

INSPECTION REPORT

OVERSTONE COMBINED SCHOOL

Wing, Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110519

Headteacher: M.A. Parry B.Ed

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 19th – 22nd June 2000

Inspection number: 186620

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 4 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Church St
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Bedfordshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr C.W. Strickland

Date of previous inspection: 15th – 18th January 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Information technology Equal opportunities	How high are standards? Teaching. How well is the school led and managed?
Andy Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mari Powell	Team inspector	Provision for pupils under five. English Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Jeannie Underwood	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Geography History Music	
John Iles	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology Physical education	

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The Registrar, Inspection Quality Division, The Office for Standards in Education, Alexandra House
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REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school
How good the school is
What the school does well
What could be improved
How the school has improved since its last inspection
Standards
Pupils' attitudes and values
Teaching and learning
Other aspects of the school
How well the school is led and managed
Parents' and carers' views of the school

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	1 - 16
The school's results and achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	17 - 27
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	28 - 34
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	35 - 38
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	39 - 42
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	43 - 51
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	52
[OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES]	

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	53 - 138
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The local authority reorganisation carried out last September means that Overstone continues to provide education for the full primary age range, but not for Year 7 pupils. The ending of Grant Maintained status has also had a significant impact upon the way in which the school is funded. There are currently 268 pupils of predominantly white ethnic origin educated at the school, comprising 123 boys and 128 girls who attend on a full time basis. There are also 21 boys and 13 girls who are not yet of statutory school age and attend part-time only. About 4% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is much lower than the national average. The ability of the pupils on entry to the school varies from term to term, but is generally slightly above average. This is reflected in the relatively small proportion of pupils on the register for special educational needs (17%). Only one pupil has a statement of special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school. There is strong leadership and management that demand a high quality of education for the children. The teachers are experienced, knowledgeable and hard working. As a result, the lessons are challenging and well organised; they help the children to make good progress and achieve high standards in many subjects. The headteacher and governing body are managing a declining budget with skill. The school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- By the age of eleven, the standards of the pupils' work in English, mathematics and science are well above average and continuing to improve. Almost half of the pupils exceed the levels expected of eleven-year-olds in all three subjects.
- Throughout the school, the pupils achieve well because in most lessons the teachers have a secure grasp of the subjects that they teach and expect the children to do their best.
- The headteacher provides very strong leadership and through his personal example gives clear direction for the work of the school. He successfully delegates to staff, so that they have a good awareness of their management responsibilities. He also works closely with his governing body
- The school's curriculum is broad and well balanced. It offers all the pupils a very good range of relevant learning activities both in and out of the classroom.
- The governing body is providing effective support because it is well organised, well informed about what is happening in school and makes decisions on the basis of good quality evidence.
- The children display very positive attitudes to school. They work hard in lessons and behave responsibly. They are proud of their school's achievements and eager to share these with visitors.

What could be improved

- The lesson plans for the foundation subjects, such as music, design and technology, geography, history, art and physical education, need to have a more consistent identification of the learning objectives and opportunities for informal assessment
- Although the school follows local authority guidance the view of the inspection team is that the levels of adult supervision during swimming lessons need to be enhanced.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. There was a positive response to the findings of that report so that the school has made very good improvement and moved from strength to strength. The effective leadership and management identified within the school continue to strive for improvement. The teaching is now much more consistent, and there is a far greater proportion of very good lessons. As a result, standards have continued to rise and are considerably higher than those described in the last report. The shortcomings in subjects such as religious education that were identified at that time have been successfully remedied

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	C	B	C
mathematics	B	A	A	B
science	A	A	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The table shows that in last year's national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils achieved results in science that were well above average when compared both with schools nationally and with schools that have a similar intake. In mathematics, standards were well above the national average and were better than the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. In English, pupils' results were above the national average and broadly in line with those of pupils from similar schools. Taken overall, the improvement in the pupils' results over the past four years is similar to the national trend.

The inspection findings indicate that standards continue to be well above average in all three subjects and much better than the national picture. This is because the leadership makes very effective use of a variety of test results to set challenging targets for each child in the school. Consequently, at the end of Key Stage 1, a much larger proportion than usual exceeds the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Similarly, by the end of Key Stage 2, almost a half of the current Year 6 is reaching levels beyond those expected of eleven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science.

The strength of the pupils' literacy skills supports their work in many other subjects of the curriculum. As a result, by the age of eleven the pupils' achievements in art, design and technology, geography, history, physical education and French exceed the expected levels. The quality of pupils' singing is also above average. Similarly, the improvements in the school's provision for religious education has led to a quality of work beyond that required of eleven-year-olds in the local syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils are diligent and try hard to improve their work. They make the most of what the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils are polite and well behaved in class and on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships at the school are very good. Both adults and children act with care and consideration. The pupils take on responsibility very willingly.
Attendance	Good. Above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
60 lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good

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

The teaching has improved and is much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. On this occasion, almost all of the lessons were found to be at least satisfactory (99%). A half of the lessons were good (50%) and a further quarter (27%) were either very good or excellent. Only one lesson (less than 2%) was considered unsatisfactory. The teaching is particularly good in the class containing the pupils under the age of five and at the upper end of Key Stage 2. In Years 5 and 6, 60% of the lessons seen were judged as either very good or excellent.

The reason so many lessons are successful in pushing forward the children's learning is that the teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics where the teachers are making effective use of the guidance provided by the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. There is also considerable strength in the expertise found in some parts of the school in science, music and French. Almost all of the teachers are highly skilled practitioners. They organise their classrooms carefully and ensure a wide range of resources is at hand to support the children's learning.

Most teachers are very clear about what they expect the pupils to learn in each lesson, but in the non-core subjects their lesson notes are sometimes insufficiently precise. Consequently, on a few occasions, although the lesson activities are relevant and appropriate, the teachers are sometimes unclear about where to focus their informal assessment to confirm that the pupils are acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding at an appropriate rate.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum that includes drama, the teaching of French and an exciting range of educational visits and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The support of the learning assistants helps these pupils to make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. There are clear rules and high expectations for considerate behaviour that make a strong contribution to the ethos of the school. The teachers take great care to raise the pupils' awareness of other cultures and to prepare them for life in a multi-ethnic society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very effective support and works hard to promote the pupils' welfare. Their academic progress and personal development are also monitored very carefully.

The school is conscientious and generally effective in applying its systems for the care and welfare of the pupils. However, the inspection team is concerned about the level of adult supervision provided during swimming lessons in the school pool. The view of the inspectors is that there should always be a second adult observer at lessons not involved in the teaching.

The school has good links with its parents and carers who are strongly supportive of its work. They hear their children read and encourage them to complete homework. The school provides very good annual pupil reports and regular parents' evenings. However, the parents receive little information about what is being taught.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher continues to drive forward the work of the school. He receives strong support from his committed staff team through their effective management of the curriculum and resources and their close monitoring of standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a very good oversight of the work of the school. They provide strong support for the headteacher and staff, ask the right sorts of questions and fulfil all of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is shrewd evaluation of performance based upon a compelling analysis of evidence collected at first hand from around the school. This is used extremely effectively in planning for future improvement.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its budget. Finance is allocated carefully to match the priorities of the school development plan and expenditure is evaluated in terms of its impact upon pupils' learning. The principles of best value are applied to all major decisions.

The levels of staffing are good, with a high proportion of very experienced teachers. The school grounds and buildings are spacious, attractive and well maintained. They make a significant contribution to the quality of education offered by the school. The range and quantity of educational resources is very good because the governors use their budget wisely and the staff and children take care of the equipment. The provision of books and computers is particularly strong.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school, make good progress and do well in their work. • Standards at the school are high • The teaching is good. • Most teachers are friendly, accessible and willing to talk about how children's progress. • It is easy to approach the school with a query or problem. • The children are well behaved and polite. • The good quality of the children's annual progress reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wider range of activities outside lessons. • Greater consistency in the setting and marking of homework. • More information about the curriculum and closer links with school.

The inspection team agrees with the large majority of extremely positive views expressed by parents about the school. Although the school sends home a lot of useful information, the inspectors agree that more detail about the curriculum would assist parents in supporting further their children's learning at home. Inspectors saw appropriate, ongoing homework being set and received throughout the inspection. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities including sporting and cultural clubs and residential trips to France and Wales. Most of these activities cater for the older pupils and are well attended.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The table shows that in last year's national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 the pupils achieved results in science that were well above average both in the national context and in comparison to schools with similar intakes. In mathematics, standards were well above the national average and better than those achieved by pupils in similar schools. In English, the results were above the national average and broadly in line with those of similar schools. Taken overall, the improvement in the pupils' results over the past four years is similar to the national trend.
2. In the national tests for 1999 at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' results were well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. In comparison with similar schools they were well above average in writing and mathematics and above average in reading.
3. The inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 continue to be well above average in all three subjects and much better than the national picture. Similarly, the work of the seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics is well above average and above average in science. This is because the leadership makes very effective use of a variety of test results to set challenging targets for each child in the school. Consequently, the proportion of pupils that exceeds the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics is much larger than usual. Similarly, almost a half of the current Year 6 is reaching levels beyond those expected of eleven-year-olds in English, mathematics and science as they near the end of Key Stage 2. The school monitors standards rigorously, checks to see that boys and girls achieve appropriately and sets itself realistic, challenging targets that it is on course to meet. *As a result, standards are much higher than those described in the previous inspection report.*
4. The pupils coming into school as four-year-olds are assessed during their first term of part-time education. The results of these assessments indicate that the children's ability levels are slightly above average, but in most cases not significantly so. They receive a good start to their time in school and benefit from lively and interesting teaching. Consequently, they make good progress and the majority meets the targets for five-year-olds in their creative development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. They exceed the targets in language and literacy, mathematics, and in their physical, personal and social development.
5. The strength of the pupils' literacy skills supports their work in many other subjects of the curriculum. They are articulate, thoughtful and discuss sensibly. Most learn quickly to read and write with accuracy and fluency, and they turn readily to pen and paper to record their thoughts and ideas. They know how to use a library or the Internet or, a CD-ROM encyclopaedia to locate information. Accordingly, by the age of eleven, the pupils' achievements in geography, history, and French exceed the expected levels.
6. Mathematics is taught effectively and the school has made a successful start to the introduction of the national numeracy strategy. The teachers have a secure grasp of the subject and expect the pupils to master basic number skills at an early age. This is achieved through frequent practice and quick fire mental mathematics sessions. The teachers reinforce their pupils' learning by making use of their mathematical knowledge in other subjects such as science. As a result, the pupils enjoy mathematics, are confident in handling large numbers and standards remain high throughout the school.
7. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in science are above average. The pupils make good progress in learning about skeletal frames through a practical activity identifying animal bones. This work is carefully extended by the teacher's pertinent questioning and the pupils' good research skills. By the end of Key Stage 2, progress has quickened still further as a result of some excellent teaching in Year 6. Standards are well above average because the pupils are thinking scientifically and using their knowledge and experience to good effect. This was evident, for instance, when they explained the relationship between vibration and volume and pitch of sound.

