

INSPECTION REPORT

St John's RC Primary School
Rickmansworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire County Council

Unique Reference Number: 117475

Inspection Number: 187616

Headteacher: Mr Aleksander Szwagrzak

Reporting inspector: David Westall

Dates of inspection: 29th November – 3rd December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707441

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
Type of control:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Berry Lane Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 2HG
Telephone number:	01923 774004
Fax number:	01923 710915
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Helen Parnell
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
David Westall, RgI	Science Design and technology Art Music	Attainment and progress Teaching Leadership and management Staffing, accommodation and learning resource The efficiency of the schools The curriculum and assessment
Jill Head	Areas of learning for under fives Information technology Physical education	
Sandy Wellsted	Mathematics Geography History Special educational needs	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Special educational needs
Elizabeth Forster		Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community Equal opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

Oxford Associates Support & Inspection Services (OASIS)
Waterstone Cottages
Naunton
Near Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL54 3AS

01451 850228

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

The teaching is good, and occasionally very good or excellent, in over one third of all lessons. In Year 6 the teaching is particularly effective, and the teacher had good knowledge in most subjects, high expectations and an enthusiastic approach which captures pupils’ interest.

The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs, and they make good progress, across the school.

The governors are highly committed and effective, and the very recently appointed headteacher has good communication skills and has made a promising start.

Pupils make mainly good progress in mathematics and geography in Key Stage 2, and achieve standards which are above average.

The quality of pupils’ singing is good, and their games skills are a little above average.

The school is good at promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development.

Pupils’ behaviour is good; they want to learn, and they get on well together.

The school is a caring community, and relationships between the pupils and staff are good.

There is a strong partnership with parents, and this benefits pupils’ learning.

Where the school has weaknesses

More able pupils coast through some lessons in English, mathematics and science, in both key stages, when their work is too easy.

In information technology, Key Stage 2 pupils do not make enough progress in developing their skills in control, monitoring and modelling.

Key Stage 1 pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their writing by using their own ideas, feelings and imagination, and most Key Stage 2 pupils need to be encouraged to create longer pieces of writing in English and other subjects.

The school does not do enough work to make pupils aware of the richness and diversity of other cultures.

Teachers do not give pupils enough chance to use their initiative, make decisions, develop their own ideas and to solve problems; and this is evident in a range of subjects.

Children who are under five years old do not have ready access to a secure outside play area, and this restricts the development of their physical skills.

.....
In design and technology, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, and their standards are usually low for their ages.

The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well. The first six weaknesses listed above will form the basis of the governors’ action plan which will be sent to all parents or guardians at the school. The remaining weakness is less important, but should be considered by the school for inclusion in the action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The governors and staff have devised and implemented sound plans to address most of the weaknesses identified in the last OFSTED report (1996) and these have resulted in school improvement. A satisfactory management structure is in place, and strategies for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are more effective. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are better, and ensure that work is generally matched to pupils' needs. The school has made broadly satisfactory progress in introducing schemes of work; and communications systems, with parents and within the school, are effective. A homework policy is now in place, which provides parents with useful information and helps to ensure that homework makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning. However, the last OFSTED report found that standards were generally below average in design and technology, and this is still the case in Key Stage 2.

Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

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

Inspection findings show that overall standards in reading and writing are above average in Year 6; and pupils' speaking and listening skills are mainly good. However, their knowledge about books and authors is rather limited and they write relatively few long pieces in English or in other subjects. In mathematics and science, inspection findings confirm that overall standards are above average in Year 6. However, more able pupils could do better in some lessons in English, mathematics and science.

In information technology, pupils' standards in communicating and handling information are a little above average in Year 6, but their skills in control, monitoring and modelling are underdeveloped throughout for Key Stage 2. Standards are high in geography in Key Stage 2 and are a little above average in games in both key stages. Singing skills are good, across the school. In design and technology, standards are mainly low in Key Stage 2. Standards in the remaining subjects of the National Curriculum are satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 11 years
English	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Mathematics	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Good
Science	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Information technology	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement	Mainly satisfactory
Other subjects	Satisfactory, overall.	Insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement in art and design and technology, in both key stages, in geography in Key Stage 1 and history in Key Stage 2. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, in history in Key Stage 1 and in music and physical education in both key stages. Teaching is mainly good in geography, in Key Stage 2.	

The quality of teaching was sound, or better, in 96% of all lessons; and was good and occasionally very good or excellent, in 37% of all lessons. The most effective teaching is in Years 2, 4 and 6; and the teaching in Year 6 is a particular strength of the school.

The literacy strategy has been successfully introduced, and pupils are given a thorough grounding in reading and writing skills. However, Key Stage 1 pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their independent writing skills by using their own ideas, feelings and imagination, and most Key Stage 2 pupils need to be encouraged to create more extended writing in English and across the curriculum. In both key stages, the progress of more able readers is inhibited by a lack of challenge in the reading materials they are sometimes given. Teachers have made a sound start in introducing the numeracy strategy, and lessons include suitably varied activities, including those to develop pupils' skills in mental mathematics. Mathematics teaching is good, overall, in Key Stage 2, and is particularly effective in Year 6. In science, teachers organise their lessons well, and have secure knowledge of the subject. However, in science and in mathematics, more able pupils sometimes mark time in lessons when their work is too easy. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, in both key stages, and is a strength of the school. In information technology, the teaching is mainly sound but Key Stage 2 teachers provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in control, monitoring and modelling. In design and technology, insufficient lessons were observed to make an overall judgement about teaching. However, evidence suggests that Key Stage 1 teachers have sufficient subject knowledge but that some Key Stage 2 teachers would benefit from in-service training to increase their expertise. In both key stages, teachers do not usually provide enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, make decisions, develop their own ideas and to solve problems, across a range of subjects.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good, throughout the school.
Attendance	Good, with low levels of unauthorised absence.
Ethos*	Good. Pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well and persevere with their tasks. Relationships are good, across the school.
Leadership and management	The governors are hard working and provide good support for the management of the school. The recently appointed headteacher has sound analytical skills and is a strong and positive presence in the school. He has effective communication skills which are already beginning to be reflected in the good relationships he is establishing with the governors, staff and school community. The deputy head is highly conscientious, and provides a positive role model for his colleagues. Subject co-ordinators make a valuable contribution to the planning and organisation of their subjects, and have a beneficial effect on standards in English, mathematics and science. However, there is no co-ordinator for design and technology and there needs to be more effective leadership in this subject where standards are low in Key Stage 2. The school development plan identifies relevant priorities and makes a sound contribution to school improvement.
Curriculum	Sound, overall, Sufficient time is allocated for literacy and numeracy lessons. Teachers plan conscientiously, and their planning is mainly sound but often good. Pupils who are under five receive a sound range of learning experiences but require more opportunities to develop their physical skills. Aspects of information technology require more attention in Key Stage 2, and the needs of more able pupils are not consistently met in English, mathematics and science.
Pupils with special educational needs	The school provides well for these pupils, and they make good progress, as a result.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are good. Their cultural development is sound, overall, but the school needs to do more to develop pupils' multi-cultural awareness.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Sound, overall, but some teachers need to learn more about the teaching of design and technology. Support staff make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Classrooms are of a generous size, and teachers take care to create an interesting learning environment. Pupils who are under five do not have ready access to a secure outside play area. Resources are sound, overall.
Value for money	Sound.

**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

- The school promotes good values, attitudes and a strong emphasis on spirituality
- Parents feel welcome in the school
- Parents find the staff easy to talk to
- Parents feel well informed about what is taught

What some parents are not happy about

- Being well informed about children's progress

Inspection findings fully support parents' positive views about the school. Overall, procedures for keeping parents informed about children's progress are satisfactory.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to raise standards and to improve the quality of education for pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- ensure that more able pupils do not coast through some lessons in English, mathematics and science, by providing tasks which provide sufficient challenge;
(See paragraphs 9, 18, 19, 20, 28, 72, 80, 86)
- raise pupils' standards in control, monitoring and modelling by giving increased emphasis to these elements of information technology in Key Stage 2;
(See paragraphs 10, 21, 25, 92)
- improve pupils' independent writing skills by providing more opportunities for Key Stage 1 pupils to use their own ideas, feelings and imagination in their work, and for Key Stage 2 pupils to create extended writing in English and in other subjects;
(See paragraphs 7, 18, 75, 77)
- ensure that more attention is given to teaching pupils about the richness and diversity of other cultures, in order to develop their multi-cultural awareness;
(See paragraph 34)
- provide more opportunities, across the curriculum, for pupils to use their initiative, to make decisions, develop their own ideas and solve problems;
(See paragraphs 23, 77, 83, 90)
- take steps to provide a secure outside play area for under fives, in order to give them appropriate opportunities to develop their physical skills.
(See paragraphs 55, 69)

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

- raise standards in design and technology in Key Stage 2 by providing well focused in-service training to raise teachers' expectations of pupils' potential achievement, and increase their subject knowledge.
(See paragraphs 11, 22, 27, 51, 105, 107)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. The school is situated in a busy residential area of Rickmansworth, adjacent to the church of St John the Evangelist, with which it has close links. As a Catholic school, it serves a number of parishes and attracts pupils from Catholic families from a wide area of south-west Hertfordshire. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds but, overall, the level of advantage is above the national average. Most pupils have experience of pre-school education. There are 208 pupils on roll, taught in seven classes. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, while the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is higher than in most schools. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs, and 16 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs. On entry to the school, the overall attainment of most pupils is a little above average.
2. School priorities in the current year include the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies.

3. Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	18	12	30

3. National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	14	15	16
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	26	27	28
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	87 (93)	90 (93)	93 (93)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

3. Teacher Assessments		Reading	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys	14	16	17
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	26	28	29
Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School	86 (93)	93 (79)	97 (96)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

.....

¹ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2²

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	15	29

3. National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	11	10	13
	Girls	14	14	15
	Total	25	24	28
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	86 (94)	82 (75)	96 (81)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

3. Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	10	10	11
	Girls	12	14	13
	Total	22	24	24
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	76 (88)	83 (88)	83 (100)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

3. Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	3.3
	Absence	National comparative data	5.7
	Unauthorised	School	0.8
	Absence	National comparative data	0.5

3.

3. Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	2
	Permanent	0

3. Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	10
	Satisfactory or better	96
	Less than satisfactory	4

2

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

3. PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

3. EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

3. Attainment and progress

1. On entry to the school, the language and literacy skills of most five year olds are above average, and their mathematical and scientific understanding is generally a little above average. In the reception class, children who are under five years old make sound progress overall across the curriculum, and in their personal and social development. However, their progress in developing physical skills is inhibited by the lack of opportunities for them to play with large apparatus in a secure outside area.
2. In Key Stage 1, the overall results of the 1999 Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) were above the national average in reading and writing, and were in line with the results achieved by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. A third of the pupils achieved higher than the expected level in reading, but only one in ten pupils reached a higher level in writing. In mathematics, the 1999 Key Stage 1 results were above the national average and were in line with the results achieved by similar schools. In science, the 1999 teacher assessments were well above the national average and above average when compared to the results of similar schools. The 1999 results in Key Stage 1 were broadly similar to the school's results in 1998 in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
3. In Key Stage 2, the 1999 SATs results in English and mathematics were well above the national average and broadly in line with the results achieved by similar schools. In science, the 1999 test results were well above the national average, and well above the results achieved by similar schools. These results are an improvement on the school's 1998 results in mathematics and science, but are a little less favourable than the school's 1998 results in English.
4. Inspection findings show that most pupils make sound progress in reading across the school, and achieve standards that are above average at the end of both key stages. However, their knowledge about literature, including the work of well known authors, is less well developed than would be expected, given their general reading skills. As a consequence, their skills in making choices about their reading sometimes require improvement. In both key stages, more able pupils sometimes mark time when reading texts which are not sufficiently challenging, and their overall progress in reading is just adequate. Progress in writing, though generally satisfactory, is slower than progress in reading for many pupils in Key Stage 1. Most make very secure progress in developing the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation, and their overall attainment in writing is a little above average. However, their independent writing has weaknesses since they are given insufficient opportunities to express and develop their own ideas and feelings through writing. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in writing is sound overall and the standard of their writing is mainly above average at the end of the key stage. More able Year 6 pupils write stories that are well structured and balanced. However, pupils' progress in writing is inhibited by a lack of opportunities for them to produce extended writing in English and other subjects. Across the school, pupils' speaking and listening skills are mainly good.
5. In mathematics, inspection findings show that most pupils make sound progress across Key Stage 1. At the end of the key stage, very few pupils do not achieve the nationally expected standard, and a significant minority do better. In Key Stage 2, pupils make mainly good progress, and their standards are mainly above average at the end of the key stage. Most Year 6 pupils have an extensive mathematical vocabulary, know their number bonds and multiplication tables well, and

carry out mental calculations accurately, at speed. In science, pupils make mainly sound, and sometimes good, progress in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, the best progress is made by Year 2 pupils, while Year 6 pupils generally make the most rapid gains in Key Stage 2. Overall, attainment is above average in science, at the end of both key stages.

1. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in most subjects, including in English, mathematics and science. The progress of more able pupils is more spasmodic, but is just adequate overall. However, they coast through some lessons in English, mathematics and science when they are given tasks which are too easy. There is no significant difference between the progress being made by boys and girls, across the curriculum; and pupils with English as a second language are attaining in line with their peers.
2. In information technology, pupils make sound progress in developing their keyboard skills and mouse control in Key Stage 1, and achieve broadly average standards at the end of the key stage. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is mainly sound, but is uneven across the various strands in the subject. At the end of the key stage, pupils achieve standards which are a little above average in communicating and handling information, but their standards in control, monitoring and modelling are below average.
3. In design and technology, pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1, and their standards are mainly in line with those expected for pupils of similar ages. In Key Stage 2, however, pupils' progress, and their standards, are mainly unsatisfactory in the subject. In art, pupils make uneven but broadly satisfactory progress across the school. Their standards in art are generally satisfactory for their ages but there are few examples of high quality work, and there is some evidence of underachievement, particularly in drawing and painting. In geography, pupils' progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1, and they acquire a sound grasp of key geographical skills, knowledge and understanding for their ages. In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in geography and their attainment is above average. In history, pupils make mainly sound but sometimes good progress in both key stages. Most pupils achieve satisfactory standards for their ages, but a significant minority achieve good standards. In music, pupils make mainly sound but sometimes good progress in both key stages. Their standards are mainly satisfactory for their ages, but their singing is above average in both key stages. In physical education, pupils make mainly sound progress. Their standards in games are a little above average, but their skills in planning and evaluating their work in dance are underdeveloped.

11. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

1. Children who are under five demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, behave well and make sound progress in their personal and social development. Pupils of all ages and abilities are enthusiastic about their work and are always keen to show what they know and understand, especially during discussions. At times, some of the younger pupils become frustrated when they are expected to wait their turn to answer questions, and on these occasions their natural exuberance sometimes prevails over their self-restraint. Nevertheless, the vast majority of pupils are keen and interested in their lessons at all times. They concentrate well, are particularly good at recalling previous learning and applying it to new tasks, try hard to present their written work neatly, and are willing to learn from their mistakes. They engage energetically in any practical activities and, as they grow older, learn to co-operate well in group-work and in sharing resources. Pupils in both key stages complete homework tasks conscientiously, and the partnership between home and school has a strong influence on the pupils' success as learners.
2. Most pupils behave well at all times, during lessons, in assemblies, in the dining-hall and in the

playground. They are aware of the strong moral codes promoted by the school and by their parents, and they know and understand the codes of conduct that are displayed in classrooms. They make links between the Christian values that are promoted and discussed in assemblies and in lessons, and their own thoughts and actions towards others. Several pupils have special educational needs associated with behaviour, and they try hard, with considerable success, to manage their own behaviour and to conform to their teachers' expectations of them. A small but significant minority of the younger pupils, in reception and in Key Stage 1, occasionally behave impetuously, finding it difficult to take turns and to share. No evidence of bullying was seen during the inspection.

3. As they progress through the school, pupils take increasing responsibilities for classroom and school duties, although the range of activities of this kind is somewhat limited. Older pupils are encouraged to care for younger pupils during wet play-times, and they often read aloud confidently during assemblies. Those pupils elected to the school council execute their responsibilities with a mature seriousness of purpose. Pupils enjoy their contacts with the elderly in the community, and they commit themselves enthusiastically to supporting the work of various Christian charities, taking obvious pleasure in being able to help others. When encouraged to do so, for example in mathematics and in geography in Year 6, they enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning and rise well to challenges to use their own ideas, solve problems and make choices.

