniques. Year 3 pupils blend chalk pastels to draw effective pictures of different planets in the solar system, after listening to 'The Planets' by Holst in connection with their work in science. Year 5 pupils mix paints to show light and shade to create a mood for their paintings after discussing illustrations in the story, 'The Whales Song'. They link these skills well to paint portraits of Tudor

kings and queens in work related to history. Year 4 pupils have created colourful computer generated artwork. Years 4 and 5 pupils work well together to produce effective class paintings and collage work, such as an underwater scene of 'The Rainbow Fish'. Year 6 pupils produce sound observational pencil drawings of mathematical solid shapes, with close attention to tone, detail and shading. They use their knowledge of the works of famous artists, such as Van Gogh, Kandinsky and Munch, to produce effective landscapes and to create a mood, using paints and pastels. Pupils used pastels to a good standard to create dramatic pictures of a time when they were frightened after looking at and discussing 'The scream' by Munch. They are beginning to use appropriate artistic vocabulary. Year 6 pupils enjoy the experience of using clay to make unusually shaped bowls. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress. The extracurricular art workshop for Year 6 pupils is good, as it enables them to experience different art techniques and to extend their knowledge of art.

35. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and work with enthusiasm. They show patience in mixing colours and share resources responsibly. They talk readily about their work and appreciate the work of other pupils when it is displayed. Pupils handle materials sensibly and are responsible when clearing up at the end of lessons. Behaviour is generally good. However, a small minority of pupils display inappropriate behaviour at the start of lessons. This inability to listen to instructions diminishes as the lesson progresses and pupils become absorbed in the task.

36. The quality of teaching is good, and is much improved from the previous inspection. Significant strengths of teaching are the good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils' work. Teachers' lesson plans are good, with clear objectives and appropriate activities to achieve them. There is a clear structure in the progressive development of artistic skills and techniques, and this has a positive impact on standards of work. Resources are well prepared, and teachers provide a wide range of art materials for pupils to use, and examples of famous pictures from which to gain ideas. Pupils are encouraged to experiment with colour and tone, and teachers do not over direct pupils. They demonstrate good work and afford good opportunities for pupils to evaluate the work of others. They create relevant links with other subjects, such as history and geography. Good use is made of classroom assistants and voluntary helpers, which has a particularly good effect on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

37. The subject is well led by the art co-ordinator. The last report criticised the absence of long term planning in art. There is now a sound policy document and a satisfactory scheme of work, which ensures that the pupils study an appropriate range of techniques. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning well, and he offers good support to colleagues. There is no monitoring of classroom teaching. The subject has good resources. Classrooms are rather cramped for artwork, but pupils are able to use the craft room for some art activities, which is a more suitable area for art. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

117.

### **Design and technology**

38. Pupils' work in design and technology is average for their ages. This represents an improvement in Key Stage 2 from the previous inspection, which reported low standards by Year 6. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils work well to gather information about a project, and generate a sound number of ideas. Many have a good knowledge of pulleys, and use this well to produce good working models of fairground rides. They join wood together effectively using 'Jinks' techniques to strengthen the joints of their drawbridge. Pupils' design skills are average. They draw plans and sketches with sound attention to detail and accuracy. In their best designs, pupils produced step-by-step sketches of the development of their textile hand puppets, and showed clearly how the project grew.

39. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. Early on, pupils improve their making skills and learn to use glue and adhesive tape with increasing skill. They

gain a sound knowledge of how things work, and progress sufficiently to be able to build sturdy models using construction kits. They develop a sound understanding of textiles, and learn how best to sew and stitch to fasten together and decorate pieces of cloth. Their designs improve from crude sketches in Year 3 to useful plans by Year 6.

40. Pupils enjoy their design and technology lessons. They persevere with tasks, and mostly complete them. They show a pride in their models, and are pleased to demonstrate how well they work to visitors.

41. It was only possible to observe one design and technology lessons during the inspection. Evidence from this lesson, and the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' plans, indicates that teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' planning is sound, and gives appropriate attention to the development of pupils' skills. Teachers make effective links with other subjects, such as history and literacy. In history, for example, pupils construct machines from medieval times, and build an Egyptian 'sphinx' using construction kits. In literacy, pupils make puppets, and move on to produce a play using their creations.

42. A good policy and scheme of work provide appropriate guidance to teachers, and state clearly how pupils' skills should progress through the school. The co-ordinator for design and technology is knowledgeable, and has benefited from appropriate training. He has responded well to criticisms in the previous report concerning the lack of guidance for teachers, and has adopted the Local Education Authority's planning documents. Assessment of pupils' work is weak, and is limited to brief comments at the end of the year about how well pupils have worked. The co-ordinator has plans to develop a system of photographic evidence to build up a collection of pupils' work. The subject has adequate resources, but many construction kits are now old and in need of replacement. There are sufficient tools, which are easily accessible by way of a design and technology trolley, and a sound range of books in the library. There is a well-equipped technology room, which is well used.