8. Every class demonstrates a strong commitment to the daily use of information technology and most pupils are reaching the levels expected of seven and eleven-year-olds by the end of the respective key stages. In Years 5 and 6 there is a significant minority that considerably exceeds the expected levels as a result of strong personal interest and involvement in the school's computer club.
9. At the end of both key stages, the pupils' work in art, design and technology and physical education exceeds the expected levels. Similarly, the improvements in the school's provision for religious education have led to a quality of work beyond that described for seven and eleven-year-olds in the local syllabus.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The pupils' attitudes to work, their behaviour, personal development and relationships within the school are consistently very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, the parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The vast majority of parents believe the school consistently maintains high standards of behaviour. A tiny minority of parents expressed concerns about bullying in the playground, but the inspection evidence did not support these views.
11. In the vast majority of cases, the pupils' attitudes towards learning in the school are very good. They are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers, ask and answer questions, and willingly offer their own ideas and suggestions. Pupils of all ages quickly settle down diligently in class, are capable of maintaining sustained periods of concentration and stay on task. They are interested in their lessons and many of them take part in the wide and varied range of extra curricular activities that the school offers.
12. Overall, the pupils' behaviour is very good. They conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner at all times. Their behaviour in the classrooms and in assemblies is of a consistently high standard and there is no disruption to learning. The pupils move around the school in a very quiet and orderly manner. Behaviour at breaks and lunchtime is very good. There were no obvious signs of any bullying or isolation of individual children. There have been no exclusions in the current academic year. The combination of the high standards in the pupils' personal discipline and the consistently good class management has a positive impact the standards of attainment achieved.
13. Relationships within the school are very good. The pupils respond positively to their teachers, to other adults whom they come into contact with, and also to one another. Pupils of all ages are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors, and particularly considerate and friendly to new pupils joining the school. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. All pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, pupils show due reverence for the occasion, willingly joining in hymn singing and prayers. There is no deliberate damage to resources or school property and a remarkable absence of litter around the site.
14. The pupils' personal development is very good. They are learning a good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. They support local and national charities and make appropriate visits into the community. Older children have the opportunity to participate in residential trips in both the United Kingdom and abroad. The children respond well to the many opportunities provided for taking responsibility for their own work in the classrooms. In many lessons, pupils were observed working independently, undertaking their own research, operating computers and staying on task. When taking on formal responsibilities around the school, for example helping to supervise younger children and running lunchtime library sessions, the pupils respond in a very mature and sensible manner.
15. The parents are very supportive in helping the school to maintain good levels of attendance that are above the national average. There is almost no unauthorised absence. The pupils enjoy coming to school. They arrive on time, and the lessons, assemblies, breaks and other activities start and finish promptly.

16. The high standards maintained in behaviour, attendance and punctuality are strong features of the school and make a very positive contribution to the pupils' attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The teaching has improved and is now much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. On this occasion, almost all of the lessons seen (99%) were found to be satisfactory or better. A half of the lessons (50%) were judged to be good and a further quarter or so (27%) were either very good or excellent. Only one lesson was considered unsatisfactory (2%). The teaching is particularly good in the class containing the pupils under the age of five and at the upper end of Key Stage 2. In Years 5 and 6, 60% of the lessons seen were judged as either very good or excellent.
18. The teaching of the pupils under the age of five is highly effective because the teacher has a very good understanding of how young children learn. She knows the critical importance of using the right sorts of language and is very skilled at explaining the activities in different ways so that all the children understand what she wants them to do. She is similarly skilled in questioning the children to check what they have learned, and she listens acutely to the way that they respond. In every activity she takes care to extend the children's language by introducing new words and technical vocabulary.
19. The classroom is well organised and facilitates a sensible mix of activities that cover all of the nationally agreed areas of learning. The teacher's planning is detailed and thorough, setting out clearly what is to be achieved. The sessions start and finish with all of the class together. This is important because it helps the children to get to grips with being part of a larger group and to learn to take turns and listen to each other. Sometimes important news is shared. For instance, the teacher handled the sad news of the death of one of the class guinea pigs extremely sensitively. The subsequent conversation enabled an important dialogue to take place about the possible causes of death and for the children to talk about their memories of "Honey". The strong scientific inclinations of one pupil who wanted to dig up the corpse and have it stuffed were handled in a firm, but kindly fashion!
20. The group activities are productive because they are interesting and frequently linked to a central theme. For example, much of the current work in class is taken up with the study of the African nation of Togo. The teacher has introduced this successfully through stories and other well-chosen literature, supported effectively by a very good range of artefacts, maps and samples of clothing. She works hard in order to deepen the children's understanding and to improve their basic skills. For instance, she organises activities where they write simple captions to their drawings of characters from "Chidi only likes blue," and they practice spending money by making purchases from the market set up in the role play area. They make and taste semolina the African way and construct houses for a model village. All these activities help to bring the children's learning alive. Furthermore, the effective deployment of the learning assistant and student nursery nurse means that not only are there good levels of adult assistance available to the children, but that the teacher receives plenty of information about how each child is progressing. This helps her plan for the next steps in learning.
21. In key stages 1 and 2, the teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subjects they teach. This is one of the main reasons that so many lessons are successful in pushing forward the children's learning. It is particularly the case in English and mathematics where the teachers are making effective use of the guidance provided by the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. In these lessons, the teachers set out clearly in their planning what they expect the pupils to learn. The most effective teachers make the objectives clear to their pupils at the start of the lesson, and then refer back to them at regular intervals, especially during the concluding whole class session when they check what has been learnt. The pace of these lessons is almost always brisk. In the literacy hour, the chosen texts are varied and interesting and the teachers probe the pupils' understanding with shrewd questioning. In mathematics each numeracy lesson starts with plenty of quick-fire mental calculation. A notable feature here is the way that the teachers always take care to ensure that besides extending the brightest pupils, they always find time to offer simpler questions for those who find mental calculations difficult in this setting. This clearly demonstrates the teachers' very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of

individual pupils.

22. The school has given considerable thought to the teaching of mixed age classes. The current strategy in Key Stage 2 of arranging for English and mathematics to be taught in sets based on ability is working well. The tasks are closely matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils, and it is clear from talking to the children and analysing their work that each set is making rapid progress. Similarly, extra support is effectively organised for the pupils with special educational needs, so that the learning assistants know exactly what to do to help. All these pupils have a programme of activities related to the targets in their individual education plans, and with the guidance and support of the learning assistants they are making good progress towards them.
23. There is also considerable strength in the subject expertise found in some parts of the school in science, music and French. The effective deployment of the music specialist leads to a high standard of singing throughout the school. Similarly, the linguistic skills and enthusiasm of two teachers has resulted in the teaching of French becoming firmly established as part of the school's curriculum for Years 5 and 6. These lessons are very effective because the pupils are encouraged to speak, question and discuss in French. Most pupils already have considerable confidence in their oral ability and the good quality of their accent is a direct reflection of the effectiveness of the teaching. Another good feature of this work is the way that the school enables the Year 6 pupils to apply these skills in a real way by taking them to France for a week each summer.
24. Almost all of the teachers are highly skilled practitioners. They organise their classrooms carefully and ensure a wide range of resources is at hand to support the children's learning. For instance, in a design and technology lesson in Key Stage 1 the teacher made sure that all the necessary tools and equipment were strategically placed so that pupils could find them easily, work safely and waste no time. Good working practices are encouraged from an early age so that the pupils quickly become used to setting out their work neatly and carrying out homework tasks thoroughly. Another notable feature is the way that teachers encourage pupils to carry out independent research as a regular part of their work. For instance, during a literacy lesson in Year 6, the pupils showed a high level of maturity in finding out about Roald Dahl. They used a CD-ROM encyclopaedia to locate the information they required and then made notes of the relevant parts rather than just printing out the whole document.
25. In almost every lesson, the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers shine through. They expect the children to do well. However, this excitement and drive is less in evidence in the Year 3 / 4 class. As a result the pace of learning, although adequate, slows slightly in comparison with the rest of the school and the children's response is less wholehearted.
26. The teachers are strongly committed to encouraging the pupils in their use of information technology. Their planning always tries to identify ways in which information technology can be incorporated in the other subjects of the curriculum, with the result that the computers are continually in use for some relevant purpose. The teachers demonstrate new programs, skills and techniques and set up rotas so that every pupil gets a chance to practice. However, in parts of the school it is sometimes difficult for the teachers to check how the pupils are approaching their work because most of the class is occupied with other activities. The teachers make more effective intervention and push learning forward when there is a group of pupils working on several computers such as the small "suite" outside the Years 4-6 classrooms. Elsewhere, the teachers tend to focus on the outcomes of the activity rather than supporting individuals in the systematic development of the skills and techniques of information technology. **This is an area for improvement that the governors should consider for inclusion in their action plan.**
27. Most teachers are very clear about what they expect the pupils to learn in each lesson, but in the non-core subjects their lesson notes are insufficiently precise. Consequently, although the lesson activities are relevant and appropriate, the teachers are sometimes uncertain about where to focus their informal assessment to confirm that the pupils are acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding at an appropriate rate. For instance, in a physical education in Key Stage 1 the pupils enjoyed a vigorous games lesson, but the teacher did not make it clear how the pupils might improve their basic ball skills

before practising these within the context of the games. **This is a key issue for action.**

