

INSPECTION REPORT

Belmont Primary School

Erith

LEA area: Bexley

Unique Reference Number: 101422

Headteacher: Mr P Wilson

Reporting inspector: Mr J Tyler
20506

Dates of inspection: 6th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 706579

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Belmont Road Erith Kent DA8 1LE
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Nelson
Date of previous inspection:	12 th February 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr J Tyler (Registered inspector)	Information technology; design and technology; music; special educational needs.	Attainment and progress; teaching; efficiency of the school.
Mr S Ward (Lay inspector)		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; attendance; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; support, guidance and pupils' welfare; partnership with parents and the community.
Mr A Maula	English; religious education; equality of opportunity.	Curriculum and assessment.
Mrs R Scahill	Mathematics; art; geography; physical education.	Staffing, accommodation and resources for learning.
Mr P Sudworth	Under-fives; science; history.	Leadership and management.

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The Office for Standards in Education
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London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress. The most important contributory factors are the good quality of teaching and well-planned curriculum.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Relationships are very positive throughout the school. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very effective.
- Physically disabled and visually impaired pupils make very good progress and pupils with other special educational needs make good progress. They receive effective support and have high self-esteem.
- The school has a successful partnership with parents, who are very supportive.
- The leadership of the school is very good and there is a commitment to high achievement. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection.

Where the school has weaknesses

1. Pupils' attainment in information technology is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1.

This is a successful school in which the strengths greatly outweigh the weaknesses. The governing body will draw up an action plan to address weaknesses and send a copy to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress since the last inspection in addressing the key issues in the report. The consistency in the quality of teaching has improved through the regular monitoring and staff development. The schemes of work have given teachers a structure in which to plan their lessons and in the best of these there are clearly linked strategies to assess what the pupils have learned. The school's management structure has been clarified. The leadership and management of the school are now major strengths in the school's provision. The school is well placed to continue making improvements.

Standards in subjects

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

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools
English	D	D
Mathematics	C	D
Science	C	D

	Key
<i>very high</i>	A*
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E
<i>very low</i>	E*

The grades indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 were similar to the national average for mathematics and science but below average for English, in which very few pupils attained the higher Level 5. All three subjects were below the averages for schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. However, on entry to the school, this year group had a balance of attainment that was below average and so, overall, they made satisfactory progress. Pupils are now making good progress through the school, and attainment is rising in line with the national trend and matching it. Standards are below national expectations in information technology at the end of Key Stage 1, but in line with expectations by the top of the school. Standards in other subjects are as expected for the ages of the pupils, and above expectations in physical education.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 11 years
English	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Good	Good
Science		Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Information technology		Insufficient observations made	
Religious education		Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Other subjects	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The overall quality of teaching is good. It was at least satisfactory in 95% of lessons seen, good or better in 44% and very good in 13%. The strongest teaching was in mathematics, English and physical education lessons. These are all subjects in which standards are above national expectations by the top of the school. There were some weaknesses in the teaching of specific subjects, such as science, but these are generally limited to a few teachers. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in that it is much more consistent across the school.

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils work with enthusiasm and are keen to learn.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Pupils arrive at school on time. Unexplained absences are checked quickly.
Ethos*	Commitment to high achievement. Very good relationships throughout the school.
Leadership and management	Very good leadership and school development planning. Good management structures. Monitoring of teaching and curriculum is very effective.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced. Good schemes of work support teachers' planning of lessons. Enriched by extra-curricular activities and range of visits.
Pupils with special educational needs	Make good progress. Well supported through planning and by effective learning support assistants. Very well integrated and high self-esteem.
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for moral and social development. Good for spiritual and cultural. Emphasis on taking responsibility is a particular strength.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Good level of staffing. Very effective training for staff. Good resources for learning, which are used well. Accommodation is good.
Value for money	Good. Pupils enter with balance of attainment that is below average, and leave with balance that is average.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
ii. Their children like going to school. iii. They are encouraged to take part in the life of the school and find teachers approachable. iv. The school encourages positive values, attitudes	vii. There are no significant concerns.

<p>and good behaviour.</p> <p>v. Their children are able to achieve good standards of work.</p> <p>vi. Parents know what is being taught.</p>	
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Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views of the school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve further the standards of work and learning of the pupils, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- viii. raise standards in information technology in Key Stage 1 by improving resources and teachers' expertise and by using computers more frequently; (see paragraphs 84 -86)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- ix. further improve the quality of teaching – accurate marking, match work to pupils' prior attainment, consistent behavioural expectations; (see paragraphs 21, 22, 24)
- x. increase the detail in longer term financial planning; (see paragraph 52)
- xi. improve planning for the under-fives by establishing more cohesive records of key skills and using these to plan future work, based on children's prior attainment. (see paragraph 63)
- xii. continue to raise standards in English - extend the range of strategies used by younger pupils to read unfamiliar words and continue the focus on writing, particularly extended writing and handwriting; (see paragraphs 68, 69)
- xiii. improve some aspects of design and technology, and music. (see paragraphs 91, 94)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Belmont Primary is much larger than most primary schools. At the time of the inspection, the 392 pupils were organised into 14 classes but in January another 30 pupils will form a new Reception class. A further 52 attend the Nursery unit. Pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds. Nearly 8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below average. The number of girls and boys is broadly balanced, though there are many more boys than girls in one year group. The proportion of pupils for whom English is as an additional language is nearly 6%, which is higher than in most schools. There are 78 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, giving a proportion that is average. 15 of these have statements of special educational needs, of whom 11 are supported through an integrated unit for pupils who are visually impaired or physically disabled. Pupils enter the Nursery in September or January, according to their date of birth. Entry to the main school is by a similar system, though attendance at the Nursery does not lead automatically to a place in the Reception classes. Attainment on entry is, on balance, below average.

2. The prospectus starts with a statement of purpose. "Belmont School is a caring community which believes that through the promotion of equality and the provision of opportunity, all pupils will achieve their full potential."

3. The school development plan sets out priorities for the next three years. These include:

- improvements to the curriculum, especially in mathematics, religious education, art, and in personal, social and moral education;
- the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy;
 - drawing up home-school agreements;
 - reducing the size of teaching groups in Year 2;
 - maintenance and improvement of buildings.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	32	28	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	28	30	30
	Girls	28	27	27
	Total	56	57	57
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	93	95	95
	National	82	83	87

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	30	30	31
	Girls	27	27	27
	Total	57	57	58
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	95	95	97
	National	82	86	87

Attainment at Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	28	31	59

National Curriculum Test Results	English	Mathematics	Science
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Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	18	21	21
	Girls	24	21	27
	Total	42	42	48
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	71	71	81
	National	70	69	78
Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	17	21	21
	Girls	24	23	24
	Total	41	44	45
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	69	75	76
	National	68	69	75

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year

		%
Authorised Absence	School	5.9
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0
	National comparative data	0.5

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	0
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	13
Good or better	44
Satisfactory or better	95
Less than satisfactory	5

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

1. Attainment on entry to the Nursery varies but is, on balance, below national expectations. Children under five make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Their attainment by the age of five is in line with national expectations. Children are beginning to become acquainted with letter sounds for the beginning of words. The majority of children in the Nursery recognise their own name and, by the end of their first term in Reception, most write it in well formed letters. Most children count to ten correctly and many can count to 20. They understand comparative language such as bigger and smaller.