## 122. **Geography**

43. Pupils' work in geography is appropriate for their ages. The previous inspection was unable to make a judgement on standards in geography. Pupils in Year 6 use local maps with reasonable skill, and have a sound knowledge of the use of compass directions to locate features. They make sound use of their literacy skills in comparing land use in Letchworth with that in St. Lucia. They have a basic understanding of the water cycle and of the changing nature of a river's course from source to mouth. They know about the effect of rainwater on limestone and the unique landscape features which this produces. Pupils show good skills when talking about some of the instruments used to record weather, and interpreting weather maps of the British Isles.

44. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their mapping skills and their correct use of directional language. They develop a growing understanding of the significance of a map key. Year 5 pupils locate their homes on a large scale map of Letchworth, and plot their route to school accurately. They understand some of the reasons for the growth of settlements and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural lifestyles. Pupils are widening their knowledge of local geography. They undertake fieldwork in their local area, interviewing shoppers, investigating shop types and studying traffic pollution. Pupils use their mathematical skills well to record a traffic survey by means of accurate bar charts and to locate map features accurately by means of co-ordinates. They are learning about the relationship of geography to science, for example, in investigating different types of soil. Younger pupils are making sound progress in widening their knowledge of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom and their capital cities. They learn the difference between countries and continents and attempt to identify the continents on a world map. Many pupils are expanding their use of appropriate geographical terms, such as 'capital', 'continent' and 'estuary'. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress, particularly where additional classroom support is available.

45. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their work in geography. They listen attentively, settle down to individual or group work quickly and help each other when problems arise. Year 5 pupils were very keen to talk about their map work and their journeys to school. The presentation of their work is variable, and although most pupils take a pride in their work, a few write carelessly, and produce maps without appropriate labels.

46. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teachers plan their lessons well. A Year 3 teacher always put the objectives of the lesson on the board and drew his pupils' attention to them. This worked well as it helped to focus their minds on what they had to find out and made a positive contribution to their progress. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on the development of mapping skills. They match work well to pupils' varying needs and often plan extension work for higher attaining pupils. They give pupils the opportunity to use correct geographical terms. Day-to-day assessment is sound and teachers generally make good use of assessment to plan subsequent work. No evidence was seen of teachers using information technology to enhance learning in geography.

126.

## **History**

47. Pupils' work in history is average for their ages and this reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Pupils have an average sense of chronology. Year 6 pupils have a sound knowledge of Queen Victoria and of aspects of life during her reign. They research information well about how rich and poor children lived and use their literacy skills and word processing skills soundly to present their findings. They have a good understanding of how class sizes in Victorian schools were large, that discipline was strict and that methods of learning were very different from what they are today. In a role play lesson, the pupils made sound use of speaking and listening skills to act out scenes in a Victorian classroom.

48. Most pupils are making satisfactory progress in widening their knowledge of events and people of the past and in understanding the significance of change over time. They are developing their ability to research information from a variety of sources. Some pupils were observed looking up books on ancient Egypt in the school library, and others were using CD ROM programs to research information on the Romans. Many pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of evidence in history. Year 5 pupils know how the Battle of Bosworth led to the establishment of the Tudor dynasty. They follow up a visit to the Tower of London by studying Tudor cooking and the differences between a Tudor kitchen and a modern version. They design a menu for an Elizabethan banquet. In work linked to art, pupils show a growing understanding of some Tudor artists, such as Holbein. Year 4 pupils are widening their knowledge of life in Britain in Roman times. They know how slaves were used to fire the heating systems of Roman villas. Year 3 pupils are extending their knowledge of life in ancient Egypt. They write their names in hieroglyphics. They understand how the River Nile was, and remains, important to Egypt and they are making sound progress in deepening their knowledge of the pyramids. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.

49. Pupils have positive attitudes to work. They enjoy their history lessons and show a natural curiosity in finding out about the past. In a Year 5 lesson on the Tudors, one girl was eager to show a post card which she had bought during a recent family visit to Ann Boleyn's house. In a Year 3 lesson on ancient Egypt, one pupil was eager to know whether the country still had kings. A few pupils display inappropriate behaviour at times, but, overall, pupils listen attentively, are eager to offer ideas and settle down to work quickly. Year 6 pupils enjoyed their Victorian role play and took an active part in it. Indeed, many were disappointed when it came to an end.

50. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and similar to that reported in the previous inspection. Teachers plan their lessons well. The role play organised by both Year 6 teachers had a positive effect on pupils' understanding of life in a Victorian school and enhanced progress in learning.