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

28. The school provides its pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. It also offers a range of additional experiences that further enrich the pupils' broader development. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education provides an important underpinning to the more academic aspects of the curriculum. This includes provision for raising the pupils' awareness of the dangers of the misuse of drugs and an element of sex education. There is also a range of interesting clubs and other extra curricular activities.
29. The school is successful in its implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. This has been a powerful factor in raising attainment in these areas to their current high levels. Increasing attention is being paid to developing the pupils' skills in information technology across the curriculum. Word processing and the use of CD-ROM are well-established activities within a number of subjects such as English, history, geography and science. Educational visits also form an important part of the overall programme. For instance, a recent visit to France has greatly enhanced opportunities for the oldest pupils to practise their existing language skills and to acquire new ones. There is a very good level of support for visits and other extracurricular activities embracing music, sports and Internet clubs. Through these activities the pupils learn to co-operate as teams, acquire a sense of fair play and enjoy opportunities to pit their skills in competition against those of other young people.
30. The youngest pupils enjoy a range of broadly based activities that are carefully planned in order to help them achieve the goals identified for them in the nationally agreed Areas of Learning. As a result, these young pupils are developing well socially and are well prepared to cope with the requirements of the various national strategies in which they will participate at the age of five. There are good links with the local playgroup that provide the teachers with very useful information about the children as they plan the early stages of their learning.
31. The oldest pupils are very well prepared for transfer to their local secondary schools, either grammar or comprehensive. By the age of eleven the pupils have acquired a good range of skills and knowledge and a confident approach to their work that enables them to make this transition with little or no difficulty. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are clearly communicated to the receiving schools prior to their arrival.
32. The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is good, and for their moral, social and cultural development it is very good. The school's aims and values are strong. The pupils are well known to the adults who are dedicated to promoting their confidence in themselves as individuals and an awareness of the impact of their attitudes and behaviour upon others. The school assemblies provide appropriate opportunities for the pupils to reflect on spiritual issues. For example, the older pupils have been stimulated to write very reflective prayers focusing on the spiritual connotations of the Millennium. There are some attractive corners of the school that encourage the pupils to pause and reflect, but such provision could be further enhanced, for example, by the inclusion of intriguing artefacts or materials from the natural world. Although there are spontaneous opportunities for the pupils to express awe and wonder about some of the things they experience in lessons, for example, in the appreciation of art or good literature, this is an ingredient that could usefully be developed more consistently across all classes. In a class of Year 1 pupils, for example, there was rapt attention as the teacher's narrative skills were brought into play to describe the birth of the Buddha. The sense of wonder was palpable as the children reflected on the enfolding of the Buddha and his mother by the branches of a tree and the flowers that sprang up where his first steps were taken.
33. The social and moral climate within which the pupils spend their school day has a very strong influence upon them. High standards of behaviour are consistently, but almost unobtrusively promoted. The

pupils' achievements are openly celebrated in assemblies and reflected in displays of photographs and in the trophies they have won. The adults trust the pupils to carry out a range of responsibilities, such as organising the play equipment trolleys at breaks, supervising the library and overseeing the welfare of younger members of the school at playtimes. The pupils respond to this trust in a mature and responsible manner. Effective use of well-chosen stories also supports the development of moral understanding in younger pupils. For instance, they quickly recognised that the animals who helped themselves to fruit from Handa's basket had behaved dishonestly.

34. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good. There are very good opportunities for them to appreciate their local heritage and the mainly Christian influences on the culture of this country. Good teaching has stimulated the pupils to learn about the characteristics of much older cultures such as that of Ancient Greece. Through the study of literature and a range of art from Europe, Australia, Africa and elsewhere, the pupils learn to value the impact of art and writing upon various civilisations. Work in geography also enables them to learn about life and culture in other places such as St. Lucia, and Togo. Similarly, the study of the French language is a rich ingredient in developing the pupils' understanding of elements of life in France. The very youngest children are currently receiving an exciting, living experience of the culture of another country through meeting an African visitor who has also provided some very attractive and intriguing artefacts and articles of clothing for them to observe and discuss. With other pupils in the next class, they are also relishing opportunities to see and taste some of the foods associated with the visitor's home country. A good number of pupils benefit greatly from additional opportunities to learn instruments such as recorder, violin and woodwind.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The school very effectively supports its pupils and the staff strive hard to promote their welfare. This is a strong feature of the school. The headteacher places a high priority on pastoral care and provides very good leadership in this aspect. The teachers are very approachable and totally supportive. The non-teaching staff are dedicated, committed and provide very good support for both teachers and pupils. All members of the staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them conscientiously and consistently. Very good provision is made for medical and first aid requirements, and the arrangements for dealing with routine matters such as minor accidents are very good. Conscientious teachers who are alert and vigilant supervise pupils well at breaks. Experienced and efficient midday assistants undertake the lunchtime supervision, and the standard of their care is high.
36. The school makes very good use of appropriate external support agencies, particularly for travellers' children. The classroom assistants and parent helpers are deployed effectively and used very well to support pupils and teachers. The support for the pupils with special educational needs is good, and has a positive effect on their attainment and progress. Child protection procedures are securely in place and there is very good awareness of them throughout the school. There are also very good procedures for health and safety. These are well known and understood by all staff, who consistently demonstrate safe working practice in lessons. However, the level of adult supervision in some swimming lessons was judged to be insufficient, particularly for the younger children. Although the school follows the guidance provided by the local authority, the inspectors' view is that there should always be a second adult in attendance. This adult should observe the pool and be on hand to manage the pupils and raise the alarm should the teacher ever have to enter the water to retrieve a child in difficulty. **This is a key issue for action.** The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and all the required safety inspections and checks, including assessment of risks, are regularly carried out and properly recorded. A small number of minor health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the headteacher during the inspection.
37. The school has very effective procedures in place to promote and monitor discipline and good behaviour. All members of staff have high expectations of behaviour, and discipline is administered consistently and well. This has a positive impact on the high standards of behaviour maintained in the school. Attendance is monitored rigorously. Absence is meticulously recorded, immediately followed up and appropriate action taken. Good attendance is encouraged and the general ethos of the school and the positive attitudes of the staff ensure that pupils are happy to attend.

38. The headteacher, class teachers and the support staff know the pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. The class teachers maintain detailed, personal profiles of the pupils, which are summarised in the annual progress reports to parents. The pupils' work is consistently marked and assessed. The headteacher and staff maintain a detailed analysis of the performance of individual pupils across a broad range of tests and assessments. This helps them to set targets for each child and predict the performance of each year group as they move through the school. This information is also used effectively to modify and extend the school's curriculum and the teachers' long and medium term planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The relationships between the school and parents are very good. The school enjoys the active support of the majority of parents, who consistently expressed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. There are a good number of committed parents who regularly help in the classrooms and accompany the children on out of school trips. Parental involvement in the children's work at home is also good, and there is strong support for home reading and homework. There is an active parent teacher association, which organises events and raises funds for the school.
40. Although the vast majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems or complaints, a significant minority did not agree that the school works closely with them. The inspection evidence did not support these parents' views. The school staff are very approachable and parents were regularly observed talking to class teachers at the start and close of the school day. A significant number of parents disagreed that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Again, the inspection evidence did not support this view. The school takes children on appropriate trips and during the inspection many children were observed taking part in the wide and varied range of extra curricular activities on offer. Some parents do not agree their children get the right amount of work to do at home. The parents are given very detailed information about the school's homework policy at the start of each academic year. The provision for homework was judged to be generally satisfactory, but there are some inconsistencies between classes and age groups
41. The day to day communication between the school and home is satisfactory. The school sends out regular communications to parents about specific events and activities, but the newsletters, although informative, are infrequent. The home reading records and weekly spelling records provide the parents with appropriate information and are well used. The school entrance, with notice board for parents, is very welcoming and has a good range of information about the school and wider educational matters. The school publishes a detailed and comprehensive prospectus and an informative booklet for the parents of children who are about to join the reception class. The governors hold an annual meeting with the parents and publish an annual report. The parents are given a very good annual report about their children's attainment and progress and offered appropriate opportunities to attend meetings to discuss it with their teachers. The reports consistently indicate what pupils can and cannot do, the progress being made, where pupils are finding difficulties and the areas for improvement. Some parents stated that they were not given enough information about what is taught in the school. The inspection evidence supported these parents' views. The school is aware of this and has set up a joint working group with the governors to investigate ways of improving communications with parents.
42. Overall, the school's links with the parents enrich its work considerably and have a beneficial effect on the pupils' academic achievement and personal development.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

43. The previous report correctly identified the leadership and management of the school as a major strength. This continues to be the case. Much of the success of this school is a direct result of the astute leadership of its long serving and very experienced headteacher. He holds strong views about education, but listens hard to the opinions of others. The staff team has been together a long time and he knows them well. He delegates wisely and strives to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of their role and their individual importance in ensuring the success of the school. As a result, he enjoys the full support of his staff and the governing body as the school continues to evolve to reflect the changing needs of education in a new millennium.