2. In the 1999 assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, standards were above the national average for writing and well above average for reading and mathematics. A high proportion of pupils attained the higher Level 3 in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools these results were average, and above average for reading. When this year group entered the school, assessments showed that the balance of attainment was broadly average. The trend since 1996 has been one of results remaining above national averages. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys. This year, attainment is in line with national expectations in English and above expectations in mathematics.

3. The Key Stage 2 results for 1999 were similar to the national average for mathematics and science but below average for English, in which very few pupils attained the higher Level 5. When compared with similar schools, results were below average for all three subjects. On entry to the school, assessments showed that the balance of attainment in this year group was below average. The trend since 1996 has varied between subjects. For example, between 1997 and 1998 the results improved for English and science but fell for mathematics. However, an aggregation of the three subjects shows that overall standards have risen at a similar pace to the national figures, remaining broadly average. There are no significant differences between the attainment of girls and boys. This year, attainment is above national expectations for English and mathematics, and in line with expectations in science.

4. Pupils make good progress across the school. In the lessons seen, progress overall was at least satisfactory in 95% and good or better in 41%. Previously completed work shows that they also make good progress over time. Pupils with special educational needs in general make good progress, and physically disabled and visually impaired pupils make very good progress. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress in most subjects.

5. In English, pupils make good progress with speaking and listening throughout the school. Progress is good in reading and satisfactory in writing. Standards in speaking and listening are above average in both key stages. The majority of Key Stage 2 pupils show well-developed oral skills. They often engage in informed discussions. During a Year 6 assembly, older pupils spoke in character and projected their voices well to a large audience. The standard of reading by the end of the school is above national expectations. Many Key Stage 2 pupils read independently, demonstrating appropriate skimming and scanning skills. Younger lower-attaining pupils often use phonics quite successfully to read unfamiliar words, but their range of strategies beyond this is not sufficiently wide. Standards of writing are broadly in line with national expectations throughout the school. Younger pupils pay attention to punctuation and verb tenses. Older pupils write for a wide range of purposes, in different styles. Some poems include effective and imaginative use of language. There are inconsistencies in the quality of extended writing and handwriting; in some classes standards are below expectations.

6. Literacy skills are used effectively across the curriculum. Pupils often write answers rather than fill in spaces on worksheets, and this helps them to make good progress. Speaking and listening skills are promoted through almost all subjects. The use of information technology within English is not sufficiently developed.

7. Pupils make good progress in mathematics. In Key Stage 1, pupils are given many opportunities to practise their number skills and, by Year 2, most pupils count in fives and tens confidently and recognise patterns in numbers. During Key Stage 2, pupils learn to carry out more complex skills and different methods of recording their work. Regular mental and oral mathematics at the start of lessons is reinforcing number facts, developing new strategies and having a very positive effect on pupils' progress. Standards are similar in all aspects of the subject. Mathematical skills are sometimes practised in other subjects. For example, graphs are used in information technology and geography, and measuring skills in design and technology. Some opportunities to use mathematics in other subjects are missed when teachers are planning lessons.

8. In science, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In many lessons, higher-attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged and this reduces their progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils carry out simple scientific tests, guided by their teacher, and are beginning to understand the principles that underlie fair testing. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good understanding of fair testing and are often able to hypothesise, though this is not a consistent feature of their work. They communicate their results in tables, and describe in their own words what they have done and why things happen. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is at similar levels in all aspects of science that are studied.

9. Standards in information technology are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils make satisfactory progress and use computers for a range of purposes within other subjects. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are below national expectations. Progress is unsatisfactory, partly because computers are used too little during lessons for other subjects. Some pupils lack appropriate keyboard skills and sufficient breadth of experience. However, most pupils use a computer mouse confidently and accurately.

10. In religious education, attainment is in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus at the end of both key stages. Younger pupils identify Christmas as a festival of light like Diwali and Hannukah, demonstrating their understanding of light as a symbol. Year 6 pupils compared the account of the Christmas story from different Gospels. Many have started using appropriate vocabulary when contributing to classroom discussion, though they show a lack of a deeper understanding of principles and practices relating to some major world faiths. Progress in religious education is satisfactory.

11. Standards were in line with national expectations in the work seen in art, design and technology, geography, history and music. There are many good cross-curricular links, which help to make work relevant and ensure that knowledge and skills are reinforced. In physical education, standards were in line with national expectations in Key Stage 1, and above national expectations in Key Stage 2 in all aspects observed, including swimming.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

12. Behaviour in the playground and around the school is very good. It was very good in the overwhelming majority of lessons seen. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when behaviour was judged to be good. In the very small number of lessons where behaviour was less than satisfactory, this was the result of weaknesses in the teachers' classroom management. 88% of parents in the survey expressed satisfaction with pupils' behaviour, and there have been no exclusions over the past year. There is no evidence of any vandalism or graffiti and pupils respond well to the trust they are given around the school.

13. Pupils of all abilities and ages have a very positive attitude to their work. Most listen carefully to the teacher, understand and follow orderly classroom routines, and settle quickly to task. Even the youngest pupils work with sustained concentration. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are very keen to volunteer answers to teachers' questions. They undertake individual research, particularly in the juniors, and pupils of all ages have the confidence to take the initiative in lessons even where this means politely challenging the teacher. In a Year 1 class, for example, a teacher writing a caption on the board was challenged by a pupil, who asked "What about a full stop?"

14. Relationships are very good, both between pupils and with adults. When the under-fives have occasional squabbles, they often sort out their differences without adult intervention. Across the school, pupils are polite and friendly to adults. When working in pairs or groups, pupils collaborate well and organise their work without fuss. They listen to each other and are mutually supportive, readily offering help to one another in lessons and around the school. Boys and girls mix and work well together. Pupils with special educational needs have high self-esteem and are well integrated. Apart from the sight of special learning aids, it was difficult to spot physically disabled and visually impaired pupils in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties are happy to answer questions in the knowledge that their contributions will be valued.

15. A number of pupils take on responsibilities within the school. Year 6 pupils take on some whole-school duties as monitors, but even in the younger classes some pupils take on monitor roles which involve them coming into school early to help set out the classroom. Examples were seen of pupils spontaneously taking on responsibility for tidying up and for helping pupils with disabilities.

Attendance

16. Attendance is satisfactory, being in line with that of similar schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is low and almost all pupils arrive at school on time. Pupils' regular attendance and punctuality contributes to their attainment. 93% of parents indicate that their children enjoy coming to school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

17. The overall quality of teaching is good. It was at least satisfactory in 95% of lessons seen, good or better in 44% and very good in 13%. The strongest teaching was in mathematics, English and physical education lessons. These are all subjects in which standards are above national expectations by the top of the school. There were occasional weaknesses in the teaching of specific subjects, such as science, but these are generally limited to a few teachers. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in that it is much more consistent across the school.