14. **Attendance**

4. Attendance is good with low levels of unauthorised absence. Registers are correctly completed and regularly monitored for patterns of absence. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time

15. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

15. Teaching

5. The quality of teaching was sound, or better, in 96 per cent of all lessons; and was good, and occasionally very good or excellent, in 37 per cent of all lessons. The most effective teaching is in Years 2, 4 and 6; and the teaching in Year 6 is a particular strength of the school.
6. The teaching of children who are under five years old is sound. Both the teacher and the classroom assistant have good relationships with the children, and this benefits their learning. The planning of lessons is mainly sound but should take more account of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The inclusion of elements of the National Curriculum and the literacy and numeracy strategies is mainly appropriate, although sometimes children are required to sit for too long, listening to information and instructions. The children are given adequate opportunities to make choices, and learn through play. However, when children are engaged in self-chosen activities, adults seldom intervene, except for management purposes. As consequence, opportunities to extend children's learning through their play are sometimes missed. Due attention is given to developing children's social skills, and they are made to feel secure in the well organised classroom.
7. In English, the teaching is mainly sound in both key stages, and is sometimes of a high quality in Years 2 and 6. The literacy hour has been successfully introduced, and lesson planning is thorough and effective. In the best lessons, the teachers' lively presentations and enthusiasm motivate pupils strongly, and learning moves at a brisk pace. Throughout the school, pupils are given a thorough grounding in reading and writing skills. However, Key Stage 1 pupils are given insufficient opportunities to develop their independent writing by using their own ideas, feelings and imagination and most Key Stage 2 pupils, particularly the more able, need to be encouraged to produce more extended writing in English and other subjects. Too many of the writing tasks set for pupils are prescribed, lack a sense of purpose and audience, and provide limited opportunities for pupils' creative input. In both key stages, the progress of more able readers is inhibited by a lack of challenge in the reading materials they are sometimes given.
8. In mathematics, teaching is mainly sound but sometimes good in Key Stage 1, and is mainly good and otherwise sound in Key Stage 2. Lessons are well planned, and teachers have made a sound start in implementing the numeracy strategy. Lessons include suitably varied activities to help pupils develop and practice their skills in mental mathematics, and to acquire mastery of mathematical concepts and knowledge. In Year 6, tasks are particularly well matched to the needs of all pupils; and pupils with special educational needs benefit from effective support in mathematics, across the school. Tasks are usually appropriate for more able pupils, but they sometimes mark time, in both key stages, as a result of work which is too easy for them. In Years 2 and 6, teachers are good at encouraging pupils to devise and explain their own calculation strategies, but this is less evident in other classes. Some teachers too readily show pupils how to tackle calculations or which methods to use to solve problems or record their findings, rather than encouraging pupils to work out and explain their own approaches.
9. In science, the quality of teaching is mainly sound, and is sometimes good, across the school. Lessons are carefully planned, and teachers are clear about what pupils are expected to learn. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they organise their lessons effectively. In the best lessons, they use good questioning skills and ensure that tasks are matched to meet the needs of all pupils. Less effective practice is evident when opportunities are missed to challenge pupils by requiring them to use their initiative and make decisions about their work, and when more able pupils are given work which is too easy.

10. In information technology, the quality of teaching is sound, overall, in Key Stage 2 and ensures that pupils make mainly satisfactory progress in the subject. However, teachers provide pupils with insufficient opportunities to develop their skills in control, monitoring and modelling. Consequently, Key Stage 2 pupils make unsatisfactory progress in these aspects of the subject. In geography, the teaching is mainly good in Key Stage 2, with excellent teaching in Year 6. In all lessons seen, teachers demonstrated secure subject knowledge and, in the best lesson, the teacher's expectation of pupils' potential attainment was very high. Occasionally, however, pupils require more opportunities to contribute their own ideas, and are given little scope to use their initiative. The quality of teaching is mainly sound, but is sometimes good, in history in Key Stage 1, and in music and physical education in both key stages.
11. Due to timetabling arrangements, insufficient lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching in art and in design and technology, across the school, in information technology and in geography in Key Stage 1 and in history in Key Stage 2. However, evidence shows that teachers ensure that pupils are given experience of using a range of art mediums but there are weaknesses in their planning for the systematic development of pupils' art skills. In design and technology, evidence suggests that Key Stage 1 teachers have sufficient subject knowledge, but some Key Stage 2 teachers would benefit from in-service training to raise their expectations of pupils' potential attainment and to increase their subject expertise.
12. Across the school, the teaching is characterised by positive relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers explain tasks clearly, create an orderly and purposeful atmosphere in lessons and motivate pupils well. Sound use is made of homework to reinforce and extend what is learned in school. In the most effective lessons, skilful use is made of questioning to probe pupils' understanding and to assess their future needs. Particularly good use is made of time in Year 6, where the teacher has high expectations, good knowledge in most subjects and enthusiasm which motivates pupils strongly. A weakness in the teaching, in both key stages, is the general lack of opportunities provided for pupils to use their initiative, make decisions, develop their own ideas and to solve problems, and this is evident in a range of subjects.

23. **The curriculum and assessment**

13. The curriculum for children who are under five years has sufficient breadth and balance, with the exception of the provision for their physical development. The curriculum is generally planned to provide an appropriate balance between child initiated and adult led activities. However, planning needs to take greater account of the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning. Overall, the curriculum for pupils who are under five in the reception class provides a secure foundation for the statutory curriculum.
14. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the curriculum has satisfactory breadth and meets statutory requirements. However, insufficient attention is given to developing pupils' skills in control, monitoring and modelling in information technology in the same key stage, and to the progressive development of pupils' key skills in design and technology in the same key stage. The school allocates an appropriate time for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and the balance of the curriculum is sound. However, pupils require more opportunities to make decisions and to use their ideas and initiative, across the curriculum. Pupils benefit from good provision for their spiritual, moral and social development and sound provision overall, for their cultural development. Appropriate attention is given to the teaching of health education, sex and drugs, through a planned programme. Extra-curricular activities are currently sound, with firm plans to

increase the present provision. Older pupils also take part in a range of competitive sports. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum and to after school clubs.

15. Arrangements for the identification and support of pupils with special educational needs are good, and fully comply with the recommendations of the Code of Practice. Achievable targets are set for pupils and are reviewed at frequent intervals. Pupils are moved appropriately to different stages of the special needs register in the light of the progress they make. Parents and specialist agencies are appropriately involved in assessments and reviews, and statutory requirements for reporting are met. There is a good policy for special educational needs, and the school is in the process of developing a policy for the education of able pupils.
16. All subjects have policies, but most are in need of review to reflect current practice. The school recognises the need to write an early years policy for children under five. The school is making sound use of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work in science, history and geography and has started to introduce their schemes of work for information technology and design and technology, but these are yet to have a significant impact on attainment. There is no scheme in art and this is required to ensure that key skills are progressively developed. Although the school has a broad outline of activities for physical education, this needs to be underpinned with a scheme of work to ensure skills are systematically taught.
17. Overall, teachers' planning is mainly satisfactory and is often good. Learning objectives are usually clear but in a small minority of lessons there is a lack of clarity. Teachers plan conscientiously and tasks are matched to meet the needs of most pupils, including those with special educational needs. The needs of more able pupils are not identified or addressed in some lessons in English, mathematics and science; and these pupils mark time, as a consequence.
18. The last report identified assessment as a weakness, and since then the school has made good progress in developing sound procedures and some good practice. However, this is not reflected in the assessment policy, which is out of date. The optional SATs are carried out each year, and sound use is made of these and other standardised tests to inform future planning for pupils. The school has made a good start in setting targets for individual pupils, based on the findings of the SATs and other tests. Through middle infant screening, the teachers have identified pupils who are unlikely to attain average standards at the end of the key stage. This year, they have established a good programme of support for these pupils, involving their parents in regular meetings to discuss and plan appropriate work. The portfolio of assessed work is generally out of date. However, teachers have started to discuss and assess samples of writing and have plans to continue this work in mathematics and science. There are useful collections of work which serve as records of achievement for individual pupils, and demonstrate the progress they make as they move through the school. Record keeping systems are satisfactory across the school. The quality of marking is satisfactory overall and good marking, which provides useful guidance as well as encouragement, is often evident in Years 2 and 6.
29. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**
19. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, and satisfactory provision for their cultural development. Strong Christian values and warm relationships underpin all aspects of the school's work, creating an ethos which is conducive to learning and which promotes pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. The personal and social development of children who are under five is successfully promoted in the reception class.