44. The school aims are cogent and concise, and contain a strong commitment to the provision of educational breadth and excellence that is reflected in its day to day running. This is achieved through rigorous, ongoing self-evaluation. For instance, the headteacher maintains a very good overview of standards based on the thorough analysis of a wide range of test and assessment data. The progress of every child at the school in acquiring the key skills of literacy and numeracy is diligently recorded, and this information used to set realistic, but challenging targets for both individual pupils and year groups. Following appropriate training, the senior management team is now involved in checking the quality of teaching in lessons. The results of these visits are recorded and used as a basis for discussions with the teachers.
45. The school sets about evaluating its progress in a systematic fashion. The school development plan is useful because it is brief and logical in format, and sets out clearly what needs to be done and who will do it. As a result, each subject co-ordinator knows exactly what is expected of them each year. The plan is realistic, so that not every subject is the focus of major development at the same time. For instance, this year has seen a lot of action to cope with the National Numeracy Strategy and preparations for the National Grid for Learning in information technology. Consequently, there has been a lower emphasis on science.
46. The subject co-ordinators do a very good job. They check the quality of work in their subjects by analysing samples of pupils' work from around the school. They go on courses to keep up to date and share their learning with colleagues at staff meetings. They provide guidance on planning and increasingly are starting to monitor the quality of the teaching, especially in English and mathematics. From time to time, they carry out reviews into particular issues that are either raised by the headteacher and governors or emerge from discussion in staff meetings. This has most recently been the case in music, but the school records reveal a wealth of information that has been used sensibly to inform the development of school policy. For example, after the last inspection there was a detailed study to establish what needed to be done to improve reading standards. This year the co-ordinators for information technology have carried out an audit to discover what sorts of training are required to improve the teachers' skills and boost their confidence in teaching this subject. It is this sort of attention to detail that leads to continuing school improvement because decisions are firmly based on the thorough evaluation of all available evidence.
47. The governors are strongly supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher and senior staff. The governing body has a sensible committee structure that reflects individual strengths and interests of its members and allows work to be shared equitably amongst them. Many are involved with the school on a regular basis as both parents and governors. The head teacher's reports and the regular curriculum reviews help to keep them well informed. They use this knowledge to check that things are in order. Acting as "a critical friend", they ask tough questions and expect answers to be backed up with evidence. A good example of this partnership is the way that the senior management team is working with a group of governors to examine ways of improving further the flow of information to parents and the wider community about what goes on at school.
48. The school's finances are managed with rigour because the headteacher and governors are fully conversant in all aspects of budget management. At the moment, the school's income is falling because of a change of status and the loss of the Year 7 cohort following a reorganisation by local authority. Nevertheless, prudent management and careful forward planning means that the school is still in a position to sustain favourable staffing, improve its buildings and retain sufficient reserves to ensure a "soft-landing" when next year's budget is announced. Decisions about spending are linked closely to the school development plan and the principles of best value are rigorously applied. The governors are always careful to ask how expenditure is going to benefit the pupils, but at the moment their checks for deciding whether purchases are having the desired effect on the quality of education are less consistent.
49. Every subject co-ordinator manages a budget. This is useful because it strengthens their management role and encourages them to consult with colleagues before prioritising what needs to be bought. It is further facilitated by the good quality information provided by the finance officer who makes extremely efficient use of information technology to produce regular budget reviews. Funds are used wisely and relate clearly to the school development plan. As a result, the teachers have amassed a very good level of educational resources for the benefit of the pupils. Books are plentiful and there are a good number of

computers throughout the school.

50. The staffing levels are good with a high proportion of very experienced teachers who provide a broad range of subject and phase expertise. There is significant strength in English, mathematics, French, the Early Years, music and science that contributes to good teaching and high standards.
51. The school's accommodation is spacious and offers a wide range of facilities including a library, a dedicated music room, a learner swimming pool, a large playground and a sports field. The hard work of the caretaker and cleaning staff makes a strong contribution to ensuring that the school's learning environment continues to be well maintained, clean and attractive.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to improve still further the high quality of education offered by the school, the headteacher, governors and staff should now;
 - Ensure that the planning in the non-core subjects is as clear about the learning intentions of each lesson as that in literacy and numeracy. As a corollary, the teachers should identify one or two simple opportunities for informal assessment in each lesson in order to ascertain whether or not the pupils have mastered the objectives. **(paragraph 27)**
 - Review the levels of adult supervision provided for the teaching swimming in the school pool. **(paragraph 36)**

In addition, the headteacher, staff and governing body might also consider including in their action plan a review of the teaching of information technology to establish how best to ensure the systematic teaching of the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding in all parts of the school. **(paragraphs 26 & 117)**

The school is aware of these issues and in the case of those relating to curriculum planning and information technology has already identified appropriate time for review and staff training within the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	22	50	22	1	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		268
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YRec – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		47

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	25

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	23	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	14
	Girls	22	23	23
	Total	34	35	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92	95	100
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	14	12
	Girls	23	23	23
	Total	35	37	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	95	100	95
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	18	19	37

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	16	18
	Girls	14	14	18
	Total	30	30	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81	81	97
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	16	15	17

	Total	31	31	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84	84	89
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	234
Any other minority ethnic group	1

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YRec - Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YRec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	118

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	[]
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	[]

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	546591
Total expenditure	531819
Expenditure per pupil	1642
Balance brought forward from previous year	59037
Balance carried forward to next year	73809

Total number of education support staff	[]
Total aggregate hours worked per week	[]

Number of pupils per FTE adult	[]
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	268
Number of questionnaires returned	131

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	37	5	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	55	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	34	57	6	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	53	12	2	8
The teaching is good.	47	46	5	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	56	13	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	36	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	40	4	2	3
The school works closely with parents.	31	47	14	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	47	45	1	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	51	2	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	37	17	2	15

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. All the children who have not reached their fifth birthday are in one class. They join the school either in September, January or after Easter. A significant majority has previously attended the local playgroup with which the school has very good links both in relation to curriculum and the personal, social and emotional development of the children. The results of early assessments indicate that the attainment of the greater proportion of the children as they start school is slightly above average. A few children have above average skills in several areas. Their speaking skills, especially, are often well above average. Recent changes to the baseline assessment used by the school means that there are only limited data to compare attainment on entry with children of a similar age elsewhere in the county.

Personal, social and emotional development

54. Most of the children make a confident start to school. This is because their induction experiences prepare them well for the time when they spend a half of each day in school. The children quickly familiarise themselves with classroom routines. They understand that they have to sit quietly and respond politely during the taking of the register, can access equipment, such as aprons for painting or construction materials, independently and know that they have to tidy up after activities. They show a high level of interest in the tasks prepared for them. For instance, one area of the classroom is currently set up as an African market. The children eagerly organise their shopping activities there and greatly enjoy balancing fruit and vegetables on their heads as they go to the market. They relate amicably and sociably to each other as they share activities in different groups. For example, one group of eight children reading together from an early reading book helped each other by pointing out words and turning the pages at appropriate times. Similarly, as they play on the outdoor equipment or ride the wheeled vehicles, they happily take turns and share with each other. When a new child joined the class during the inspection, she was quickly made to feel welcome as the children had been well prepared for her potential bewilderment as a new member of the group.
55. The children's personal, emotional and social development is above what is expected at this stage. This is because the adults are very sensitive to their needs and devise activities that not only foster their self-confidence, but also their awareness of the needs of others. There are good opportunities for the children to discuss their feelings openly. For example, the death of one of the class's guinea pigs was talked about and the children were able to articulate their feelings of loss at their own level.

Language and Literacy

56. Early reading and writing skills are not always well established by the time the children begin school. However, progress is rapid and a high percentage of the children exceed the targets set by national guidelines by the time they reach their fifth birthday. Many children speak clearly and confidently about the different topics that are the focus of learning over the year. Their observations about stories read to them and their evaluations of their own artwork are lively and appropriate. This is in part because the adults probe the children's understanding and opinions with carefully constructed questions that invite lively replies. This approach also benefits the development of the children's early writing skills. For instance, as a group was drawing aspects of life in Togo, the teacher questioned them and agreed a suitable caption for the children to "write". The children quickly recognise that the words that they write, or see in books and around the classroom walls, carry meaning. A good number of children now associate individual letters with their sounds and a few can confidently read whole words such as "have", "saw," "said," "with," and "you". Through their reading and writing, the children's awareness of the shapes of letters is systematically fostered.

Mathematics

57. Every opportunity is taken to develop the children's mathematical understanding through the everyday activities of the classroom. As a result, by the time they are five, the children have a very good understanding of the way numbers represent quantities and can be increased, decreased and shared.

When compared with the average results obtained during the initial baseline assessment, this represents very good progress. The children visiting the African market handled coins appropriately, demonstrating a good understanding that each fruit or vegetable corresponded to a particular coin. They can sort and match everyday objects, record preferences for various fruits in the form of a pictorial bar chart, count to twenty and back, sometimes in sets of two. The taking of the register is regularly used to calculate numbers of children present and absent. A large number line is confidently used to help the children see how the numbers increase and decrease.

58. The adults have a good knowledge of what the children know and can do in mathematics. They recognise that a few can count well beyond twenty, but that some are still not wholly secure in counting to ten. They, therefore, devise questions that challenge the more advanced learners and build the confidence of others. Sand and water play and cooking activities develop the children's understanding of capacity in terms of cupfuls and spoonfuls. They can successfully talk about "more" or "less" when adding water to semolina during an African cooking experience.
59. The children enjoy their classroom activities and already show some fascination with what can be achieved through manipulating numbers. The chanting of a range of traditional number rhymes also enriches their experiences of number.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

60. The topic approach to planning includes a very good variety of activities that helps the children to make sense of their world. Their overall attainment in this area indicates that they meet the outcomes envisaged by the time they reach their fifth birthday. They are able to use overlays to compose a "Thank You" letter to a visitor. They can use the mouse to create pictures and patterns in the screen and are able to deploy different colours for painting. They recognise where Britain appears on a map and identify the fact that Togo is a long way away. In the African topic, they learn that countries are different, and that there are various forms of dress, foods and cooking practices. Through experiences in the classroom they observe that ingredients change during cooking. One child, watching semolina being cooked, said "It's like mashed potato. It's gone all stiff now". They observe the different colours, textures and smells of the fruit that feature in the story, "Handa's Surprise". They develop skills for cutting and sticking to make houses from card. They use their imagination well to construct roadways along which they send vehicles in different directions and to a variety of locations. The adults plan a variety of structured activities, sometimes supplementing those that arise naturally from the topics in order to challenge the children's skills further. The children are inquisitive and show a high level of interest in how things function. The time the children spend in school somewhat restricts the variety of activities in this area but they are developed further when the children join the next class.

Creative development

61. The children are making satisfactory progress in the creative areas of learning. They are well on course to meet the early learning goals identified for them. They delight in opportunities to paint. Their figure paintings of people from Togo are large and bold, showing good use of colour and an early understanding of form. The children also enjoy their musical experiences. They can sing to the accompaniment of a keyboard and beat rhythms when performing action songs or using untuned percussion instruments. They are learning to vary the dynamics of their singing, recognising when parts of a song are loud or quiet, fast or slow. They show an interest in what they see in the classroom that is currently alive with materials from Togo. They express wonderment at some of the clothes people wear and the artefacts they produce.
62. The children are given space to experiment with their own ideas during role-play and art activities. The adults interact sensitively with the children and skilfully help them to develop their ability to plan and evaluate their self-chosen activities. The materials and experiences offered to the children are a good reflection of other cultures, beliefs and lifestyles.