18. Teachers' planning is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Teachers plan together in year groups so that pupils are taught the same things. A weekly planning sheet is used to plan learning objectives for each subject and, in most classes, this is effective in giving a clear focus to the teacher's explanations and questions. In the under-fives, the initial plans are sound but they are insufficiently adapted as the week progresses, in order to modify work to meet individual needs. Day-to-day assessment is used effectively through the rest of the school to plan further work. When teachers have insufficient subject knowledge they occasionally mark work inaccurately, for example marking factual errors as correct. However, subject expertise is generally good. One subject in which some teachers express insecurity is information technology, which partly explains why many lessons are planned without appropriate use of computers. Teachers often ask good questions during lessons, checking and extending pupils' understanding. In an English lesson, the teacher asked about the characters in a play: "What does this tell us about...?" and "How do we know that...?" These sorts of questions made the pupils think deeply and helped them to make good progress.

19. Pupils are usually set appropriate expectations of what should be achieved. In a few English lessons, the lower attainers were given work that was too hard for them and, in science lessons, the higher attainers were often insufficiently challenged. In most lessons, work is adapted to suit pupils' needs. For example, pupils with reading difficulties were often given tasks with simplified instructions. Higher-attaining pupils were usually given extension work. Teachers expect pupils to use correct subject vocabulary and to use specific skills across the curriculum. For example, reading and writing skills are used purposefully in other subjects, such as science, design and technology, and history.

20. Most lessons are organised carefully and teachers use suitable methods to teach particular ideas. The under-fives classrooms are well prepared with a range of resources suitable for the day's activities. Many lessons throughout the school start with direct teaching, including some revision of previous work. This is effective. After pupils have completed individual or group tasks there is often a final class discussion. This is also effective when used to reinforce what has been learned and to introduce the next steps in learning. In a few lessons, the final discussion was insufficiently focused and so was less effective. Teachers plan a suitable balance of activities. For example, in science lessons, there was a great deal of practical work before findings were recorded while, in music lessons, pupils both listened to and made music.

21. A strength throughout the school is the management of pupils. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and are good role models. Their positive attitudes to learning and high expectations of behaviour contribute significantly to the pupils' very good response in lessons. When pupils occasionally misbehave, teachers often ask them to consider what they have done, what they should have done, and how to put things right. This is very effective in supporting pupils' social and moral development. In a very few lessons, the teacher did not set sufficiently firm expectations for behaviour and, when pupils became noisy, did not intervene quickly enough. One benefit of the pupils' good attitudes and behaviour is that time and resources are used effectively. When teachers ask pupils to clear away their work it is done quickly, and resources such as historical artefacts can be used in the safe knowledge that they will be treated with care. Teachers encourage pupils to use dictionaries, number lines and other classroom resources. Homework is set consistently, with an increasing amount towards the top of the school. It is relevant to work in lessons and so makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' progress.

The curriculum and assessment

22. The previous inspection acknowledged the school's curriculum as being broad, balanced and accessible to all its pupils. It reported a good range of extra-curricular activities, but the need to develop coherent schemes of work incorporating detailed assessment objectives. The school has maintained the strengths and made considerable improvements. Detailed schemes of work have been adopted for most subjects, and these incorporate key assessment objectives.

23. The curriculum for the under-fives is appropriate and leads smoothly into the early stages of the National Curriculum. English and mathematics are given appropriate priority and all classes have a literacy and numeracy session each day. Other subjects are taught for a suitable amount of time. One aspect of information technology, monitoring external events, is only taught during a residential trip, which pupils do not all attend. Personal, social and health education is taught through other subjects and special events. Pupils receive sex education and are made aware of the dangers of drugs. The curriculum is enriched by various school visits, which include residential trips for three Key Stage 2 classes. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, mostly for older pupils: football, netball, hockey, information technology and recorder. Some pupils have private music lessons during school time, which enriches the musical life of the school. The school has a satisfactory homework policy, which identifies how much homework should be set in each year group.

24. In English and mathematics lessons the school is following the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In other subjects, the school has either adopted or adapted nationally recognised schemes of work where these are available. There are annual and termly plans to ensure a reasonable balance within subjects, and to help teachers plan for the systematic development of knowledge and skills.

25. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well through good curriculum planning. Individual education plans are clear and precise, and this enables teachers and learning support assistants to focus on the most important issues for each individual. Plans are reviewed regularly. There is good use of assessment both to identify which pupils need extra support and to measure their progress.

26. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good for English, mathematics and science. They are satisfactory for other subjects. Baseline assessment is made on entry to the Reception class. Information from this is used not only for planning further work, but also for tracking the progress made by each year group. Various forms of standardised testing take place through the school. The school identifies trends over time in particular aspects of English and mathematics. This helped the school to identify a relative weakness in writing, which is now a focus for improvement. Assessment information gathered in the Nursery is not used effectively to give continuity as pupils transfer into the Reception class.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

27. Belmont makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Assemblies are planned with a weekly theme. In addition to a story and a hymn or song, assemblies include a short prayer and moment of reflection to which pupils respond appropriately. In their writing, across the various subjects of the curriculum, children are given the opportunity to develop an empathy with others. For example, in history in Year 3, pupils wrote thoughtful first-person accounts of the life of evacuees. In Year 5, the Nativity story has been given added poignancy through parallels drawn with the plight of modern-day refugees.

28. The school's provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Most adults in the school provide good role models in how to treat others. Pupils are taught a strong sense of right and wrong. Even the youngest children gain an understanding of the importance of helping others and develop a concern for environmental issues. Some pupils updated the song "Where Have All The Flowers Gone?" with their own verses. Year 6 pupils wrote their own Ten Commandments linking moral and environmental issues. The school has a clear code of conduct, supplemented by class rules that are jointly drawn up by the teacher and pupils. A notable feature is the school's encouragement for pupils to develop good self-discipline. This is fostered, for example, through the use of a special form which children are sometimes asked to complete when they have been naughty; they have to explain what they have done wrong, what they should have done and what they can do to make it better.

29. The regular circle-time sessions, in which pupils are able to discuss relationships, contribute to the very good provision made for pupils' social development. In addition, pupils are encouraged to show care and compassion for others. They are praised for looking after each other, for volunteering to help disabled pupils, or coming into school

during break to help prepare teaching materials for visually impaired pupils. Pupils of all ages have opportunities to take on responsibility within the school, such as class monitors helping to set out classrooms before school. School monitors, in Year 6, take on wider responsibilities. Through most of the juniors, pupils have the opportunity to go on an annual residential school trip, and this significantly contributes to pupils' social development.

30. The school makes good provision overall for pupils' cultural development. There are some opportunities to learn about mainly Western art and music. For example, Year 1 pupils imitated the texture of Van Gogh's paintings and pupils in Year 3 have listened to and prepared their own illustrations for Prokofiev's "Peter And The Wolf". In religious education, pupils across the school have looked at festivals of light within different faiths and have thoughtfully compared the Christmas customs found around the world. Pupils in Year 5 have corresponded with a school in Western Australia and Year 2 pupils have been comparing life in Bexley with that of a schoolchild in the Scottish Isles.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

31. Belmont provides a caring and supportive environment for pupils. Teachers know the children well and there are appropriate systems in place for monitoring and tracking individual pupils' academic progress through Key Stages 1 and 2 in English, mathematics and science. Progress is not tracked effectively between the Nursery and Reception classes. Throughout the school, targets for improvement are set for pupils at teachers' meetings with parents, and good use is made of individual targets in some classes. Very careful monitoring of pupils with special educational needs is effective in ensuring that they maintain a good rate of progress.