20. The school's declared mission to promote the 'love and practice of our Catholic faith' is particularly evident in whole school assemblies, but also permeates daily routines and classroom practice. Christian themes predominate in assemblies, and one assembly each week is devoted to the previous Sunday's liturgy. Pupils are taught to consider the significance of Christian stories, festivals and traditions, to value the best of human qualities and achievements, to recognise qualities of leadership, and to appreciate acts of forgiveness and kindness. They are given meaningful opportunities to reflect on their own lives, to consider others less fortunate than themselves, and to value the power of prayer. All assemblies meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Thoughtful prayers written by pupils are displayed in focal points in classrooms around the school, and, in most classes, prayers are said regularly at the beginning and end of each day. Class assemblies reinforce whole school themes and, in the best examples seen, unite pupils by encouraging the sharing of spiritual experiences. The school enjoys strong links with the local parish church whose priest regularly leads Mass and special assemblies. During the inspection, pupils representing the school attended a Millennium Mass led by the Bishop of Westminster for schools in the Westminster diocese. The promotion of pupils' spiritual development through the subjects of the curriculum is not as strong as it might be, although the personal and social development programme used by the school satisfactorily promotes the 'wonder of living', and teachers occasionally draw on their own experience to provide spiritual insights into everyday experiences.
21. The school is fortunate in being able to build on the strong moral foundation already established in the home lives of most pupils. Through its aims, policies, rules and practices, the school provides effective moral guidance. Staff provide appropriate models for relationships and behaviour in their daily interaction with pupils, and pupils are taught right from wrong from a very early age. They are taught to observe the school's rules and codes of conduct, to value the school's system of rewards, and to respect the need for sanctions. They are taught to reflect on mankind's moral responsibility for others less fortunate than themselves, and to care for the environment, both in the locality and in the wider world.
22. Pupils are given an appropriate range of opportunities to develop social awareness and social responsibility. They are required to work together in class, in games lessons and in drama productions, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from the opportunities to participate in residential visits related to their geographical and historical studies, or to outdoor and adventurous activities as part of their physical education programme. Clubs for football and netball promote an understanding of the value of teamwork, while activities such as athletics, cross-country running and competitive swimming also reinforce the importance of individual effort. Pupils of all ages are assigned classroom duties, while older pupils also take on responsibilities in the school as a whole. They care for younger pupils during wet play-times, and some are expected to read aloud to the whole school during assemblies. The school council gives a great deal of responsibility to the pupils elected as representatives for their classes. The meetings are chaired and clerked by pupils, and all representatives are involved in seeking out the views of their peer groups on issues that are raised or decisions that need to be made. Pupils of all ages are involved in supporting various Christian charity organisations, and there are regular meetings between pupils and the elderly in the local community at high points of the Christian year. Strong community links foster their understanding of citizenship.
23. Pupils' cultural development is promoted soundly through the curriculum and through a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. Theatre workshops are run by a theatre-in-education company which visits the school, and pupils also enjoy opportunities to take part in theatre visits to London. There are clubs for various sports after school, and some pupils also attend clubs for science or French. Educational visits to places such as St. Albans (Verulamium), Castle Hedingham and Wales support pupils' work in history and geography; and pupils' knowledge and understanding of a different locality and of a different culture are extended by their study, in Year

4, of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. Pupils' awareness of the cultural and religious significance of Christian festivals and traditions is promoted well. Overall, however, insufficient attention is given to developing pupils' awareness of the richness and diversity of cultures other than their own.

34. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

24. St John's is a caring community where each child is valued. The teachers and other adults get to know the pupils well and relationships are based on mutual respect and encouragement. Parents are encouraged to share their concerns with teachers, and good communication within the school ensures that all adults contribute to meeting the pastoral needs of pupils. Children with specific behavioural or other needs receive appropriate specialist support. Pupils and parents are confident that their concerns will be listened to sympathetically. The school keeps sound records of pupils' academic progress and has recently introduced an appropriate system to identify underachieving pupils.
25. There is an good behaviour policy which sets out detailed guidelines for acceptable conduct. Pupils respond positively to the system of rewards and sanctions and maintain high standards of behaviour. Any occasional incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with fairly and promptly, with pupils being expected to reflect on their actions. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good, and the school particularly stresses the importance of not missing school unnecessarily by taking holidays in term time.
26. All staff are well briefed on child protection issues and follow sound procedures. Children have the opportunity to visit before starting school; and the detailed guidance for new parents suggests helpful strategies to ensure that their children settle well to school life. Parents who are new to the school have the opportunity to meet the staff, and this establishes the basis for good communication between school and home.
27. Although the school has no planned programme of personal and health education, many aspects are appropriately covered as part of the science curriculum. Sex education is provided for the oldest pupils in the school. Speakers from the police are invited from time-to-time to talk to pupils about personal safety. The school is actively participating in a local initiative to provide safe routes to school, and this helps to ensure that pupils are well versed in road safety.
28. The school has sound procedures for medical matters, accidents and emergencies and follows county policies for health and safety. Guidelines for safe use of the swimming pool are in place and the school is aware of the need to complete some risk assessments. The premises and grounds, which are clean and well maintained, are regularly inspected to ensure that the school provides a safe and secure environment.

39. Partnership with parents and the community

29. St John's has successfully built up a strong partnership with parents which has a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to school and learning. Parents value the welcome they receive at the school.

All staff work hard to build up a good rapport with parents, and their openness and approachability is particularly praised by them.

30. The home/school agreement and other documentation the school provides, helps parents to understand the part they can play in their children's education. New parents receive a good starter pack which gives guidance on how they can best prepare their children to learn. At the start of each term, parents are able to learn the basic work that will be covered, and homework expectations. They are also given details of timetables and other school dates; and this is good practice. The school runs workshops to keep parents up-to-date with new initiatives such as the literacy strategy. Regular newsletters are sent with details about school activities.
31. The school arranges regular opportunities for parents to discuss the progress of their children. Annual reports give satisfactory indications of pupil's attainment; and parents of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, are kept well informed. There is no evidence to support the view of a very small minority of parents that the school does not do enough to keep them informed about their children's progress.
32. Parents are very supportive of the school and many give very generously of their time helping in classes, with clubs and in raising funds for the school through the Friends Association. The recent loss of the school hall and adjoining areas in a fire has united the whole school community in supporting children's learning under difficult circumstances and working towards raising funds for replacement equipment and library books.
33. St John's has a firm commitment to strengthening links with all the parishes in its catchment area, through invitations to school celebrations and events. The school also works hard to ensure that pupils learn about the wider community through the donation of harvest gifts to local elderly or disabled neighbours. Pupils have some opportunities to visit their local area when studying history or geography, and to meet children from other schools in sporting events.
34. The school has received sympathetic support from local businesses after the fire. It has an open approach to those wishing to use its facilities; a private playgroup uses a spare classroom, the school field is used by cubs and the school secretary organises the use of the school swimming pool by parents and other groups during the summer. This helps pupils to see their school as a valued resource.

45. **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

45. **Leadership and management**

35. The school benefits from a highly committed governing body which makes a valuable contribution to the leadership and management of the school. Attendance at governors' meetings is very good, agendas are well planned and meetings are efficiently minuted. Appropriate committees have been established and provide good support. Governors regularly visit the school to observe it in operation, and each class has a linked governor. Individual governors provide useful feedback to the full governing body, following their visits as 'governor of the month'; and a significant proportion of the governing body develops increased insights by acting as regular helpers in classrooms. The governors with responsibility for monitoring literacy and numeracy are well informed and are taking a keen interest in the school's work in these subjects. The governing body fulfils its role as critical friend to the school through rigorous discussions about key management issues; for example, through the careful analysis of the budget and its implications for school organisation, and through pertinent discussions about the curriculum, staffing, premises and the results of statutory testing. Statutory requirements are met in all respects, except for the appraisal of teachers, which is behind the required schedule for some staff.
36. The governors and staff have devised and implemented sound plans to address most of the weaknesses identified in the last OFSTED report (1996) and these have resulted in school improvement. A satisfactory management structure is in place, and strategies for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are more effective. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are better, and ensure that work is generally matched to pupils' needs. The school has made broadly satisfactory progress in introducing schemes of work; and communications systems, with parents and within the school, are effective. A homework policy is now in place, which provides parents with useful information and helps to ensure that homework makes a sound contribution to pupils' learning. However, the last OFSTED report found that standards were generally below average in design and technology, and this is still the case in Key Stage 2.
37. The headteacher took up his appointment in September 1999, and has made a good start. He has sound analytical skills, and has observed lessons in all classes and provided teachers with useful feedback. He is a strong and positive presence in the school, and has effective communication skills which are already beginning to be reflected in the good relationships he is establishing with the governors, staff and school community. The deputy headteacher is highly conscientious, provides a positive role model for his colleagues, and provides sound support for the management of the school. All subject co-ordinators analyse planning for their subjects and audit and organise resources effectively. They make a particularly valuable contribution to the leadership and management of English, mathematics and science, and gather pertinent information through analysing the results of statutory and non-statutory tests, by observing lessons and, occasionally, by examining samples of pupils' work, across the school. In geography and history, the co-ordinator has only very recently taken responsibility for the subjects, and has yet to develop her role. In music and design and technology, there are no co-ordinators, following recent staff changes. In particular, there is a need for effective management and leadership in design and technology, since standards are generally below average in Key Stage 2.
38. The school development plan identifies a range of relevant priorities until 2002. It includes success criteria, budget implications and those responsible for individual initiatives, and makes a sound contribution to school improvement.
39. The day-to-day management of the school is good, and benefits from efficient secretarial support.