Physical development

63. The children show great confidence in moving about the classroom for different activities. Most are

unafraid when climbing on outdoor equipment or using pedalled or wheeled vehicles at different speeds. In general, their physical development is above expectations for this stage. They control their body movements well, both during outdoor play and when engaged in indoor lessons in physical education. Their ability to use small equipment such as brushes, crayons, scissors and glue spreaders develops satisfactorily as a result of the good balance of activities organised to develop these fine control skills. They handle instruments well and respond to a variety of simple rhythms.

64. The adults show a high level of concern for the safety of the children and brief them well. There is a need now to provide greater structure in some of the outdoor play experiences, linking them more closely with the more controlled movements the children learn indoors. A few children could benefit from small group outdoor play in order to develop further both their physical abilities and their social and communication skills.

ENGLISH

65. In the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds, the pupils achieved results that were above the national average but on a par with the average for schools of similar type and size. At the end of Key Stage 1, the results of seven-year-olds were well above the national average in reading and writing. In relation to those of pupils from similar schools, the results were above average in reading and well above average in writing. At both key stages, a good proportion of pupils achieved at the higher levels. This is particularly so in reading at the end of Key Stage 1.
66. The trend over four years suggests that pupils leave the school having made significant progress. The evidence of recent work and testing indicate that these high levels of performance will at least be maintained this year. Standards in writing, in particular, continue to rise as a result of the teachers' increasing skill in implementing the school's literacy strategy and their improved planning of the tasks the pupils undertake.
67. Throughout the school, the majority of pupils have very well developed skills for speaking and listening. This is because the teachers are very aware of the need to provide a variety of opportunities for the pupils to converse with each other and with adults. Many of the pupils in Key Stage 1 make lively observations about stories they hear and can hold the interest of their audience when, for example, they bring items from home for the "Show and Tell" sessions. For instance, when some pupils were commenting upon the exotic fruit featuring in a story, one child spontaneously observed "the mango's skin is crinkly, just like my nanny's!" The lessons in religious education also provide exciting opportunities for talk as pupils engage in role play or discuss what they see during video programmes, such as the home life and celebrations linked to Judaism or Buddhism.
68. The pupils in Key Stage 2 have very well developed skills, notably at the upper end of the school. This is because in lessons such as history and religious education they engage in wide ranging discussions, and are encouraged to listen carefully and to respond to other speakers, structuring their responses appropriately. In one lesson in Year 6, as part of a discussion on friendship, the pupils considered the problems that arise with children who are difficult to befriend. They reflected on the issue in a very mature way and suggested how they might support their peers to suppress any disagreeable characteristics. Some older pupils have collaborated to produce an interesting class newspaper containing well argued reports and opinions, which clearly indicate that a considerable amount of discussion must have taken place between the various groups of reporters and the editors.
69. Overall, reading standards are well above average at both key stages. The younger pupils enjoy sharing the big books as a class. They gleefully attempt to spot words that have been covered over in the text. One pupil in Year 1 triumphantly called out "I want the word to be 'walk' and it will begin with a 'w', end with a 'k' and have a 'l' before that"! The teachers skilfully provide the pupils with a range of strategies to help them become confident readers. For instance, early on, they practise the sounds associated with letter names, develop sight recognition of familiar words such as "saw", "they", "house", "said" and use clues provided by the illustrations.
70. The use of books for enjoyment and for independent research work becomes very well established

during Key Stage 2. By the time they leave at eleven, almost all pupils read at a level commensurate with the expected level. A high proportion reads at a more advanced level and is skilful at drawing inferences from demanding fiction text and identifying the stylistic devices that characterise different types of writing. They recognise differences, for example, between the writing styles of A K Rowling and Anne Fine. The pupils' reading records show that many are rapid readers and get through a good range of books. The time allocated for reading in school and the inviting array of books in the school library have a very beneficial effect on promoting the pupils' interest in reading. Work in history provides regular opportunities for the pupils to extract information from CD-ROM programs such as Encarta.

71. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards of writing are high. This is because the teachers have carried out a close analysis of their pupils' attainment and used the information to plan activities that develop their writing skills very systematically. The pupils write for an appropriate range of purposes such as stories, instructions, lists, labelling and captioning pictures. They are given sufficient time to read through what they have written in order to spot things they can change themselves. Many of the young pupils are very competent in using a capital letter to begin a sentence and a full stop to end it. A few pupils have more sophisticated punctuation skills. Many pupils are developing a reasonable awareness of effective vocabulary. In one piece of descriptive writing, for instance, a younger pupil wrote "a snowy tiger, proud and fearless". Spelling skills are being systematically developed, supported by the use of personal word banks and the many words on display in classrooms. The teachers also select key words from the pupils' own writing to be written out and learned using the "read, cover, write, check" approach. From an early stage, there is a systematic method of developing handwriting. By the end of Key Stage 1, many pupils are well on the way to forming well shaped letters and successfully joining them to form well orientated whole words.
72. By the end of Key Stage 2, the range of the pupils' writing increases dramatically. This contrasts with more restricted opportunities in lower Key Stage 2 where, at the time of the inspection, the range of writing was narrow and individual pieces of writing often unfinished. However, the subsequent progress made in the oldest classes is very considerable. There are regular opportunities for writing in subjects such as science, history and religious education which enable the pupils to engage in empathetic writing or that which contains bias, as is sometimes the case in history. The pupils' ability to select effective vocabulary results in vivid, arresting writing. Other pupils are increasingly varying their sentence structures for dramatic effect and using a good range of punctuation, including suspension marks. The pupils' work provides evidence of how the development of the skills of writing occupies an important place in the provision made by the school. It is produced in handwriting that is well formed, neat and mature, reflecting the pride the pupils take in both the quality of the content and the presentation of their writing. Word processing is also widely used. Some pupils begin school with below average reading and writing skills, but by the age of eleven they make sufficient progress to be included in the vast majority who attain levels in line with the national average. The time is now ripe for the oldest, higher attaining writers to be given greater freedom, at times, to select their own topics for extended writing.
73. Almost all of the lessons seen during the inspection were of good quality, and there were also very good features in the teaching at both key stages. No lessons were deemed to be unsatisfactory. The teachers use the literacy framework discriminatingly and plan work that builds upon the pupils' existing skills. The pupils' literacy skills are further developed by their regular application and use across a range of subjects.. Teachers' skilful, sharply focused questions increase the pupils understanding of text and develop their critical skills in relation to their own writing. The emphasis on developing the pupils' phonic awareness results in good levels of spelling and the pupils' confidence in sounding out unfamiliar words. The school's overall teaching strategy is very successful.
74. Effective communication between the teachers and support assistants ensures that the pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate help to develop their skills. As a result, these pupils make good progress. Where the pupils are set individual targets, usually on a half termly basis, and these targets are referred to in the marking of work, progress is assured. In order to raise standards further, this practice needs to be implemented consistently in all classes.

MATHEMATICS

75. In the National Curriculum tests of 1999 the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results that were well above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. A strong feature of this performance was the large proportion of pupils who achieved the higher level 5. Similarly, in the Key Stage 1 tests the pupils achieved results that were well above average in comparison with both schools nationally and those of similar schools. Again, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was well above average.
76. Further analysis of the tests show that over the past four years the performance in mathematics at Key Stage 2 has been rising steadily with the attainment of both boys and girls being well above average. The inspection evidence confirms that standards are high and continue to improve. Well over 80% of Year 6 pupils have reached the expected level, and almost a half has exceeded this. An analysis of the test results in Key Stage 1 shows that achievement has risen substantially, from well below average in 1997 to well above average in 1999. The inspection evidence indicates that standards continue to be well above the national average.
77. The reason standards are so high is because the pupils are well taught by experienced teachers who have a good grasp of mathematics and who know how to make the subject interesting. A positive start has been made to the introduction of the national numeracy strategy. The teachers structure their lessons carefully and make effective use of an appropriate range of activities. For example, most lessons start with quick fire mental questions that challenge the pupils' understanding of concepts such as multiplication, place value and number bonds. The teachers' expectations are high and they demand focussed concentration and rapid response. This was evident, for instance, in a Year 4 lesson when the teacher skilfully fired off a range of questions that were expressed in wide variety of ways, but all of which involved either multiplication or division. By the time the pupils came to do more formal written group work, most had a good understanding of the principle of commutation. That is to say, that if 21 divided by 7 makes 3, then 3 times 7 makes 21.
78. The group activities are well planned and match the pupils' abilities and needs, providing them with appropriate challenge and extension. The teachers take care to ensure that the children understand what they are doing. For example, there is evidence in the pupils' books that they are expected to explain how they arrive at their answers. In Key Stage 1, a pupil was asked to add $7+3+5$ and said that they had started with the biggest number then added the next biggest and so on. A lesson in Year 1 indicated that the pupils are beginning to understand that the question "How many more than x ...is... y ?" can be done by subtraction. One pupil tried to explain how he had worked out that 9 was 3 more than 6. His explanation was based on his knowledge of the three times table. The pupils in a Year 2 lesson demonstrated their knowledge of 2,5,10 times tables during the initial mental session. Many of them also recognised and knew other tables. Whilst working in groups, pupils who were throwing the dice for numbers to multiply struggled to find the answer to 7×7 until one pupil realised it was 49. When asked how he found the answer, he explained that he knew $3 \times 7 = 21$. Therefore, 6×7 is double 21, that is 42, and by adding on another 7 and you have 49. It is this regular practice of the manipulation of number linked to the teachers' skilful questioning that is the foundation for the high standards in numeracy.
79. Throughout the school the majority of pupils have a very positive attitude towards mathematics. Many enjoy the challenge of the mental arithmetic at the start of the lessons and enthusiastically participate in answering the questions. They are confident to explain how they found their answers and feel sufficiently secure to respond even when the answer is not right. They listen carefully to their teachers and are motivated to achieve high standards. Most of the pupils take great pride in their work, which is neat and laid out well.
80. In Key Stage 2, the lessons move at an increasingly rapid pace. The teachers have good relationships with their groups and high expectations of success. This has a very positive effect on the pupils'

learning as they are developing further their knowledge of mathematical concepts. They understand place value up to a thousand, are able to round up to the nearest 100,000 and accurately work out simple money problems, for example, to discover by how much in price an article has been reduced. They are competent with long multiplication and division and working with decimals. They know how to convert numbers from fractions to decimals and fractions to percentages. The pupils have explored area and shape using grids and compasses to draw a variety of regular figures such as a rhombus, a parallelogram and a kite. They recognise acute, obtuse and right angles, and can draw angles carefully and accurately. During a lesson in Year 5, the pupils were expected to use this information to understand how squares, rectangles and triangles are drawn. They also recognised that an equilateral triangle has three internal angles of 60 degrees and sides of the same length.