32. There are very effective systems in place for promoting discipline and good behaviour. The school's code of conduct is clearly understood and very good use is made of rewards and commendations, including certificates and recognition in an achievement book and in assembly. No evidence of bullying was apparent during the inspection, and pupils confirm that if incidents occur they are dealt with effectively by teachers. Supervision and care during the lunch break are effective.

33. There are good systems for monitoring and promoting attendance. Registers are properly taken at the start of each session and are well maintained. Most parents are diligent in notifying the school of any absence, but where no prior explanation has been given or telephone call received, the school routinely telephones home on the first day of a pupil's absence from school. This is a very good system. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer who visits the school regularly, checks registers and helps pupils whose attendance has given cause for concern. Certificates are awarded to promote good attendance.

34. The school has good systems in place for carrying out health and safety checks on the buildings and on equipment. There are adequate measures in place for ensuring that child protection issues are dealt with properly. Arrangements for dealing with accidents and first aid are good. There is very good recording of all incidents and any treatment provided. Although the school does not allow staff to administer prescribed medication, it does ensure that all teachers have a record of pupils' known medical conditions and allergies. The care of physically disabled and visually impaired pupils is very good.

Partnership with parents and the community

35. Belmont provides good information for parents. Reports on pupils' progress are personal to each child and give detailed information on what the child can do. Although not all reports include targets for improvement, targets are agreed with parents at the meetings held in school with teachers. There is a good flow of communication to parents through newsletters, and most parents are satisfied that the school keeps them well informed and that it is approachable with any problems. They feel strongly that the school encourages them to be involved in the life of the school.

36. Parents are very supportive of the school and of their children's education. A number assist in classes or with activities such as running the school library. There is an active Parents' Association which organises social and fundraising events and which has successfully raised substantial sums for the school. Parents of physically disabled and visually impaired pupils have formed their own mutual support group with the school's help. The school works well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are well informed, discuss their children's progress regularly and feel confident to contact teachers whenever the need arises. This contributes significantly to their good progress.

37. Good use is made of visitors to the school, including those from local public services and churches. Local

residents have been invited into school to help with history work, for example by recounting their childhood memories. A range of school visits and trips to farms and museums help to enrich the curriculum. The school regularly supports both local and national charities.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

38. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has set a very good direction for the long-term development of the school. He works closely with the deputy headteacher, who carries out her roles well, particularly in the monitoring of teaching and learning and in staff development issues. Management systems are very well organised and everyone in the school knows their responsibilities. Members of the senior management team and year leaders have suitably prescribed roles and fulfil them effectively. Weekly senior management team and staff meetings concentrate upon raising standards and further developing the curriculum. Planning meetings within year groups ensure that pupils of the same age but in different classes are taught the same things, and enable teachers to share their expertise and ideas.

39. Subject co-ordinators are effective in managing their responsibilities. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Standards in English, mathematics and science are monitored regularly throughout the school and all teachers are members of core groups, which regularly review issues related to these three subjects. The management of the early years provision is under review. This is important because some weaknesses in provision for the under-fives have not been identified and dealt with. The co-ordinator for special educational needs and the special needs manager work very well together to support pupils. They work effectively with class teachers and learning support assistants to ensure that pupils are well integrated and receive an appropriately adapted curriculum.

40. Governing body committees have clearly defined terms of reference, meet regularly and work effectively in considering aspects of the school's work. Their written reports are sent to all governors before the next full meeting of the governing body so that all governors are kept fully informed. Several governors visit the school with a defined focus such as special educational needs, numeracy or target setting. Their reports keep the governing body up to date, particularly in the development of the curriculum. Governors do not have written guidelines to help them evaluate what is happening in classroom, which would be useful.

41. The school development plan is an effective document in moving forward the work of the school. It is clearly written, contains estimated costs and success criteria, the personnel responsible for particular initiatives and a very clear time schedule by which tasks are to be completed. Governors are regularly informed of progress towards the targets. In its formulation it includes the opinion of staff and governors, and intended priorities are shared with parents at the annual general meeting.

42. There is very effective support and monitoring of both teaching and curriculum development. Subject co-ordinators check that planning matches the schemes of work. Senior managers observe teaching and give detailed feedback that identifies both strengths and areas for improvement. Written documentation is thorough, and information about the day to day running of the school is clearly set out in the school's handbook. Expectations about the teaching and learning programmes are clearly specified in the schemes of work.

43. Relationships in the school are very good. Almost all teachers provide a good learning environment, following the school's policies consistently and teaching its values by example. The school's aims are being met in all respects. Pupils have equal opportunities to develop. In some lessons, the work does not match the needs of groups of pupils, such as higher-attaining pupils in science. However, overall, the school is clearly committed to high achievement.

44. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in addressing the key issues in the report. The consistency in the quality of teaching has improved through the regular monitoring and staff development. The schemes of work have given teachers a structure in which to plan their lessons and in the best of these there are clearly linked strategies to assess what the pupils have learned. The school's management structure has been clarified. The leadership and management of the school are now major strengths in the school's provision.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

45. The school is well staffed with suitably qualified teachers, as at the time of the last inspection. There is a good balance between longer serving staff and those more recently qualified. The teachers' range of subject expertise is

now good and this has contributed to improved standards since the last inspection. Staffing to meet the requirements of pupils with special educational needs, including those with physical disabilities and visual impairment, is good. The school employs a good number of well-trained learning support assistants. They have attended staff training for literacy and numeracy and have a range of in-service training, including additional literacy support. Their high level of commitment makes a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress. The school works well with external agencies, such as therapists and specialist advisors.

46. The arrangements for professional development are very good. Teachers attend a variety of in-service courses to improve their expertise. Much recent training has focused on numeracy, literacy and information technology. An effective system of staff appraisal identifies whole-school and individual training needs. Before accepting visually impaired pupils, the school ensured that there would be sufficient training for staff. The induction procedures for new teachers are effective, and newly qualified teachers are well supported by a mentor. The school is involved in the School Centred Initial Teacher Training scheme. Two students provide additional teaching support in the classrooms, which is beneficial both to the students and the school and contributes to the pupils' progress. They are monitored by class teachers and a mentor, and receive a weekly tutorial.

47. Overall, the accommodation is good. The covered passageway that links the various buildings is attractive and practical. Classrooms are sufficiently large and are accessible to disabled pupils. The main hall is well used for physical education and assemblies and the smaller hall is used for dinners and some lessons. The buildings and grounds are well cared for. There is a good, separate play area for Nursery children and an attractive playground for younger pupils. The junior playground and small field are clearly marked out for games activities.