Teachers use questioning well, in order to draw out ideas from the pupils and to increase their understanding of what conditions must have been like in Victorian times. They maintain a sound balance between giving information and allowing the pupils to research information for themselves. They organise their lessons well, usually ending with a plenary session where the pupils are encouraged to talk about what they have learned. Teachers make sound use of a variety of resources, including information technology and videos. At times, the pace of lessons slows down. As in the previous inspection, there is occasionally a lack of challenge, for example, when pupils are allowed to spend too long just colouring a picture.

51. The previous report criticised the lack of long term planning in history. There is now a good policy, and a clear scheme of work is used. The co-ordinator monitors planning and work samples to gain a good overview of standards throughout the school. There are sound procedures in place for assessing pupils' progress and good use is made of assessment to plan subsequent work. There are adequate resources to support learning in history. The school makes sound use of the education museum service for artefacts. There is a good range of history reference books in the school library.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide variety of visits to places such as the Tower of London, the British Museum and the Fitzwilliam Museum. These visits, together with the opportunities for pupils to learn about the various eras of British history, make a positive contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Music**

52. Pupils' work in music is average for their age and they make satisfactory progress. This reflects the findings of the previous OFSTED inspection. Pupils show a sound awareness of musical phrasing and pitch, and reasonable skill in maintaining independent rhythms and singing, appropriate to their ages. They are developing their skills of listening to and appraising music and are gaining in confidence in performing, both individually and in groups.

53. Throughout the school, pupils are developing an increasing ability to discern and play beats in differing times. They consolidate their previous learning well and build on it by learning new skills in listening and performing. Pupils enjoy singing Victorian music hall songs, which are well linked with their work in history on the Victorians, and are a good contrast to the classical music, such as 'Nimrod' by Elgar, listened to during assemblies. Pupils read and use symbols well when composing and performing. A few pupils read correct musical notation. The school choir takes part in the local schools' music festival each year and performs in school concerts at Christmas and Easter. Older pupils sing at the local Christmas lighting up ceremony in the town. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and enjoy the success music that brings them.

54. Pupils generally participate with enthusiasm and enjoy their music lessons. Most listen attentively and work well together when required. They are generally well behaved and are respectful of others' efforts. There is a good relationship between pupils and staff.

55. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some instances of unsatisfactory teaching and some good teaching. No class teaching was observed in the last inspection. Lessons are well planned and resources are well prepared. When teaching is good, this is characterised by good musical knowledge, high expectations which are made clear to pupils, precise planning, when a range of facets of music is covered in each lesson to provide a suitable challenge to all pupils, and by good pace to the lessons. When teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons do not engage the interest of pupils, and inappropriate behaviour by some pupils is not sufficiently well controlled, which results in a loss of teaching time.

56. The previous inspection criticised the lack of a scheme of work in music. After discussions with staff and attending a county specialist course, the co-ordinator has purchased a published scheme of work for music to provide support for both specialists and non-specialists within the staff. This scheme of work is effective, and ensures continuity in pupils' learning and a progression of skills.

At present, two parents lead the extracurricular recorder group. Peripatetic music teachers come into the school for extracurricular music lessons for some pupils to learn to play string and brass instruments. Although these extra musical experiences enhance pupils' understanding of music, some pupils are withdrawn from their English and mathematics lessons in order to have their music lessons, which is inappropriate.

57. Music makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, when they compose and perform together, and learn music from different cultures. Resources are sound with a range of good quality instruments which make a sound contribution to pupils' learning.

### **Physical education**

58. Overall, pupils' work in physical education is average for their ages, but many have good games and swimming skills. Observations were made of games lessons, gymnastics and swimming. No dance lessons were observed. The previous inspection found that standards were mainly good, but with significant underachievement in some classes. In gymnastics, Year 6 pupils are able to travel around the hall and hold sound balances on various body parts. They mirror the movements and the balances of a partner with varying degrees of success and a few higher attaining pupils do this well. Pupils are able to build up a sequence of balances, linked together well by rolls. Observation of after school football and netball clubs indicates that a significant number of pupils have above average standards in these sports.

59. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in developing their skills in outdoor games and in gymnastics. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making good progress in running with a rugby ball, holding it correctly and dodging and weaving. Some find it difficult to aim for open spaces. Pupils are able to participate in small sided rugby games, and throw and catch the ball with reasonable accuracy. In gymnastics, Year 3 pupils are refining their ability to balance on a variety of apparatus, and move smoothly from one piece of apparatus to another. Some girls perform good examples of cartwheels and forward rolls.

60. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons. They change sensibly into appropriate kit. They listen attentively and most of them respond quickly to instructions. They work with enthusiasm and many are eager to be chosen to demonstrate what they can do. Behaviour in lessons is good, although a small minority tends to be silly and gets over excited at times. Pupils take responsibility for getting apparatus and equipment out and they handle these carefully. They respond appropriately to the rules of games. Year 3 pupils particularly enjoyed a session of 'catch the tail' during a rugby lesson.