Routines are well organised and help to promote an orderly atmosphere in the school.

50. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

50. **Staffing**

40. The school has sufficient teachers, and they are appropriately qualified. The staff have the experience and expertise to cover the age and ability range of the pupils. Their subject knowledge is mainly secure, except in design and technology where some Key Stage 2 teachers would benefit from in-service training to improve pupils' standards. There are co-ordinators for all subjects except design and technology and music.

41. The provision of classroom assistants to support pupils with special educational needs is good. The staff are well briefed and well informed, most having undergone a substantial amount of training to equip them for their work. They develop positive relationships with pupils, and make a valuable contribution to their progress and attainment.

42. Procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff are sound, and the governors are appropriately involved in making appointments, using job and person specifications. The staff willingly attend a range of in-service training courses, and the recently appointed headteacher has already set up a programme of regular meetings with individual members of staff to discuss their needs and aspirations. However, procedures for the appraisal of staff have not been implemented for some teachers, and the school is not meeting statutory requirements, as a consequence.

53. **Accommodation**

43. The school was constructed in 1965, and is in sound condition externally and internally. In Easter 1999, a fire severely damaged the school hall, and destroyed the library which was sited within it. Just before the inspection, the refurbished hall was put back in use, although the library is yet to be reinstated. The hall is large and attractive, and the adjacent dining area is also generous. A separate, temporary building accommodates a class and also provides space which is currently used for working with pupils with special educational needs. This temporary building provides satisfactory space for the Year 6 class, while all the classrooms in the main building are of generous size. Teachers take care to create interesting displays of pupils' work, and the school environment is kept in clean condition by the conscientious caretaking staff.

44. There is satisfactory playground space, a school field and an outdoor swimming pool which is used during the warmer months. Overall, the accommodation is good, and has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning. However, there is a significant weakness in that children who are under five do not have ready access to a secure outside play area to develop their physical skills.

55. **Learning resources**

45. Resources for children who are under five are adequate, overall. However, there is only very limited small-world play provision and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use large apparatus, including wheeled toys, to develop their physical skills in a secure outside environment. Resources for English are satisfactory. A commercially produced scheme has been carefully selected for the literacy hour, and there is a sound range of fiction. The school lost its library in the recent fire, and has started to build up a new stock of non-fiction books.

Mathematics resources are generally good, with a wide range of practical equipment and materials to support work in the various attainment targets. Resources in the remaining subjects of the National Curriculum are satisfactory, including in science and information technology. Resources are generally well organised and easily accessible.

56. The efficiency of the school

46. The day-to-day administration of the budget is carried out efficiently by the headteacher and school secretary. Spending is also carefully monitored by the finance committee of the governors. The most recent audit review (1998) found the school's financial administration and controls were sound. A small number of recommendations were made and these have been efficiently implemented.
47. The finance committee of the governors provides good support for the management of the school. There are regular meetings, and the budget is analysed with particular care during the spring and early summer terms. Staffing costs are rigorously debated, and savings have been sensibly achieved in recent terms. Financial planning is appropriately linked to the priorities identified in the school development plan; and good use is made of funding to support pupils with special educational needs. The school takes care to obtain value for money through its purchase of educational materials and equipment, and governors obtain and evaluate a range of estimates for the maintenance of the school building.
48. The school makes sound use of staffing, learning resources and accommodation. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and behave well. The school makes mainly good provision for their spiritual, moral and social development, and sound provision for their cultural development. The quality of teaching is sound, or better, in nearly all lessons. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and geography in Key Stage 2, but unsatisfactory progress in design and technology in the same key stage. In all other subjects, pupils make satisfactory progress across the school. Overall, the school provides sound value for money.

59. **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

59. **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

49. Children are admitted to the reception class in the September after their fourth birthday. During the inspection, twenty five children were under five, eleven of whom are summer born children.

60. **Personal and social development**

50. Children under five have settled in school and are happy and secure in the well established class routines. They make sound progress in developing their personal and social skills, and their behaviour is good. They follow instructions and settle well; most manage to work and play independently when given the opportunities to choose their activities, and they generally remain on task. Children usually share resources amicably and are good at co-operating and taking turns. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their work, engaging well in discussions and activities and showing a keen interest in their learning. However, when engaged in teacher directed tasks, the children show less confidence and are rather too dependent on adults.

61. **Language and literacy**

51. On entry to the reception class, the language and literacy skills of most four-year-olds are above average. The children listen carefully and can follow simple instructions. They comment and ask sensible questions. When they speak, they do so confidently and fluently, and they use an extensive vocabulary for children so young. Children listen attentively to stories and join in well-known repeated patterns. Most children can recognise their own name and many can write their names. All children can form some recognisable letters in their early attempts at independent writing and most are beginning to understand the relationship between letter shapes and sounds. More able children form most letters correctly and can write simple sentences unaided, showing a good understanding of phonics. For example, a child writes 'ONPPLL' for apple and another writes 'cherch' for church. However, most children show a reluctance to experiment with the skills they have and this restricts their writing, although they often have good ideas. They are more confident when filling in the appointments book in the vets clinic and would benefit from more provision, of this nature, to experiment with their emergent writing. Overall, by the time they enter Key Stage 1, pupils have made sound progress in their literacy skills.

62. **Mathematics**

52. Children in the reception class make sound progress in developing mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. Most children recognise the numerals 1 to 9, understand the function of 0, and can count on, in order up to twelve. They know the number of the days in the week and can repeat them in the correct sequence, and most can also recall the months of the year accurately and in order. Most are aware of times of day and successfully link these with events in their own lives, knowing, for example, that 3 o'clock is 'home time.' They understand mathematical terms such as 'more' and 'less', and can make simple comparisons, identifying, for example, the 'tallest teddy' or the 'longer' of two lines. They consolidate their knowledge and understanding of number by learning rhymes and songs, and by playing number games. By the time they are five, most pupils are attaining standards which are a little above average for their age.

63. Knowledge and understanding of the world

53. Most children in the reception class make sound progress in their knowledge and understanding of change over time and acquire a suitable foundation for the study of history in Key Stage 1. They talk daily about the immediate past and about changing dates, using language associated with the passing of time. When considering changes to the school buildings as a result of the fire and the rebuilding that followed it, they make good use of photographs to inform their discussion of 'past' and 'present' in relation to a place they know well, and communicate their ideas competently in drawings and models. They develop an early understanding of chronology as they reflect on key events in their own lives, note the changing seasons, and become familiar with the passing months of the year.
54. Children make sound progress in developing their scientific knowledge and understanding, and demonstrate observational skills which are a little above average when noticing how some materials change when water is added to them.
55. The children show an interest in the world around them, make visits within the local area, and know the school site well, having followed the rebuilding programme closely since the fire. They are interested in the weather, noting daily changes and recording these using simple symbols.
56. Most of the children are confident when using the computer. They have good mouse control and understand the relationship between the mouse and the screen. They use the shift key to represent capital letters and can write their own name on the screen. They make sound progress when learning to cut and stick paper, and when using construction kits to make simple materials.

Creative development

57. Children learn a range of songs by heart, and their singing is good. They perform well, using percussion instruments, and know when to play louder or more quietly. Their listening skills are also about average. They make sound progress when learning to make wax-resist pictures when using very simple printing techniques. They also make sound gains when using a computer program to create pictures to create pictures, and when painting rainbow patterns.

68. Physical development

58. Children handle pencils, scissors, paint brushes and small objects with increasing control and their manipulative skills meet the desirable outcomes by the time they are five. They make models from construction kits with confidence and dexterity and demonstrate sound skills when playing with sand. When using the school hall, children show a satisfactory awareness of space. However, the children's skills of climbing or balancing are not being sufficiently well catered and pupils' physical development is inhibited by the lack of ready access to a secure outside play area.

69. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

69. **English**

59. Pupils entering Key Stage 1 at the age of five, demonstrate standards in speaking and listening and reading which are a little above average. This also applies in writing to a minority of pupils, while the rest attain average standards. They have received a sound foundation in initial literacy skills in the reception class.
60. In the 1999 SATs, at the end of Key Stage 1, the school's results for reading and writing were above the national average and were average when compared to the results achieved by similar schools. A third of the pupils attained higher than average standards in reading, but only 10% achieved higher standards in writing. In Key Stage 2, the results for English well above the national average when compared to the national average and were average when compared to the results achieved by similar schools.
61. Inspection findings show that the progress Key Stage 1 pupils make in speaking and listening, reading and writing is sound overall. At the end of the key stage, pupils attain standards that are above average in speaking and listening and reading, and a little above average in writing. Throughout the key stage, pupils develop a firm foundation in initial literacy, but their progress in writing is not as high as expected, given their attainment in reading. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make generally sound progress in their knowledge and use of language, and good progress in Year 6. At the end of the key stage, standards are mainly above average in aspects of English. In both key stages, more able pupils mark time in some lessons and their progress is slower than it should be. As a consequence they are not achieving the standards in reading or writing they are capable of. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs make mainly good and otherwise sound progress.
62. In both key stages, most pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. They are given good opportunities to speak to the class, and the vast majority speaks fluently and clearly, using Standard English. Increasingly, as they get older, pupils show awareness of their audience and adapt their speech appropriately for different purposes. They have a good general vocabulary and their knowledge of specific subject vocabulary is also good.
63. In lessons and over time, most pupils make sound progress in reading in Key Stage 1 and achieve standards that are above average at the end of the key stage. They know about authors and illustrators, fiction and non-fiction books. However, they are not yet secure about finding information from non-fiction books. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make sound progress with the mechanics of reading and most pupils become reasonably fluent and accurate readers by the end of the key stage. They enjoy reading and can describe events in the books they have read and understand the significant themes. They can retell the main events in the stories they read, and are beginning to understand inference and deduction. They read expressively, but not always confidently when reading aloud. They refer to other texts they have enjoyed, often from the literacy hour. Overall, pupils have good retrieval skills, both from information books and through using CD ROMS. Across the school, pupils' knowledge of literature and strategies for making choices is less well developed than would be expected, given their competence in reading. They can name a few very well known authors, but all remember the recent visit from the poet and illustrator, Colin McNaughton, who they hugely enjoyed. In both Key Stages, more able readers are generally not reading from sufficiently challenging texts, and their overall progress in reading is just adequate.

64. Progress in writing, though generally satisfactory, is slower than in reading for many pupils in Key Stage 1. Across the key stage, pupils make very secure progress in developing the basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation, but their independent writing has weaknesses. Pupils are given too little opportunity, either orally or through their writing, to explore their emotions and exercise their imagination, interpreting in their own way some of the texts and images introduced to them through the literacy strategy. When they are given opportunities to express their own ideas or write about their own experiences, their writing is lively and fluent. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make sound progress in developing their understanding of spelling, punctuation and grammar and their progress in writing is mainly sound. Most pupils' handwriting settles into an even and legible style by Year 4. By Year 6, pupils can identify formal from informal writing styles, recognise parts of speech, and use dictionaries confidently. More able Year 6 pupils write stories that are well structured and balanced. However, the range of all pupils' writing is rather narrow, and they are not given enough opportunities to produce extended writing, using their own ideas and imagination, in English or across the curriculum.
65. Pupils in both key stages show an interest in the literacy hour and the vast majority is eager to participate in the question and answer sessions. They work purposefully in groups, whether an adult is with them or they are on their own. Pupils' behaviour is generally good in lessons. Occasionally, during the introductory sessions of the literacy hour, some pupils appear to switch off and coast, allowing others to contribute and do the work. Throughout the school, pupils take pride in presenting their work well. They collaborate effectively when given the opportunity. Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading and most enjoy opportunities to speak to the class or a group. They also enjoy reading aloud from their own writing.
66. The quality of teaching is mainly sound across both key stages, with sometimes very good or excellent teaching in Years 2 and 6. The literacy hour has been successfully introduced and, in both key stages, medium term planning provides a strong framework to support teachers' lesson plans. In most plans, learning objectives are clearly identified. Resources are always well prepared. The introductory sessions are used well to revise learning that has gone before and to establish the main teaching points. Plenary sessions are also used effectively to reinforce the main teaching points and assess how well pupils have grasped what has been taught. In the best lessons, the teachers are enthusiastic and their lively presentations are infectious. The lessons move at a brisk pace, with pupils fully engaged and enjoying their learning. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and of pupils' commitment to high standards. Other strengths include good questioning which enables teachers to make spontaneous assessments of what pupils have learned. Some teachers are particularly skilled at accepting suggestions from pupils that miss the point, and allowing them to see how these can be improved, rather than telling them they are wrong. In these lessons, pupils are more willing to contribute their ideas. Tasks are usually well matched and texts carefully selected for the range of pupils. Occasionally, in introductory sessions, the teachers do too much talking and pupils become bored and lose interest. The extension work that teachers plan for more able pupils is not always completed, because they are sometimes expected to do the same work as others first, when this is not always necessary. In some lessons, pupils are not given enough opportunities to contribute their own ideas or to make choices. Consequently, they are over reliant on their teachers and reluctant to make decisions about their work or use of resources. Throughout the school, pupils are given a thorough grounding in reading and writing skills. However, the younger pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to experiment with their early writing skills, and to use their own ideas, feeling and imagination. Across the school, writing is mainly done as a means to an end, to reinforce a skill that is being taught. The subjects pupils are given to write about are sometimes very prescribed and lack a real purpose. Most pupils, and especially the more able, need more opportunities to engage in extended writing. Overall, pupils need to be able to write sometimes without recourse to word books, so that they can concentrate on getting their thoughts down on paper. Sometimes, their anxiety, over possibly making mistakes, hinders their progress. The teaching of reading, beyond the skills of decoding print, required further development. Very few teachers read

regularly to their class. As a consequence, pupils' knowledge of authors and books is generally under developed. The literature that is used is often merely a vehicle to teach skills and knowledge, and is not sufficiently valued or appreciated for the pleasure of the story or poem, or for the richness and quality of the language. Giving pupils fuller access to the texts, books and authors, would make a significant difference to their knowledge of literature, and they would be better informed to make choices about their reading. The quality of marking is mainly sound, and in Years 2 and 6, pupils are given particularly helpful comments about the content of their writing. Homework is used appropriately to support English.

67. The co-ordinator is a skilful and experienced teacher and has had responsibility for English for two years. She has good subject knowledge and, together with her colleagues has successfully introduced the literacy strategy. She monitors teachers' planning and gives useful verbal feedback. She is aware of the need to write a new policy to incorporate the changes brought about by the literacy hour. She has worked with staff to analyse test results and other assessments, and correctly identified the need to improve elements of the teaching of writing. To address this, more time has recently been allocated to writing in both key stages. Sound records are kept of the progress made by Key Stage 1 pupils and the Year 2 teacher keeps careful records of pupils' progress in writing. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are given termly tests in writing and comprehension and results are carefully analysed and recorded.

68. Resources are satisfactory. A commercially produced scheme has been carefully selected for the literacy hour and there is a sound range of fiction. The school lost its library in the recent fire and has started to build up a new stock of non-fiction books. Computers are used to support English in some lessons, although there is scope for more use, particularly for composing directly on to the screen.

79. **Mathematics**

69. On entry to Key Stage 1, the attainment of most pupils is a little above average. The school's results in the national tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 were above the national average, though broadly in line with the results of similar schools. The results were very similar to those achieved by pupils in the previous year, and there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Inspection findings confirm this pattern of results. Most pupils make sound progress, overall, throughout the key stage; and, when account is taken of their individual learning needs and their prior attainment, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. More able pupils make broadly satisfactory progress, but coast through some lessons. Very few pupils do not achieve the standard expected nationally of pupils aged seven, and a significant minority do better. By the end of the key stage, almost all pupils have a secure understanding of number, calculations and measurement. For example, they can count on in 5s and 10s from any two-digit number in a 100 number square, recognise and write multiples of 100 up to a thousand, and, using a number line and a number square, explain three different ways of adding eleven to a given number. They can use a tape measure accurately to measure 'Joe' for a Christmas outfit, and can make simple measuring strips of their own. Most pupils can tell the time on a clock face, noting the hour 'o'clock' and the half and quarter hours.

70. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the school's results were well above the national average, and broadly in line with the results of 'similar' schools. A very significant number of pupils exceeded the standard expected for their age, and, overall, the results showed an improvement on those of the previous year. Inspection findings show that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make generally good progress throughout Key Stage 2, and, in some lessons observed, progress was very good indeed. Consequently, standards are mainly

above average at the end of Key Stage 2. More able pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but mark time when their work is too easy. Most Year 6 pupils have an extensive mathematical vocabulary, know their number bonds and multiplication tables well, and carry out mental calculations accurately, at speed. For example, they swiftly add pairs of adjacent numbers on a 'dartboard' to work out which combinations produce the highest and lowest scores using two darts. Most pupils identify the number pattern that occurs in a sequence of square numbers, apply their knowledge to extend the sequence, and also acquire a secure grasp of the pattern produced by adding pairs of adjacent square numbers up to 100. Lower attaining pupils readily find the sum of two square numbers, and some pupils with special educational needs can give clear explanations of the strategies they use to add four two-digit numbers. All pupils use correct notation, and all can explain the difference between 'product' and 'sum.'

71. Pupils, throughout the school, respond well in mathematics lessons. They show a lively interest in the subject, develop confidence in their use of number and of mathematical language, and are always keen to demonstrate what they know and can do by answering questions in mental maths sessions, by applying themselves well to written tasks, and by engaging enthusiastically in practical activities. They are always prepared to learn from their mistakes, and initial diffidence usually gives way to confident use of new strategies by the end of a lesson. Pupils in Key Stage 2 co-operate well when working in groups, and take turns fairly at all times. However, a small but significant minority of the younger pupils, in Key Stage 1, have not yet acquired the self-discipline necessary to take turns, particularly during discussion and, although their behaviour is generally good, their own natural exuberance sometimes works to the disadvantage of their more reticent peers.
72. No unsatisfactory teaching of mathematics was seen during the inspection. Teaching is mainly sound and sometimes good in Key Stage 1, and is mainly good and otherwise sound, in Key Stage 2. All staff have worked hard to familiarise themselves with the content and other requirements of the National Numeracy strategy, and a very sound start has been made to its implementation. Lessons are well planned and include suitably varied activities to help pupils develop and practise their skills in mental mathematics, and to acquire mastery of mathematical concepts and knowledge. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are intended to learn, and plenary sessions at the end of lessons are usually used to good effect to check what has been learned and to clarify any misunderstandings. Teachers in both key stages also ensure that pupils use correct mathematical language, and their explanations of tasks and processes are clear. By directing suitably accessible or demanding questions to pupils of differing abilities, all teachers try hard to ensure that question and answer sessions are used to good effect. In the best lessons, in Year 6, tasks designed for pupils to undertake independently of the teacher are also well matched to pupils' abilities, and higher attaining pupils are suitably challenged. While pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress in all lessons, the highest attaining pupils in most classes are often required to do much work which is too easy for them, rather than moving speedily to more challenging tasks. Good examples of pupils devising and explaining their own calculation strategies, and of using informal jottings to record their methods of working-out are apparent in lessons and in pupils' exercise-books, in Years 2 and 6. These are key features of the National Numeracy strategy guidance and should form an integral part of teaching and learning in both key stages. At present, they feature only very recently in the written work of pupils in some classes, and some teachers, though competent, too readily show pupils how to tackle calculations or which methods to use to solve problems or record their findings, rather than encouraging pupils to work out and explain their own approaches. Few teachers encourage pupils to devise questions of their own in order to demonstrate that they have deduced a mathematical principle by generalising from given examples. In Key Stage 1 classes, the management of pupils' exuberance sometimes presents a different kind of challenge, and the pace of lessons slows down while pupils are reminded of the need to wait their turn to answer.

73. Teachers in both key stages are skilled in the spontaneous assessment of pupils' spoken and written responses during work in progress during lessons. The school also makes good use of the results of statutory assessments and other standardised tests, for example, to identify and plan support for pupils with special educational needs, and to review the curriculum and resources in order to give appropriate emphasis to those aspects of the various attainment targets in which pupils' results indicate a weakness. There are good examples of target-setting in mathematics, and the marking of pupils' work is sometimes diagnostic and helpful, although this is not consistent practice across the school. The co-ordinator for mathematics is well informed, hard-working and enthusiastic. She supports her colleagues well, has been instrumental in ensuring that training for the introduction of the National Numeracy strategy has proceeded smoothly, and has undertaken useful monitoring of teaching in several classes. She has begun to assemble a portfolio of assessed work representing different National Curriculum levels across the school as a whole, and is developing a sound understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject. The school policy and scheme of work for mathematics have been superseded by the National Numeracy strategy and will need to be updated in the light of recent developments and, when it is published, of the requirements of National Curriculum 2000. In the meantime, the school is making effective use of a commercial scheme to supplement its own programmes of work. Resources are generally good, with a wide range of practical equipment and materials to support work in the various attainment targets. However, some of the older published materials used to supplement the core scheme do not readily lend themselves to the investigative approaches promoted by the National Numeracy strategy.

84. **Science**

74. On entry to Key Stage 1, the scientific knowledge and understanding of most pupils is a little above average. The results of the 1999 statutory teacher assessments, in Key Stage 1, were well above the national average, and above average when compared to the results achieved by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. In Key Stage 2, the 1999 SATs results were well above the national average, and well above average when compared to the results of similar schools. The 1999 results are an improvement on the school's 1998 results, in both key stages.

75. Inspection findings show that most pupils make mainly sound, and sometimes good, progress in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, the best progress is made by Year 2 pupils, while Year 6 pupils generally make the most rapid gains in Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make mainly good progress, across the school. More able pupils make broadly adequate progress, over time, but coast through some lessons in both key stages. Overall, attainment is above average at the end of both key stages.

76. In Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning that sound comes from a variety of sources. They can describe common materials in terms of their texture and appearance; and make sound gains when carrying out simple experiments to discover whether some materials are magnetic. In Year 2, pupils make good progress when planning simple experiments, and are aware of the need for fair testing. They make sound gains when learning about healthy eating; and can describe how materials can be changed by being heated or cooled, or by being bent or stretched.

77. In Year 3, pupils continue to develop their understanding about fair testing, and demonstrate above average skills when conducting simple experiments. They make sound progress when explaining why some materials are particularly suitable for specific purposes, and use good observation skills. In Year 4, pupils make sound progress when developing their knowledge about electricity, and are able to create circuits which incorporate simple switches. They make

satisfactory gains when learning about forces, and record the results of their experiments clearly. Year 5 pupils can classify different substances into solids, liquids and gases, and make sound progress when carrying out experiments to discover the conditions which affect the rate of water evaporation. Year 6 pupils know that light travels in straight lines, and use their knowledge to explain the formation of shadows and to predict refraction from prisms. They make good progress when describing how some materials change when they are mixed together and when deciding whether the changes are reversible, for example, by filtration or evaporation.

78. Across the school, pupils have positive attitudes towards science. They generally concentrate well, and persevere with their tasks. Relationships between pupils are constructive, and they co-operate effectively on shared tasks. Their behaviour is good in science lessons. About 20 pupils attend the after-school science club, run by the co-ordinator.
79. The quality of teaching is mainly sound, and sometimes good, across the school. Lessons are carefully planned, and teachers are clear about what pupils are expected to learn. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they organise their lessons effectively. In the best lessons, teachers use good questioning skills to probe pupils' understanding and ensure that tasks are well matched to meet the needs of all pupils. Less effective practice is evident when opportunities are missed to challenge pupils by requiring them to use their initiative and make decisions about their work, and when more able pupils are given work which is too easy.
80. The policy for science requires updating, and this is recognised by the school. The good scheme of work, formulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum authority, has recently been introduced, and is having a beneficial effect on whole school planning and continuity in pupils' learning. The co-ordinator is conscientious and provides sound leadership in the subject. He analyses teachers' planning and has observed science teaching, across the school, and provided useful feedback to teachers. He studies the results of the SATs and evidence from samples of pupils' work, and has formulated a useful action plan to promote improvements in the subject. Procedures for assessment and recording are satisfactory, and the school appropriately plans to update its portfolio of assessed pupils' work. Resources for science are sound.