48. The range and quality of educational resources that is provided for each subject are good. They are organised well in several central stores and in ample stock cupboards in classrooms. Labelling is clear and helpful and ensures that resources are easily accessible. There are good resources for teaching pupils with special educational needs. The library is well stocked with non-fiction books and from Year 2 pupils from each class visit the library regularly. The resources for information technology are good. There are computers in every class. Those in the lower school are not standardised and this causes some problems for curriculum planning. The upper school has very good, networked resources. Teachers make good use of overhead projectors and flip charts when teaching the whole class, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons.

The efficiency of the school

49. The school's finances are planned very well on an annual basis, with close consideration of the priorities in the school development plan. Governors study a range of models prepared by the headteacher before setting the budget. Longer term planning lacks sufficient detail in some aspects, though the broad implications are carefully considered. For example, the implications of rising costs for information technology have been recognised but not modelled with notional figures. Governors monitor spending regularly and there are very good financial controls within the school. The recommendations of the last audit report have been put in place, such as better systems for backing up data. Money allocated for specific purposes, such as special educational needs, is used effectively. The office staff are helpful and welcoming, which parents appreciate, and the administration of the school is very effective.

50. Teachers work well together in year groups and subject teams. Some teachers swap classes for particular lessons so that their expertise is used effectively. Teachers are given some time out of classes to fulfil other responsibilities. A few parents are concerned because they suspect this may cause disruption to their children's progress. The inspection found no evidence that this is the case. Some parents are also concerned that pupils in the two Year 2 classes split into three teaching groups, one of which is a job-share. However, inspectors found that the good quality of teaching and careful planning ensure that this arrangement is effective. Learning support assistants work well with teachers and provide effective help for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. Lunchtime supervisors, caretaking and cleaning staff all fulfil their roles efficiently to provide a positive social and learning environment.

51. Resources for learning are used effectively. Pupils use classroom resources frequently to help with their work. For instance, they fetch dictionaries to check spellings. Teachers prepare resources before lessons so that time is not wasted. They make good use of practical resources such as counting apparatus in mathematics, artefacts in history and large apparatus in the hall for physical education. Pupils use books from the library as well as their own classrooms. Computers are not used enough in some classes, especially in the lower school. The accommodation is used well. The computer suite is in a classroom and therefore inconvenient, but is timetabled carefully to make best

use of it.

52. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment, which is, on balance, below average. They make good progress and leave the school with standards that are generally in line with or slightly above national expectations. Their attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. These achievements reflect the good quality of education, for example in the quality of teaching, curriculum, partnership with parents, and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The leadership and management of the school are very effective. For all these reasons, the school gives good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE

53. Children usually enter the Nursery in the term after their third birthday and transfer to the Reception class in the September or January preceding their fifth birthday. In total, 52 children are taught part-time in the Nursery during the separate morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils who were not yet at the compulsory stage of education were being taught in both the Nursery and the Reception classes at the time of the inspection. Most of the children in the Reception class, however, had recently turned five and so were shortly to become of compulsory school age. Attainment on entry to the Nursery varies but is, on balance, below national expectations. Children make satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. Their attainment by the age of five is in line with national expectations.

54. The children adapt well to the Nursery and settle quickly. Most can take off their own coats and show independence in dressing and personal hygiene. They make independent choices of activities and confidently work alone or with others. They play together and share equipment well. Some children helped each other to make aeroplanes with the construction equipment, and others shared pencils and crayons when drawing and writing. Occasionally they became possessive about pieces of equipment, particularly a small minority of boys. As a result, minor squabbles broke out, but these were quickly resolved, often without teacher intervention. Children concentrate well and can sustain their level of interest for long periods of time. A small group of lower-attaining Reception children sustained their activity in the post office for a long time as they wrote letters, put on stamps, sealed the envelopes and posted them. The children treat property and their classroom environment with respect.

55. Children listen well to stories and show good levels of interest, although they do not always get sufficiently involved. They are confident in open discussion to make comments about their personal experiences. They are beginning to become acquainted with letter sounds for the beginning of words. They handle books with care, but there is insufficient planned use of reading corners. They know that print and pictures carry meaning and that books are read from left to right. When directed to the listening tapes, they follow picture stories. The majority of children in the Nursery recognise their own name and, by the end of their first term in Reception, most write it in well formed letters. Some used upper and lower case letters correctly positioned and a minority of children are beginning to write a few words unaided.

56. Most children count to ten correctly and many can count to 20. They make necklaces, patterning the number of beads on a card and at the same time replicating the colour of beads accurately. Almost all children can sort accurately by several colours and by size. They recognise some of the common two-dimensional shapes such as triangle, square and circle. The children understand comparative language such as bigger and smaller. They often sing Nursery rhymes involving numbers and are aware of positional language such as under and next to. Children enjoy performing actions to songs, and this helps their understanding.

57. When using the computer, children are beginning to manipulate the mouse correctly and click on icons to turn the pages of a book on screen. Overall, however, they have insufficient opportunities to work with computers. Children name some living and non-living things. Some children began to get a sense of past and present when they ordered simple events in stories by putting pictures in sequence. They use construction equipment to make imaginary aeroplanes, talk about the different parts of it and count the wheels. However, in general, too few activities are set up with specifically for children to investigate and explore. They have good opportunities to learn about the outside world through visitors to the school such as the fire brigade or from visits to a farm at lambing time. They learned about the growth of plants when they planted seeds and bulbs and observed their growth.

58. The children respond in a variety of ways with paint and crayon to represent their views and perceptions of the world. Whilst they work with materials such as dough and plasticene they have limited opportunities with clay and more resistant materials such as wood. They play untuned percussion such as sleigh bells to accompany songs. The children sing reasonably in tune but do not compose their own music sufficiently. They have good opportunities to engage in role-play such as in the post office and in the home corner. Some children dressed up as Postman Pat and delivered letters.

59. Nearly all children show a good awareness of space. They move confidently both indoors and outdoors. They take turns on the apparatus and climb to suitable heights on it. Some children jumped two footed into a series of coloured hoops. They showed good skills in riding the large wheeled toys and exercised good control. Children hold pencils with the correct grip. They handle scissors well for cutting out paper and manage glue spreaders effectively. They enjoy action songs and replicate the actions for different types of common daily habits such as brushing teeth and running to school.

60. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The teachers' good relationships with the children contribute significantly to their happiness and wellbeing. Sessions are prepared carefully so that children can be constantly involved in activities. The teachers plan work in outline for the term and then in more detail for each week. Whilst this has the advantage of ensuring that children cover a full range of activities, teachers are not sufficiently flexible in ensuring that they extend children's successes. Too often, all children engage in the same activities irrespective of age and prior attainment. The teachers make some careful records of children's attainments but do not use this information sufficiently when planning further work. The Nursery and Reception classes do not exchange enough information to ensure that learning is continuous and developmental.

61. Teachers and support staff work well together. Their mutual understanding is a significant factor in ensuring that children are well cared for. The accommodation for the under-fives is good. They have a reasonably spacious external environment of both hard and grassed surfaces. This is used to plant flowers, and a small wild life area has been established. The school has maintained the standards reported in the previous inspection, but insufficient progress has been made in improving the use of assessment information.