61. The quality of teaching is good, and is better than the generally satisfactory teaching reported in the previous inspection. Most of the teachers dress appropriately for physical education and actively join in, but, occasionally, they teach in outdoor shoes, and this limits the extent to which they can demonstrate appropriate techniques. They manage changing sessions well. There is effective teaching of specific skills and this is benefiting pupils' progress. An example of this was observed in a Year 4 lesson, where the teacher emphasised the correct handling of the rugby ball and the need to keep on the move. Teachers give pupils good opportunities to evaluate the performance of others, with a view to improving their own standards. Teachers plan and organise their lessons well, with effective warm up sessions, whose purpose is made clear to the pupils. They make appropriate use of praise and encouragement and careful assessments of pupils' progress. Relationships with the pupils are good. There is often a sense of humour and fun, while, at the same time, teachers maintain firm control and pay due attention to safety.

62. Clear policies and schemes of work are in place for all aspects of physical education. There is an adequate amount of apparatus and equipment, although some of it is dated and some mats are badly frayed at the corners. The co-ordinator monitors planning and some teaching, and gains a good

overview of standards throughout the school. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of after school clubs for football, netball and 'multiskills'. Football and netball matches are played against local schools and the pupils participate in the annual school district sports, albeit with limited success. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to participate in outdoor and adventurous activities during a residential visit to Derbyshire.

63. The inspection of this school included a focused view of swimming, which is reported below.

64. Pupils' skills in swimming are good. By the time they leave the school, almost all the pupils can swim unaided and competently for at least 25 metres. They are very confident in the water and show good technique in breast stroke, crawl and backstroke. Many enter the water using good diving techniques. The pupils show good levels of skill in water safety and personal survival. They tread water effectively and adopt 'huddle positions' in small groups. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in refining their swimming techniques. There was no judgement on attainment in swimming in the previous inspection.

65. The quality of teaching by both the instructor and the class teachers is good. Lessons are well planned and efficiently organised. The teachers make good use of parent helpers. There is good teaching of specific skills. Lessons move at a brisk pace, with no time being wasted. Teachers make appropriate use of praise and encouragement. Teaching is well matched to pupils' varying needs; class teachers take the higher and lower attaining groups and the instructor takes the middle group. Teachers monitor pupils' progress carefully and record it appropriately.

66. There are good curricular arrangements for swimming, although these do have an adverse effect on other areas of the curriculum. A clear scheme of work is in place. Each year group has nine swimming lessons during the school year. These lessons last 30 minutes initially, extending later to 60 minutes. During the inspection, the two classes having swimming lessons were away from school for two hours, one hour of this being in the water at the Local Authority's pool four miles away. The Year 6 class lost a literacy hour on this day and the Year 3 class lost a numeracy lesson. This raises the issue of equality of access to the full curriculum for these pupils. These classes also have another two hours approximately of games and gymnastics, so that their timetable has an above average proportion of time devoted to physical education.

## 147. PART C: INSPECTION DATA

### 147. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors who spent a total of 14.5 inspector days in the school. Time spent observing teaching, scrutinising the work of pupils and checking their attainment by working with them during the inspection - 40 hours 30 minutes. The range of the inspection activities are listed below.

- 62 lessons or parts of lessons were observed as were a number of registration periods, assemblies, playtimes, lunchtimes and extracurricular activities;
- discussions were held with all teaching staff and some non-teaching staff;
- many pupils were heard to read and were questioned about their mathematical knowledge and understanding;
- three samples of pupils' work across the full range of ability in all year groups were inspected in addition to work examined during lessons;
- all available school documentation was analysed;
- attendance records, pupils' records kept by the school and teachers' planning documents were examined;
- the budget figures were inspected;
- discussions were held with pupils, parents and governors;
  - a parents' meeting was held and the views of the 25 parents at this meeting and those of the 50 families who responded to a questionnaire were taken into account.

### 148. DATA AND INDICATORS

#### 148. Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y3 – Y6	193	6	65	28

#### 148.

#### Teachers and classes

#### 148. Qualified teachers (Y3 – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	22.4



**148. Education support staff (Y3 – Y6)**

Total number of education support staff:	10
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	104.5
Average class size:	24.1

**148.**

**Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	332617
Total Expenditure	322655
Expenditure per pupil	1722.88
Balance brought forward from previous year	5865
Balance carried forward to next year	15827

**148. PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 193  
 Number of questionnaires returned: 50

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	28	58	12	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	52	12	6	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	32	28	16	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	22	48	24	6	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	24	48	16	6	6
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	24	48	22	6	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	26	56	18	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	46	16	12	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	20	40	36	4	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	22	46	24	8	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	42	46	10	2	0