81. A further example of some of the very good teaching observed towards the end of Key Stage 2 was in Year 6 where pupils were asked to multiply and divide decimal numbers by 10, 100, and 1,000. The teacher got the pupils to hold up the individual digits whilst the class wrote down the answer. The pupils with the digits then moved in the appropriate direction, either for multiplication or division to show the correct answer. The response showed that by the end of the session the majority of pupils understood the operation and could give the right answer. In a Year 5/6 lesson, the pupils showed how well they understood the properties of a prime number, a factor, a multiple and a square number. Most pupils responded instantly to a wide range of questions with the right answer displayed on their fan of digit cards. Where a pupil had an incorrect answer the teacher asked someone to explain why this was so. The activities set for the group work involved the drawing and interpreting of pie charts and many pupils across upper Key Stage 2 were able to understand this way of displaying data and could interpret the results.
82. In Key Stage 2, the pupils are formed into sets for mathematics lessons on the basis of their prior attainment. This works well because it enables teachers to ensure that all pupils have tasks that are matched to their needs and abilities. Both the SEN pupils and the more able pupils are appropriately extended.
83. Since the last inspection, the standards in mathematics, particularly in Key Stage 1 have risen substantially. The pupils are making good progress throughout the school. This is because the subject is led and managed effectively by a co-ordinator who has a good oversight of the subject and its development. She is enthusiastic about mathematics and has overseen successfully the introduction of the national strategy for numeracy. She has a sound appreciation of standards at the school because she monitors the pupils' work and checks the quality of teaching in lessons.

SCIENCE

84. In the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds, their attainment was well above the national average and in comparison with similar schools it was close to the average. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was close to the national average. The inspection evidence indicates that standards have been maintained this year with a greater proportion of pupils likely to achieve the higher levels. This is because the quality of teaching is mainly good throughout Key Stage 2 and excellent at the end. Attainment is also above average at the end of Key Stage 1. In 1999, according to teachers' assessments, the percentage of seven-year-olds achieving the average level 2 or better was above the national average. Standards at both seven and eleven years of age have improved since the previous inspection when they were described as "in line with expectations".
85. The pupils in Year 1 are developing a good understanding of materials. They know that they can be classified and name a good range, for example, wood, brick and plastic. The pupils' literacy are reinforced and extended through the use of scientific terminology to describe materials, for example, rigid, flexible and transparent. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils make good progress. In Year 1/2, they understand the importance of the skeleton in humans and animals, following examination to identify specific bones found in animals. This work causes excitement and enthusiastic discussion because of the teacher's good subject knowledge and good use of language to generate enquiry. The teacher probes the pupils' understanding and gets them to give reasons for their choices. This promotes both good learning and good progress. The pupils are aware that the skeleton provides support and

protection for important organs found in the body, for example heart, lungs, kidneys and brain, which they are able to name accurately and locate approximately. Drawing on prior knowledge, the pupils make good comparisons of how veins in leaves of a plant and human veins provide sustenance. They talk intelligently about the experiments they have undertaken, for example, testing paper for absorbency and a determining how sound becomes fainter as distance increases.

86. In one part of Years 3 and 4, the pupils make slower progress in lessons mainly because the classroom management is inadequate and there is insufficient challenge for the higher achieving pupils. However, other pupils in a different Year 4 class make good progress. This was evident in their investigation to assess how effectively the roots take in water and transport it up the stem to other parts of a plant. Great excitement and enthusiastic were comments generated when the pupils saw the effect of white carnations after they were placed in coloured solutions. This work was differentiated to meet the needs of all learners, and the teacher worked with a group of lower achieving pupils to ensure they understood the transportation of water in plants. The higher achieving pupils could confidently and accurately describe the process and offered additional hypotheses about the relationship between the quantity of water added to plants and their accelerated growth. Working independently these pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding and were secure in the process of their investigation.
87. The acceleration in the pupils' progress continues, and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are well above the national average and the progress that the pupils make is very good. Year 6 pupils were challenged to investigate ways in which molluscs can be classified by their characteristics. The teacher immediately identified the objective of the lesson and ensured that all pupils understood what was expected of them. Consequently, they were able to work systematically to identify similarities and differences in a range of molluscs. The quality and use of language during their group discussions were of a very high standard, with the teacher insisting upon the presentation of evidence to support opinions. Discussions with Year 6 pupils confirm that their knowledge and understanding extend across all attainment targets. For instance, they give clear explanations of the relationship between vibration and the volume and pitch of sound. Similarly, they accurately describe an investigation of how materials can change and know that not all changes are reversible.
88. The quality of the teaching is good overall, with one example of excellence and one lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, the teachers have high expectations of their pupils, which raises their self-esteem and give additional status to their investigative efforts. This has very strong, beneficial on the quality of learning. The quality and range of language meet the needs of all pupils. The lessons are conducted with good pace, but not at the expense of reduced understanding. The teachers identify assessment tasks for the lessons, evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and make changes if they are deemed necessary. Time limits are set for activities and this puts pressure on pupils to complete their work promptly. Nevertheless, the teachers insist upon careful recording of work and they value thoughtful and neat presentation.
89. The pupils enjoy challenge in science lessons. Where the teaching is good the pupils' behaviour is excellent. The children apply themselves diligently throughout the lessons, working very well individually and as groups. They are pleased to discuss their teachers' comments, and are aware of the need to continually look for ways of improving their work. Science often makes very good contributions to the social development of pupils.

ART

90. Only one lesson and a small amount of group work were observed in art. Therefore, the following judgements are mostly based on discussions with the teachers and pupils, and on scrutiny of the teachers' planning and the pupils' previously completed work.
91. Standards in art have improved since the last inspection and are now above average at both key stages. In the previous report, they were described as in line with expectations at Key Stage 1 and variable at Key Stage 2. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in acquiring the knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to express themselves confidently in a range of different media. Good quality teaching and the enthusiastic subject leadership make a positive impact on standards of work.

92. The youngest pupils enjoy experimenting with primary colours and are encouraged to develop confidence when painting. The children in the reception class produced an attractive display of work when the colour orange was the focus. They know that changing the amounts of red and yellow paint during mixing creates various shades of orange. This process is extended as the pupils pass through the school. Self portraits painted by children in the reception class reflect their confidence with colour. Year 1 pupils use charcoal to draw houses in the village. The pupils carefully prepare underwater pictures, using a range of coloured papers in Year 2 and print colourful patterns in Year 3. For instance, the pupils in Year 6 worked with wax crayons and achieved striking results in a display where green plants were carefully observed and represented. The pupils also apply these skills with pastels, chalks and a range of crayons to create pictures with varying strengths of colour.
93. The observational drawings are of good quality and show significant detail. This was evident when pupils in year 4 drew pictures of gardening equipment. This work is developed further and the pupils in Year 5/6 produce sensitive drawings showing particular skill in the use of shade and tone. Detailed drawings of natural objects, some of which were brought back to school following a visit to France, reflect an increasing awareness of the importance of the discipline in careful observation.
94. Throughout the school there are attractive displays of work that reflect the good range of experiences offered to the pupils. Pupils' art is attractively mounted and displayed in the school entrance hall. This gives added status to the work and provides an attractive welcome to visitors.
95. The pupils enjoy their art lessons. They are keen to constructively evaluate each other's work and to celebrate their successes. They use good quality language in their discussions, and there are good links with literacy skills when the pupils use their knowledge of indexes to research information about artists. An important feature of pupils' work, particularly in Year 6, is their positive attitude to self-assessment. There are clear indications that this strategy is improving standards of work by raising awareness of personal progress. Art also makes a good contribution to pupils' social development. This is demonstrated in the consideration that they show to each other when they have to share resources.
96. The quality of teaching in the one lesson observed was good. The lesson began with the pupils being made fully aware of the learning objectives and the specific skills and techniques to be taught. Effective links were made to the previous lesson and this provided a helpful context because it increased pupils' awareness of how they were learning. An important feature of the teaching was the use of focused questions to encourage observational skills and to improve the pupils' understanding of how to get the best effects. Effective classroom organisation and the provision a good range of materials enabled the pupils to make informed choices. The lesson had a brisk, stimulating pace that encouraged the pupils to apply themselves well throughout the lesson. The lesson concluded with a very good whole class session when pupils were given opportunities to show their work to the rest of the group.
97. The curriculum co-ordinator provides good support for her colleagues. The evaluation systems are developing well with teachers collecting examples of pupils' work to build up portfolios. The school is now reviewing its policy for art in the light of new national guidance.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. No lessons were observed in design and technology at Key Stage 2 and the following judgements are based on discussions with teachers and pupils, analysis of the teachers' planning and the pupils' previously completed work. In the previous inspection standards were in line with the national expectations. They have improved and are now above average at ages seven and eleven. The pupils throughout the school make good progress.
99. In Key Stage 1, the pupils are introduced early to the process of planning, designing, making and evaluating. The work is also linked to other subjects such as English, history and geography. The pupils in the reception class make puppets using a range of paper and card. A range of skills is developed in this work. For example, the pupils have to assess the best way of joining materials together with a range of possible adhesives. The improvement of their skills when using scissors

presents a further challenge for these pupils. They are encouraged to take great care and to show consideration for others when they use scissors. This is very important with these young learners who are very inquisitive about the progress of other members of the class. By the end of Key Stage 1, the systematic development of the pupils' skill is clearly seen in their increasing confidence and ability to work with various materials and tools. The pupils in Year 2 had the task of cladding a house they had made the previous week. This involved choosing appropriate material, for example by considering texture and colour, and identifying effective techniques to ensure secure bonding of the components. Greater demand is made of the use of scissors through more intricate cutting requirements. The pupils also have to consider ways to ensure that the doors of the house can be opened. Good discussion using appropriate language precedes the practical aspects of these activities.