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

62. In the 1999 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 attainment in reading was well above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Standards in writing were above the national average and were average compared with similar schools. On entry to the school, this year group had a balance of attainment that was broadly average. The present Year 2, who entered the school with below average attainment, are working at levels that match national expectations. Since 1996, the trend has been for standards to remain above national averages, though standards in writing have been rising faster nationally than in the school. Over time, pupils in Key Stage 1 are making good progress.

63. At the end of Key Stage 2, results in the 1999 national assessments were below the national average and that for similar schools. Though an average proportion attained the expected Level 4, few pupils reached the higher Level 5. When this year group entered the school, the balance of attainment was below average. The present Year 6, who entered the school with average attainment, are working at levels that are above national expectations. The trend since 1996 has been of standards gradually rising and remaining similar to the national average. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 2.

64. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening is above national expectations in both key stages. Key Stage 1 pupils listen carefully and respond to questions appropriately. Higher-attaining pupils can sustain concentration and express their point of view with increasing confidence. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs sometimes need a lot of encouragement to recall the main events of stories. Pupils made good progress in activities involving tape recorders and role-play. They took part in good discussions during personal, social and moral education lessons. The majority of Key Stage 2 pupils show well-developed oral skills. They often engage in informed discussions, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. During a Year 6 assembly, older pupils spoke in character and projected their voices well to a large audience. Pupils of all ages make good progress in developing skills in speaking and listening.

65. Reading standards are in line with national expectations in Key Stage 1 and above expectations in Key Stage 2.

Pupils make good progress. Higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 show well developed reading skills involving a phonic approach. They read with accuracy and understanding. Some lower attainers too often read texts with which they are already familiar, and without any degree of accuracy, fluency, expression or understanding. They often use phonics quite successfully to read unfamiliar words, but their range of strategies beyond this is not sufficiently wide. There is a clear love of books throughout the key stage. Many Key Stage 2 pupils read independently, demonstrating appropriate skimming and scanning skills. Some pupils made good predictions about the plot of a story. Pupils read in groups during the literacy hour and broaden their reading experiences through other subjects. In some classes, opportunities for individual, quiet reading are limited to registration, which is too short a time to be useful. In general, pupils read a good variety of texts, including poetry, Gospels and reference books. The practice of teachers reading with individuals, discussing their reading diaries and keeping reading records is inconsistent.

66. Standards of writing are broadly in line with national expectations throughout the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress. Higher attainers in Key Stage 1 contribute to shared writing by retelling stories in sequence. They have started writing for different purposes, paying attention to punctuation and verb tenses. A significant minority of pupils cannot express themselves in simple sentences unaided, but usually receive appropriate support. Pupils in Key Stage 2 use different kinds of writing, such as narrative, dialogue, instructions and letters. Some poems include effective and imaginative use of language. Pupils sometimes write autobiographies and stories, but the standard of pupils' drafting and quality of extended writing varies between classes and is sometimes below expectations. The school has recently started to focus on this aspect and the hour long sessions of extended writing in Key Stage 2 classes are beginning to have a positive effect. Pupils generally present their work well, though the quality of handwriting is inconsistent. Many pupils are not learning to join their letters early enough. Spelling is taught regularly and standards are in line with national expectations throughout the school.

67. Pupils' literacy skills are used effectively across the curriculum. In geography, some pupils drafted post cards to another locality. Pupils wrote from the point of view of evacuees during a history lesson and this was cleverly linked to their work in the literacy hour. When pupils complete science experiments, they are usually expected to write their findings rather than fill in spaces on worksheets. Speaking and listening skills are promoted through almost all subjects during class discussions and presentations. The use of information technology within English is not sufficiently developed.

68. Pupils' show very good attitudes to learning English. They are almost always keen to answer questions, putting up their hands to take turns. They respond positively to others' ideas and build upon them. During written tasks, they concentrate well and try to work neatly and accurately. Some pupils fetched dictionaries to check their spelling. The standard of behaviour was very high in almost all lessons seen.

69. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and this helps them to ask effective questions. When some pupils were studying a play, the teacher's good questions reinforced spelling skills and helped them to understand why speech is written differently in play scripts and novels. Teachers make good use of resources such as flip charts, big books and overhead projectors so that all pupils can fully participate. There is good teamwork with learning support assistants, who help pupils with special educational needs effectively. The few pupils for whom English is an additional language are sometimes held back when no individual support is available. Almost all lessons follow the structure recommended in the National Literacy Strategy, and this leads to a good pace and balance of activities. Teachers set high expectations. In a few lessons, the expectations for lower-attaining pupils were too high during tasks that required independent working. Teachers do not always make effective use of assessment information, such as from marking pupils' work, when planning further work.

70. The English curriculum is broad and balanced. Cross-curricular links enable the subject to make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good planning process supports the curriculum. Procedures for assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' attainment in most aspects of English are good. Assessment is used very positively in identifying pupils who will most benefit from special literacy support. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress in speaking and listening are inconsistent. There is a good range of resources for English, including the number and variety of books in classrooms and the library. The two subject co-ordinators work together well, and the National Literacy Strategy is well established. A relative weakness in writing was accurately identified and is now a focus for improvement. Overall standards have improved since the last inspection.

Mathematics

71. The pupils' results in the 1999 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 were well above the national average. Compared with similar schools the results were average. The work completed this term shows that current Year 2 pupils are in line with national expectations. Standards are similar in all aspects of mathematics, including applying what they have learnt to solving problems. The trend since 1996 has been of standards remaining above national levels. In the 1999 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 attainment was in line with the national average, but below average when compared with similar schools. This year group entered the school with a balance of attainment that was below average. The trend since 1996 has been one of maintaining standards that are broadly average. The standard of work completed by the current pupils in Year 6 is above average. This is partly a result of improved teaching, which has been helped by the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the associated in-service training.

72. Pupils make good progress overall. In Key Stage 1, pupils are given many opportunities to practise their number skills, such as counting the days to Christmas. In Year 1, they learn to count forwards and backwards to twenty and are beginning to count in twos. By Year 2, most pupils count in fives and tens confidently and recognise patterns in numbers, such as different combinations of numbers that give sixteen as an answer. In a lesson about fractions, some higher-attaining pupils applied what they had previously learned about doubles and halves and so made very good progress. Lower-attaining pupils made very good progress in their understanding of half of a number in a practical task using real sweets. During Key Stage 2, pupils learn to carry out more complex skills and different methods of recording their work. Year 4 pupils learned to collect data, make a tally chart and record the information on bar charts and pictograms where the symbol represented several units. Older pupils have made good progress in plotting co-ordinates in all four quadrants of a graph and applying their understanding of negative numbers. Regular mental and oral mathematics at the start of lessons is reinforcing number facts, developing new strategies and having a very positive effect on pupils' progress. Mathematical skills are sometimes practised in other subjects. For example, graphs are used in information technology and geography, and measuring skills in design and technology. Some opportunities to use mathematics are missed when teachers are planning lessons.

73. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They are very enthusiastic and keen to answer teachers' questions. They are confident in explaining their methods of working to the class. They are eager to learn and work hard. They co-operate well when working in pairs, sharing ideas and helping each other. In general, their work is well organised and neatly presented.

74. The quality of teaching is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers in the same year group plan their work together and lessons are well prepared with appropriate resources. Effective use is made of flip charts and overhead projectors to explain work to the pupils. Pupils of different abilities are catered for in both oral questioning and practical activities, and those with special educational needs are helped effectively by learning support assistants. Teachers motivate and challenge pupils successfully. In one lesson, the higher-attaining pupils showed that they had understood a method of addition and so were asked to apply the same strategy to subtraction. Teachers' set high expectations for pupils' behaviour and the amount of work that they should complete. This contributes to the good progress pupils make. Many lessons end with good reinforcement of the main points and new vocabulary.

75. The curriculum for mathematics is good. Work is effectively planned with opportunities for mental calculation, a class oral lesson and group activities which are appropriate for pupils' differing abilities. Annual tests track pupils' progress as they move through the school. Teachers keep useful class records to ensure that pupils are making appropriate progress. The subject is well managed with effective monitoring of standards and the quality of teaching. In-service training has had a positive effect on the standard of teaching, which has improved since the last inspection. There is now a more consistent quality of teaching. The school is well placed to maintain standards in mathematics and make further improvements.

Science

76. Attainment in the 1999 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 was above the national average, with an above-average number achieving the higher Level 3. The percentage of pupils gaining the expected level or above in the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 assessments was in line with the national average, but more pupils than average attained the higher Level 5. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' performance was below average. The trend since 1996 has approximated to the national average and there has been very little difference between the performance of

boys and girls. The school has maintained the standards reported after the last inspection.

77.The attainment of the current pupils in the final years of both key stages is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils communicate their investigative findings well in their own words. They carry out simple scientific tests, guided by their teacher, and are beginning to understand the principles that underlie fair testing. Some pupils made good progress when they learned about friction by rolling toy cars down a ramp onto different surfaces. They suggested the importance of using the same car, from the same starting point, on the same gradient. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a good understanding of fair testing and are often able to hypothesise, though this is not a consistent feature of their work. They communicate their results in tables, and describe in their own words what they have done and why things happen. This contributes to the development of literacy skills, although the quality of handwriting and presentation are inconsistent. Pupils' knowledge and understanding is at similar levels in all aspects of science that are studied. Sometimes they learn incorrect knowledge. Some pupils, for instance, recorded incorrect facts about gravity and that a tennis ball weighed less in air than in water.

78.In both key stages pupils are enthusiastic in their science work and show good levels of interest. They mostly work with concentration and are very co-operative when working in groups. They are polite in answering questions and listen patiently to the views being expressed by others. Most pupils are very well behaved and attentive. They are keen to answer questions and join in discussions.

79.The quality of teaching ranges from good to satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and from very good to unsatisfactory in Key Stage 2, but it is sound overall in both key stages. In the best teaching, very good relationships with the pupils ensured that they were happy to articulate the findings from their experiments. Teachers asked probing, challenging questions, for example when seeking reasons why the image on a concave mirror is inverted. In the first lesson of a series about electricity, pupils were asked to write down in note form all the knowledge they could recall about electricity. They spoke from their notes and discussed this knowledge. This gave the teacher a very clear understanding of what the pupils understood and gave her a good springboard for further work. Pupils made unsatisfactory progress in a lesson when the level of challenge was inappropriate and they were asked to repeat work they had already studied. In many lessons, the same work expectations are made of all pupils and not enough attention is given to challenging the higher-attaining pupils. This reduces the progress made by these pupils. However, pupils with special needs are usually well supported and make satisfactory progress. The marking of pupils' work is usually encouraging, but teachers do not always ensure that recorded work is factually accurate.

80.Two subject co-ordinators, one in each key stage, co-operate when planning how the subject should develop. Both subject co-ordinators have appropriate expertise that enables them to support colleagues and to manage the subject effectively. Since the previous inspection, monitoring of standards and provision has resulted in improvements to the scheme of work and assessment procedures. The scheme of work is good and is reviewed regularly to ensure that the curriculum remains balanced. Key questions in the scheme of work are used to check pupils' understanding, and there is a good system for recording what pupils have understood. Resources are of good quality, well looked after, and very effectively stored for ease of retrieval.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

83. Information technology

81.Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils confidently open applications, retrieve files, and copy and paste text into other documents. They use computers for a range of purposes within other subjects: text editing, handling data with a spreadsheet, control, and searching for information on disk or the Internet. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards are below national expectations. Some pupils lack appropriate keyboard skills, such as how to use the shift, backspace or enter keys. They are unsure about how to save files or print their work, even with adult support. In some classes, pupils lack sufficient breadth of experience. However, most pupils use a computer mouse confidently and accurately.

82.Progress is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to information technology and recognise how useful computers can be for their learning. They have better opportunities to do so in Key Stage 2, where there is a very good network and computer suite. The variety of computers and software for younger pupils makes it awkward to plan for systematic development in skills, and some computers cannot be used for particular applications. The way that teachers plan for the use of computers varies across the school. During the inspection, there were many lessons in which computers were not used to support

learning in other subjects. This often coincided with teachers who expressed that they lacked sufficient subject knowledge. Some teachers, however, are good at planning how information technology can be used across the curriculum. For example, in some classes, pupils used computers during the inspection in English, mathematics, science and geography lessons. Some pupils learned how to use a spreadsheet to sort information. Having taught pupils how to sort words alphabetically, the teacher plans that they will practise the skill in a range of subjects. Where pupils have made the best progress over time it is in classes where the teachers follow a systematic approach: teach a specific skill, plan how to use it in other subjects, maintain a careful record to ensure that all pupils have practised it. In a lot of classes, pupils copy their writing onto computers before printing out. Several pupils rightly observed that it is usually better to enter text direct to screen and edit it using the power of technology rather than by hand.

83. There is a very good scheme of work to support teachers when planning lessons. Residential trips in Key Stage 2 include an element of information technology and this extends and enriches pupils' experiences. Good use of technological aids supports pupils with special educational needs. Information technology contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through links with a school in Australia and research into Christmas customs around the world. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. Some teachers are unaware of what pupils have learned in previous years and assessment information is not used consistently to plan further work according to the pupils' needs. The subject co-ordinator has set a clear direction for development of the subject. Good planning has led to significant improvements since the last inspection, especially in resources and the curriculum. The development plan accurately identifies the need for further staff training and for improvements in assessment.

86. **Religious education**

84. Pupils' attainment in religious education at the end of both key stages is in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. The majority of Key Stage 1 pupils demonstrate a growing knowledge and understanding of Christian festivals such as Christmas and some festivals associated with other major world religions. They identify Christmas as a festival of light like Diwali and Hannukah, demonstrating their understanding of light as a symbol. Key Stage 2 pupils show a developing awareness of the meaning and significance of Advent. Many talk about preparations for Christmas by referring to the traditions associated with it. Some high attainers related their learning in religious education to their personal experiences. They talked about what their families mean to them at Christmas, and suggested ideas for helping others enjoy the festival. Year 6 pupils compared the account of the Christmas story from different Gospels. Many have started using appropriate vocabulary when contributing to classroom discussion, though they show a lack of a deeper understanding of principles and practices relating to some major world faiths.