100. As pupils progress through the school, they tackle assignments involving the construction of three-dimensional models using a range of materials, including wood and wire. Construction kits are also used to develop an increasing awareness of the importance of planning and evaluating work.
101. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. On each occasion, the pupils' are reminded of the activities and what they have learned in previous lesson, before new objectives are introduced. For instance, in a Year 1/2 class, the teacher ensures that pupils of all abilities understand planning and making processes. She evaluates the effectiveness of her language and modifies it when it becomes apparent that for some pupils it is too challenging. For example, model houses are used skilfully to introduce subject specific language to the pupils. The pace of the lesson is brisk and the momentum is maintained when pupils begin their practical work. This has a very positive effect upon the quality of learning and enables good progress to be made. Focused questioning encourages the pupils to participate in decision making when changes to either the design or the making procedures are under consideration. These well structured and challenging activities maintain the pupils' motivation and underpin their good progress. In the reception class, the teacher makes very good use of the classroom assistant to support any pupils who are experiencing difficulties. This good quality teamwork greatly benefits the pupils. No teaching was observed in Key Stage 2.
102. The design technology co-ordinator provides good leadership and supports the other members of the staff well, whilst developing and monitoring the provision across the key stage. Portfolios indicating the range of work in the subject are kept and provide a useful overview of achievement in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

103. No lessons were observed in this subject in Key Stage 1. However, from an analysis of the pupils' previous work it is evident that the achievements of seven-year-olds in geography are in line with the expected level. The pupils are developing an understanding of the appropriate vocabulary and acquiring mapping skills, including the use of simple co-ordinates. As part of the topic about the seaside, they have discussed where they go on holiday and the key features of the locations visited. They have produced block graphs to show how people travelled to their holiday destination, where they stayed, and the types of accommodation used. The younger children have looked at the buildings in Church Street, drawing pictures to illustrate their walk and contrasting these with houses in rural Africa.
104. The pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, and by the age of eleven their achievements exceed the expected level. They have looked at a variety of environments including deserts and mountain ranges, and have learnt a little of how location affects people's lives. They have also compared St. Lucia with their own home area. For example, during a lesson in a Lower Key Stage 2 class, the pupils demonstrated a good understanding of some of the characteristics of the island, such as climate and rainfall, and knew where the island was to be found. A study of the River Nile and its irrigation system has been linked to the water cycle and how water is used in everyday life. The upper Key Stage 2 pupils are presently considering the local environment and the traffic congestion in the High Street. They have carried out a survey, by counting cars, pedestrians and parked cars and analysed the data. They are being encouraged to think of practical solutions to the problem. Some groups came up with interesting proposals, and others found reasons why the proposals might not be that helpful. The whole debate was conducted in a very adult mature way, showing just how much the pupils respect their local environment. This type of lesson reflects the strength of the teaching in upper Key Stage 2. The pupils were encouraged to think for themselves and to discuss together the problem of traffic chaos in order to

produce a leaflet to share with the village. The teachers' good questioning guides the pupils through the discussions and effectively extends their knowledge and understanding of the issues concerned. Their enthusiasm and interest has helped the pupils to develop their skills in this subject. Effective cross-curricular links are being developed with history, mathematics and ICT for the production of graphs and pie charts.

105. As a result of this imaginative teaching, the pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy geography and are well motivated. They listen carefully to the teachers and to each other. They take pride in their work particularly in Upper Key Stage 2, where work is beautifully presented with neat writing and clear, carefully-drawn pictures and diagrams. The traffic "problem" in Wing has inspired the pupils because it is a real issue for them to research. They are enthusiastic, excited, totally involved in the topic and keen to find a solution.
106. There is a knowledgeable co-ordinator, who is reviewing the scheme of work in the light of national guidance. She is aware that assessment procedures need to be improved. This is already being planned and should be in place during the autumn term. Residential visits to Wales and France and the use of the local area all broaden the children's horizons and enrich their understanding of geography.

HISTORY

107. During the inspection period no history lessons were observed in Key Stage 1, so the evidence is taken from the teachers' planning, the schemes of work, the children's previous work and displays around the school. The achievement in history is in line with what is expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are beginning to understand what a time line is as they draw one for themselves from their birth to the present day. They have considered famous people such as Florence Nightingale and compared her hospital at Scutari to a modern hospital. They have written about the Great Fire of London using some interesting language as they wrote a diary entry to emulate Samuel Pepys: "the raging fire ... it spread fiercely... " This term's theme is "The seaside, past and present" and pupils are looking at the differences and similarities over the years. Displays in Key Stage 1 include a range of photographs of pupils on holiday, maps, writing and a large seaside painting. The teachers create effective links with geography as the pupils explore where they have been on holiday by looking at maps.
108. The pupils' achievements in history are above what is expected by the end of Key Stage 2. The pupils produce some well-written work, often researched through the Internet, Encarta and appropriate books. They show an increasing understanding of how to use various sources of evidence and how to make reasonable deductions from them. They are able to explain the reasons why explorers set off on their travels, what they were looking for, how they changed the lives of people back home. They appreciate that people involved in a situation may hold different viewpoints and opinions. In their Victorian topic many have written with empathy about the poor children, their living conditions and jobs, comparing them to the more wealthy children and those who lived in the country. A study of life in Victorian times has included a visit to the Bedford Museum, and a comparison of schools then and now, culminating in a morning when the classrooms were laid out in Victorian manner. The pupils dressed in a corresponding way and were taught lessons similar to those that Victorian children would have had. They really enjoyed this experience, which made them appreciate the freer discipline and broader curriculum that schools offer today.
109. As a result of these imaginative approaches, the pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy history, particularly the challenge of independent research using computers and books. The teachers give the pupils many opportunities to research the topic using a variety of methods. They have high expectations of good quality written work. They use questioning effectively to refresh and extend the pupils' knowledge from previous lessons and encourage them to think for themselves. The teachers are knowledgeable and interested in the subject and this conveys itself to the pupils. There are strong cross-curricular links with other subjects, such as geography. The pupils' writing skills are also encouraged by the teachers, enabling them to produce interesting accounts of historical events. As a result, the pupils respond well to their teachers' questions, are motivated, concentrate well and aim to achieve a high standard. They

take a great pride in their work and most of them produce beautifully laid out work, neatly written with carefully drawn pictures and diagrams.

110. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic about the subject and has recently reviewed the scheme of work in the light of the QCA documents and Curriculum 2000. Current plans for the future development of the subject include improved forms of assessment for September 2000. The use of the rich local environment and visits to museums, such as Bedford and St. Albans, help to enrich the pupils' history curriculum and by providing them with first hand experiences.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

111. The school continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting the use of information technology across the entire curriculum. Throughout the inspection, computers were in regular, productive use. As a result the vast majority of the pupils achieve the nationally expected levels at the end of both key stages. At the end of Key Stage 2 a significant number of pupils are working at higher levels because of a strong personal interest in the subject supported by the school's thriving computer club and ease of access to computers at home.
112. Throughout Key Stage 1, information technology is taught within the classroom with the teachers making full use of their class computers. Workstations are set up carefully and contain useful displays with prompts and reminders to help the pupils to work safely. Little direct teaching was observed during the inspection, but discussions revealed that teachers typically introduce a new program or a particular skill by demonstrating either to a group or to the whole class. They then provide opportunities for the children to practise over the course of the week. This is reasonably successful because it ensures that every pupil gets the chance to work on the computer. Consequently, by the age of seven most have learnt some of the fundamental skills of word processing and know how to print out their work. They use simple programs to store data, for example information on hair colour or pets, which they then present as pictograms, bar graphs and pie charts. They understand how to program an electronic toy to carry out a sequence of movements and enjoy trying out simulations of imaginary situations.
113. In Key Stage 2, the pupils' work builds successfully on this solid start. Towards the end of this key stage the pupils benefit from easy access to a bank of computers located immediately outside their classrooms. This enables the teachers to set larger groups to work simultaneously so that the pupils can share ideas and contrast the effectiveness of their work. The majority of the tasks observed during the inspection related directly to other subjects of the National Curriculum. In many instances, the pupils were practising their skills in word processing. For instance in Year 3/4, the literacy exercise involving conjunctions was carried out using "Word" rather than being written in exercise books. More imaginative uses were also observed. For instance, one Year 6 literacy set has been finding out about the author Anne Fine. Rather than get the pupils to write a factual piece in their books, the teacher asked one group to design a page of information about the author in the style of a CD-ROM encyclopaedia. This worked really well because it enabled the pupils to show just how familiar they are with this style of presentation. The teacher had helpfully prepared a page frame, and many pupils were soon typing at a good pace, formatting their work with sensible use of columns, with variations in the style and size of font, including boldening key words and underlining other significant facts.
114. Elsewhere the displays of the pupils' work reveal the regular use of word-processing in a range of contexts, from carefully formatted poetry to booklets about the impact of technology on our lives. A good example of how the teachers encourage the pupils to expand their skills is evident in the children's penetrating and persuasive evaluations of the school. Here, a newspaper format was successfully attempted complete with imported clip-art. There are also good examples of pupils using technology to present data from mathematics investigations in a range of different ways and of controlling the movement of a cursor through the use of the program Logo. All pupils have sent and received email.
115. The school computer club is currently the domain of Years 5 and 6 and the quality of their work is very good. Besides a growing familiarity with a range of simulation games such as "Crystal Rainforest", "Mission Control 2" and "Zoombinis", the group has designed and put together a web site for the school. They did this with the help of a parent who has particular expertise in this area. Nevertheless, it

is evident from watching the pupils at work and talking with them that they have gained considerably in skill and expertise as a result of this project. The content of the site, though incomplete, is of very good quality and reflects the high standards of pupils' literacy skills. A notable feature is the way that each small group of pupils has been responsible for a series of linked pages that are linked to the "whole." Thus at the time of the inspection, work was beginning on standardising such features as colours, fonts etc in order that the site might appear consistent and coherent to users.