85. Pupils made satisfactory progress in lessons. Their progress from year to year is also sound. Pupils of all ages respond positively in lessons and assemblies. In one lesson, pupils were well motivated and eager to contribute to a discussion aimed at selecting appropriate religious vocabulary to describe different Christmas traditions. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, enabling them to ask effective questions that check pupils' understanding. In some lessons, there is too much emphasis on an oral approach and insufficient recording of pupils' ideas.

86. The curriculum is consistent with the local Agreed Syllabus although the subject co-ordinator has rightly identified the need for more specific religious content in many lessons. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment lack rigour and consistency. The action plan resulting from the previous inspection identifies this as a priority for next year. There are sufficient resources, though artefacts need upgrading. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

89. Art

87. Pupils achieve standards expected for their ages, which is similar to the findings of the last inspection. They make satisfactory progress, developing skills systematically through the school. For example, pupils in Year 1 made two-dimensional lanterns with card and tissue while Year 6 pupils made three-dimensional lanterns using tracing paper painted like stained glass. Pupils are introduced to a range of media and techniques, which helps them develop their skills in drawing, painting and modelling. They study the work of several famous artists, such as van Gogh when working with different textures. Large displays in classrooms and around the school are creatively stimulating and show pupils how skills can be developed from year to year. Good links have been developed between art and other subjects. In science, sources of light were effectively displayed and, in history, pupils used fabric to create Tudor portraits and Victorian costume. There is a helpful scheme of work to support the teaching of art.

90. Design and technology

88. As at the time of the last inspection, standards in the work seen were similar to expectations for the ages of the pupils. By Year 6, pupils have carried out a range of projects using different materials and methods. Across the school, pupils use construction skills of increasing difficulty: some infants worked from a net to make buggies from folded, corrugated plastic; older juniors designed and made models for large toys, such as swings and carousels, requiring careful measuring and cutting. Their work often involves cross-curricular links, for example, with literacy. Some pupils made 'word-makers' that helped them learn letter sounds and others made pop-up cards depicting scenes from a book they had been reading. Older pupils used their scientific knowledge of electric circuits to power models. There is insufficient reference to function and use of evaluation. For instance, pupils made musical instruments: wind, strung and percussive. Some of the materials used were inappropriate. A study of real instruments followed by evaluation throughout the designing and making stages would have led to better products.

91. Geography

89. In the work seen, pupils attained standards in line with expectations for their ages. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Pupils develop a sound knowledge of different places during both key stages, making increasingly detailed comparisons. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils developed a sound understanding of the differences and similarities between the school's locality and life on an island off the west coast of Scotland. They accurately identified the countries of the British Isles on a map. Knowledge of more distant places was further extended when pupils in Year 4 studied life in a village in India. Pupils show interest in their work and are keen to share their ideas. The few lessons seen were well planned so that pupils in the same year group were taught the same things and resources were efficiently shared. Teachers asked searching questions and encouraged pupils to discuss their own ideas. The good scheme of work successfully encourages teachers to concentrate on geographical skills and understanding through studies of places.

92. History

90. In the work seen, standards were in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. In Key Stage 1, pupils learned about the past by studying toys from different periods. Classes in Key Stage 2 learned about the Victorians and the Second World War. Pupils made good progress when a gentleman recounted his experiences of life in war time, and some pupils consulted older relatives to find out about life as an evacuee. A good range of artefacts, books and other resources supports the detailed scheme of work, which includes very good assessment opportunities for checking pupils' understanding. Effective use is made of time lines so that pupils gain a sense of chronology. Some effective teaching included an emphasis on the preciousness of the artefacts that were being studied. Pupils were encouraged to think about the use to which the objects were put. Good questions focused their minds on the most important issues. In the following discussions, pupils gave reasons for their conclusions, often referring to books through which they had checked their hypotheses. Pupils worked with interest in history lessons and were well behaved and attentive. The curriculum is enriched by visits to places that are relevant to the topics studied.

93. Music

91. Standards in the music observed were appropriate for the ages of the pupils. They are slightly lower than at the time of the previous inspection, reflecting the school's recent emphasis on national initiatives for literacy and numeracy. Pupils sing in tune and maintain a good rhythm. Their posture and breathing is often unsatisfactory and this reduces the volume. In one lesson, the teacher noted this and made them stand to sing, which led to improvement. Pupils learn to play a range of tuned and untuned percussive instruments. One class used untuned percussion to accompany their singing of a carol. The teacher showed them how to hold the instruments properly and was very encouraging, and they played with confidence. On several occasions, pupils would have made better progress if they had been conducted. Pupils listen to music from a range of traditions, which effectively supports their cultural development. Some younger pupils listened to Indian music in connection with their work about Diwali and then joined in a call and response. The scheme of work helps teachers to plan lessons that develop knowledge and skills systematically through the school.

94. Physical education

92. Pupils in Key Stage 1 attained standards appropriate for their ages in the work seen. In Key Stage 2, standards were above expectations. Pupils made very good progress when there was sufficient apparatus set out for them all to be fully active for the whole lesson. In gymnastics, younger pupils showed agility and control in jumping and landing, and improved their performances through practice. They had good control of their movements when travelling in different directions and devised a number of ways to travel over the apparatus. In Key Stage 2, pupils used the skills they have previously acquired and worked with poise and precision in their sequences. Swimming is timetabled for all pupils in Key Stage 2 at some time in the year. By the time the pupils leave school the majority are competent swimmers who can exceed the expected twenty-five metres. Pupils approach physical education with enthusiasm and work hard to improve their skills. Pupils' show their enthusiasm for physical education by their participation in extra curricular activities and competitive sport. The lessons seen included appropriate warm up, well-developed progressive activities and a gentle warm down at the end. A new scheme of work helped teachers when planning lessons, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

93. The inspection was carried out over a period of one week by 5 inspectors for a total of 24 inspector days. For the majority of the time in the school the inspectors visited classes, talked with pupils and evaluated samples of work from each year group. In total 81 observations of teaching were made, taking over 67 hours. Pupils from each year group were heard reading and inspectors looked at samples of previously completed work. Planned meetings were held with the headteacher, teaching and non-teaching staff, and governors. Policy documents, teachers' planning and assessment records were inspected. A parents' meeting was held before the inspection with 16 parents attending.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y6	392	12	74	30
Nursery	26	3	4	N/A

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)

16.6

Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
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Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff	13
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Total aggregate hours worked each week	215
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Qualified teachers (Nursery)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	2
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Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
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Education support staff (Nursery)

Total number of education support staff	2
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Total aggregate hours worked each week	42.5
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Average class size:	28
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Financial data

Financial year:	1998/99
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	£
Total Income	777,618
Total Expenditure	1,679
Expenditure per pupil	1,642
Balance brought forward from previous year	1,029
Balance carried forward to next year	18,393

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	443
Number of questionnaires returned:	106

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	28	63	7	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	37	52	6	6	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	10	58	28*	4	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	10	70	13	5	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	14	56	15	14	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	16	68	11	5	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	16	58	21	6	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	16	62	9	10	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	26	63	8	1	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	26	62	9	1	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	41	52	6	1	1

* The high neutral figure reflects the number of parents who stated that they had no cause to complain.