116. The co-ordinators provide a very strong leadership for the subject. They have drawn up a sensible progression of work based upon the national guidance that is helping the teachers to plan appropriate work for their classes. They have a clear plan of attack to improve provision based upon a thorough analysis of the needs of the staff. In order to achieve this, they circulated a questionnaire to all teachers and then used this information to identify a provider who will organise additional training as part of the school's involvement with the National Grid for Learning. They are increasingly confident about standards in the subject because they are collecting samples of pupils' work based upon a range of simple assessment tasks carried out across the school. These timed assessments are useful, but on their own they do not give the teachers much information about how the pupils approach the task.
117. There is a firm foundation and school wide commitment to teaching the subject. In order to ensure that standards rise even further, there needs to be an evaluation of the ways in which the subject is being taught. In some lessons, most notably in those where only one or two pupils are working on a class based computer, the teacher does not always have either sufficient time or a clear focus to support these pupils. Occasionally, the pupils struggle to complete the task and time is wasted; this was evident, for instance, in a numeracy lesson in Year 4 with two pupils using Logo. The inspection observations indicate that faster progress takes place when the teacher has time to concentrate on a larger group and important learning points can be pointed out and shared with a greater proportion of the class. **This is an area for improvement that the governors should consider for inclusion in their action plan.**

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

118. The opportunity to learn French is offered to pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school regards this provision as an important element in the pupils' overall language learning as well as enriching their cultural experience.
119. Standards of attainment are above average overall. In speaking and listening, which represent the core skills taught, many pupils achieve levels that reflect very good progress. The pupils' confidence in speaking is high. They respond well to questions about personal details and preferences, and their pronunciation is very good. This is a direct result of the teachers' own skills in speaking French and the consistent use of the language as the principal medium for teaching. Taped interviews undertaken during a recent residential visit to St. Pol de Léon, suggest that pupils are able to initiate questions and respond appropriately to the answers they receive. For example, they have the confidence to enter the post office and shops and carry out transactions in French.
120. The topics selected for teaching over the two years provide good opportunities for the early development of reading skills. They focus appropriately on the practical needs of a visitor to a French speaking country. As a result, the pupils can read signs on shops and buildings. They also know enough basic vocabulary to recognise items of food and drink that appear on menus.
121. The teaching is lively. It is based on a very secure understanding of the communicative method of language learning, which focuses on ensuring the pupils' success in understanding and speaking French. The approaches adopted are highly successful in motivating both boys and girls to "have a go" in a climate which does not tolerate ridicule. The teaching emphasises that French sounds very different from English, but is nevertheless spoken by many people and is fun to learn. The various activities are conducted at a brisk pace, with the teachers ensuring that all the pupils have an opportunity to respond in French. During the inspection, the lessons were highly teacher directed in an attempt to demonstrate, in a period of 30 minutes, what the pupils already knew and also to consolidate the language practised during the residential visit. There is, however, an awareness of the value of paired and group work led by the pupils themselves, sometimes using visual or other prompts. The success of the lessons is due, in large part, to the very good relationships that prevail in the classrooms.

122. The pupils enjoy learning French. They respond with total enthusiasm to the lively approaches to teaching. They take an evident pride in understanding and speaking French and are learning to respect the similarities as well as the differences between France and England. The teachers have a very appropriate approach to the amount of writing the pupils are expected to do. This ensures that they are not discouraged by having to wrestle with the intricacies of grammar before they have mastered the essential structures needed in spoken French. They leave the school at the end of Year 6 having developed very positive attitudes towards language learning. It makes an important contribution to the preparation of the pupils for the next stage of learning.

MUSIC

123. During the inspection there were only two opportunities to observe music being taught, one lesson in each key stage. Therefore, the judgements have been made by examining the teachers' planning, talking to the co-ordinator, and observation of the assemblies and extra curricular activities.
124. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils are generally achieving in line with expectations, but above this in their singing. They make satisfactory progress. They are able to play untuned percussion to keep a rhythm pattern going to accompany a song. Most pupils are able to keep in time. They sing tunefully and with enthusiasm, and are able to sustain a simple round sung in two parts.
125. By the end of Key Stage 2, many pupils are achieving above what is expected and making good progress. Most can sing in tune with clear words and some expression, holding on to long notes at the end of phrases and not cutting them short. They can also provide a drone accompaniment for a song. Many are able to read standard notation, and they are becoming knowledgeable about musical terms.
126. The teachers' planning shows that the pupils' musical experiences include composition and appraising music, including non-western music, for example, from India and Africa. The use of the co-ordinator's musical skills to teach music to older classes raises the standards achieved by the end of Key Stage 2. By providing each class teacher with a tape so that the pupils' compositions and singing can be recorded during the year, the co-ordinator can assess the progress of their learning. Although there is a scheme of work, it is to be reviewed, in the light of the recent national guidance. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to produce a checklist of skills so that the teachers are able to plan appropriately. The wide variety of musical opportunities offered to the pupils, such as peripatetic instrumental lessons, extra curricular activities like choir and recorders and the thrill of singing in the Albert Hall, all enhance the pupils' musical curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. Standards are above average at the ages of seven and eleven, and have improved since the previous inspection when they were described as "sound".
128. The school organises the physical education in blocks of activities. During the period of the inspection, the physical education programme comprised mainly swimming, athletics and summer games. The school is very fortunate to have its own heated and covered swimming pool, which enables it to provide a coherent programme of swimming instruction for all pupils. The pupils in Year 2 show good technique with leg movements as they refine their front crawl strokes. In Years 3 and 4 the pupils make good progress in this skill, and also begin to develop other strokes. In Years 5 and 6, the pupils work hard in order to improve their athletic skills and techniques. They record their performances in running, jumping and throwing in order to measure their own improvements and progress..
129. Pupils throughout the school have very good attitudes to the subject. They very quickly get changed for activities and work conscientiously throughout their lessons. Their behaviour is very good. They are conscious of the importance of safety during the various activities and make good, unselfish use of space, ensuring that they do not encroach on to another pupils' working area. They are equally diligent working either independently or with others. The pupils value constructive criticism of their

performances and use this information along with their own self-assessment to improve their attainment.

130. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers plan their work carefully, with clear learning objectives which are pupils are made aware of at the beginning of the lessons. Challenging programmes are planned for pupils as they progress through the school. The teachers have good subject knowledge, keep instruction time to the minimum and maximise the time for the pupils to be active. They are aware of the importance of safety procedures, and build warming up and cooling down sessions into their planning. During a games lesson in very hot weather, the teacher ensured that pupils had regular drinks to avoid dehydration. However, it is the view of the inspection team that the safety arrangements for swimming are inadequate in some classes. On one occasion, a teacher taught a class of fifteen pupils without another adult being present for observation duties. It is understood that this practice is currently under review by the local education authority. The school caretaker, who is a fully qualified swimming coach, provides very good instruction to supplement the work of the teachers. The school regularly meets its target that all pupils should swim 25 metres before they transfer to their secondary schools. The pupils' achievements are recognised through presentation of awards. There is a good display of photographs and newspaper articles about the outstanding sporting achievements of school teams and individual pupils, which helps to give the subject a high profile.
131. In addition to the swimming pool, the school has other very good facilities. A large field marked for athletics provides an attractive venue for summer sports activities. A hard play area, with further pitches marked out for games, is used to practice small ball skills using a range of apparatus. The school takes part in various sports competitions against other schools in the Aylesbury area. The pupils have the opportunity to attend after school clubs where they are given further coaching to improve their skills. For example, the school benefits from coaching by players from two local football clubs – Luton Town and Aylesbury United.
132. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has been in post for three years. She has completed a new policy for physical education that is due to be presented to the governing body for approval and adoption. This work is in conjunction with the school's arrangements for Curriculum 2000.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Standards of work are often higher than those required by the locally agreed syllabus. At the previous inspection, standards were judged to be "variable". From the work seen, standards in both key stages are now consistently above those outlined by the agreed syllabus. Over the year, the teachers' planning and the pupils' work show that the agreed syllabus is comprehensively covered and that a good variety of activities helps to make the subject interesting for the pupils. At both key stages, the pupils are acquiring considerable knowledge not only of Christianity but also of other faiths, and are developing a growing understanding of important religious concepts. For example, in learning about Florence Nightingale's work at Scutari, the pupils in Key Stage 1 are beginning to recognise that sacrifice and dedication to service are often expressions of religious belief in everyday life. Similarly, the pupils in Key Stage 2 develop a more mature understanding of the concept of leadership and its place in the development of society.
134. The pupils in Key Stage 1 listen very well to stories from the Bible and from the sacred texts of other faiths. Through questioning and discussion, they gain an understanding of the ideas that lie behind many of these stories. They are also learning to recognise the significance of festivals, such as Sukkot or the Passover meal in Judaism. They can associate the sense of belonging to a family, a group of friends or a school with the concept of membership of a religious group. They understand that for groups to function well, adherence to rules is important. They make good use of their knowledge of their locality to recognise why places, such as churches, are special and why people gravitate to them significant points of their lives.
135. In Key Stage 2, the pupils' knowledge of celebrations, such as Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Day and the symbols associated with them, deepens. They also develop their recognition of the significance of places of worship. They use their local church to identify its special features, but also learn that mosques and temples have significance for Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. Through discussion, role play, looking at illustrations and video material, the pupils build up a good picture of what the life of believers

is about and how their leaders, their special books, places and customs are important to them. Their factual knowledge of significant figures such as Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Mother Teresa provides them with rich examples of the contribution of religious leaders to their communities.

136. From the youngest to the oldest, the pupils show a lively curiosity about religion. In all the classes observed and the pupils' written work, religion was discussed and treated with respect. The pupils clearly understand that whether or not they are religious, human beings have to exercise responsible stewardship of the natural world.
137. Since the previous inspection, some adjustments to the teaching appear to have benefited the pupils' learning. Fewer teachers, all of whom show considerable commitment to the status of religious education as a core subject, now do the teaching. Notable features of the teaching are the breadth and

balance of what is covered and the interesting range of activities and resources used. In particular, during this term, very good use of a range of stories has enabled the teachers to take time to underpin some of the concepts introduced earlier in the year.

138. The teachers' dedication to ensuring a full and interesting curriculum in religious education is having a very beneficial effect on the pupils' overall development. It not only enhances the pupils' spiritual and moral understanding, but also constitutes a rich strand of the school's overall cultural provision. The teachers have a good knowledge of what the pupils know, and understand that the pupils' attainment could be further raised if their assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding were more clearly linked to precise objectives for each unit of work. This is an aspect of the provision that needs to be improved.