91. **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

91. **Information technology**

81. During the inspection, very few information technology lessons were observed in either key stage. However, from the evidence collected through a scrutiny of teachers' planning, from discussions with teachers and pupils and from the small sample of work available, standards are judged to be broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1. Overall, pupils make sound gains in developing their keyboard skills and mouse control. In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is mainly sound, although uneven across the various strands. At the end of the key stage, pupils attain standards that are a little above average in communicating and handling information, but their standards in control, monitoring and modelling are below average.
82. In Key Stage 1, pupils competently use the tape recorders to listen to stories. Pupils in Year 2 use their word processing skills confidently when composing their versions of Red Riding Hood straight on to the screen. They use the space bar and caps lock, and their mouse control skills are sound. In Year 3, pupils can load a CD ROM and, with teaching support, they can find information on healthy eating. In Year 4, pupils learn how to use spell check, italics, bold, delete, underlining, cut and paste and use some of these skills when writing a newspaper article. Pupils in Year 5 have stored information about themselves onto a database, and make sound progress learning to search for and retrieve this data. Pupils in Year 6 successfully retrieve information about newspapers from a CD ROM. Samples of pupils' previous work and teachers' plans, show that pupils in both key stages have had some experience in control, monitoring and modelling, but their gains are very limited. In Key Stage 2, pupils are not having enough opportunities to develop skills in these aspects of the subject.
83. Pupils enjoy information technology and take a keen interest in the subject. Whether supervised or working independently, pupils remain on task and their behaviour is good. They co-operate well when sharing a computer and willingly help each other.
84. Little direct teaching was seen in Key Stage 1 and it is therefore not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching in lessons is mainly sound. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and plan lessons effectively, building on pupils' prior learning. The whole class, or groups of pupils, are given satisfactory instructions about steps needed to perform particular computer skills. In the best lessons, teachers continue to give appropriate support when pairs or small groups of pupils are carrying out their tasks. This sometimes involves allowing pupils to make and learn from their mistakes. Satisfactory use is made of communicating and handling information across the curriculum, but modelling, monitoring and control are generally under-used.
85. The co-ordinator has very recently taken over responsibility for the subject, and is well qualified to lead the staff in a planned programme of improvements for provision and teaching, which are identified in his information development plan. The school now has enough computers to set up a suite, and plans are underway for this to be in place by next term. The co-ordinator has written a sound policy and the school has adopted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work, which is currently being used alongside aspects of the existing scheme. Teachers have recently undertaken training to develop their own expertise and keep up-to-date with new software. The co-ordinator has also set appropriate targets to improve standards. These include further in-service training for teachers to ensure they are familiar with new software and training for parent helpers.

86. Resources are satisfactory. All classes have two computers and printers, except in the reception class where there are one of each. The school has been given a large number of computers to establish the suite. The range of software is steadily being built up. The school is clearly poised to move ahead and improve the present provision in information technology and recognises the need to provide pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills in controlling, monitoring and modelling.

97.

97. **Art**

87. Pupils make uneven but broadly satisfactory progress in art, across the school. Their standards are generally satisfactory for their ages but there are few examples of high quality work, and there is some evidence of underachievement, particularly in drawing and painting.

88. In Year 1, pupils make unsatisfactory progress when creating collages, based on line drawings provided by their teachers on worksheets. However, they make satisfactory gains and achieve sound standards when painting pictures of the scenes they remember on their journey to school. In Year 2, pupils achieve good standards when painting bold pictures of 'Bonfire Night', and adequate gains when creating collages using leaves. However, they make limited progress when making clay plaques with impressed designs created with manufactured images of Christmas scenes.

89. In Year 3, pupils achieve average standards when drawing rocks, using pastels, from direct observation. In Year 4, pupils are able to mix a range of tones to create paintings of storms, and achieve satisfactory standards when drawing a range of fruits. Year 5 pupils create rather simplistic drawings to illustrate their history topic, but make sound progress when making collage pictures of the Tudors. In Year 6, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning about the work of William Morris, and create their own designs which reflect aspects of his work.

90. From discussions with pupils, it is clear that they have positive attitudes to the subject, and enjoy art lessons. In the lessons observed, pupils' behaviour was good, and they shared resources amicably.

91. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching in art. Evidence from an analysis of pupils' completed work suggests that pupils are given experience of using a satisfactory range of mediums, and that all teachers ensure that sufficient time is allocated for the subject. Teachers plan conscientiously, but their planning does not ensure that key skills are progressively developed by pupils as they move through the school. When art work is generated from historical or geographical topics, in Key Stage 2, pupils often derive limited benefits in relation to the development of specific skills in the subject. Pupils are sometimes able to study the work of famous artists, but the development of their knowledge and understanding about art is spasmodic. There is a satisfactory policy for art, but the school appropriately recognises the need for scheme of work to promote greater overall coherence in the provision for the subject.

102. **Design and technology**

92. In Key Stage 1, pupils make broadly satisfactory progress in design and technology, and their standards are mainly in line with those expected for pupils of similar ages. In Key Stage 2,

pupils' progress, and their standards, are mainly unsatisfactory.

93. In Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress when learning to cut and glue paper and card, and when using construction kits. They benefit from looking at 'pop-up' books, and make satisfactory gains when making their own simple cards which incorporate a moveable insert. In Year 2, pupils make satisfactory progress when making vehicles, using recycled materials, which have simple axles.
94. In Year 3, pupils create masks in connection with their historical topics, but these provide little opportunity for pupils to develop their designing and making skills, and they make limited progress as a result. In Year 4, pupils make broadly adequate progress when incorporating simple electrical circuits into models made from recycled materials. However, the construction of the models generally lacks finesse. In Year 5, pupils work industriously to produce advent calendars, using fabrics, but these provide limited challenge. In Year 6, pupils design and make soft toys, but the results are typical of work usually associated with younger pupils.
95. From discussions with pupils, it is clear that they thoroughly enjoy design and technology lessons. In the lessons observed, in reception and Year 1, pupils concentrated well, shared resources and persevered with their tasks. Their behaviour was good.
96. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a secure judgement about the overall quality of teaching in the subject. However, evidence suggests that Key Stage 1 teachers have sufficient subject knowledge, but that some Key Stage 2 teachers would benefit from in-service training to raise their expectations of pupils' potential attainment and to increase their subject expertise. The school has very recently adopted the good scheme of work formulated by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, but the impact of this scheme is currently inhibited by limitations in teachers' confidence and knowledge. At present, there is no co-ordinator for design and technology, and the school recognises the need for effective leadership in the subject.
107. **Geography**
97. The timing of the inspection meant that only three geography lessons could be observed, all in Key Stage 2. Further evidence is drawn from the scrutiny of pupils' written work, from displays around the school, from teachers' planning, and from discussions with teachers and pupils.
98. All available evidence indicates that pupils' progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1, and that they acquire a sound grasp of key geographical skills, knowledge and understanding for their ages. For example, pupils in Year 1 draw simple but accurate plans of their local area, showing their routes to school, and identifying key geographical features, both natural and man-made, that they pass. Pupils in Year 2 draw simple comparisons between their own locality and the contrasting island of Struay, noting, for example, the marked differences between the volume of traffic in Rickmansworth (which they have investigated and recorded on a tally-chart), and the quiet roads of Struay. They express their concerns about their home environment and about the congested car-park quite forcibly in letters to the authorities. In another context, pupils in Year 2 use simple co-ordinates to good effect to locate geographical features on a map.
99. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress across the key stage as a whole, and attainment is above average for their ages. In Year 3, pupils use enquiry skills well, collating information from a number of sources to answer geographical questions. For example, most pupils successfully use maps of the world showing rainfall and temperature in different climatic zones. They use

keys to match zones to specific holiday destinations, and give reasons to explain the popularity of different places. In an extended study of a contrasting locality in Year 4, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the landscape and of the flora and fauna on the Caribbean island of St Lucia. They can explain the significance of the rainforest to the local people, and consider the impact of recent developments in tourism. They contribute thoughtful ideas for a debate, marshalling convincing arguments for and against building development, and identifying with the differing viewpoints of farmers, property developers and conservationists. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, pupils make very good progress during their study of rivers. They show very good understanding of the causes of pollution in rivers, and of the measures taken by people to care for rivers and to manage water supplies. They can explain how human activities change the features of places such as river-banks, and they understand well how some people take responsibility for managing the environment. Invited to put forward their own suggestions for reducing pollution in water supplies, they rise to the occasion well.

100. Pupils enjoy the topics covered in their geography lessons and respond well in most lessons in both key stages. They show great concentration when watching relevant video-recordings, as in Year 6, and make competent notes to record the main ideas. Pupils in all lessons draw on previous learning and apply themselves conscientiously to written tasks. In discussions, pupils' thoughtful responses to questions, for example about the environment and about tourism, reflect their serious attitudes and their concern for the world in which they live. Occasionally, when teachers talk for too long without encouraging pupils to contribute their own ideas, a few pupils become restless and despondent.
101. There is too little evidence on which to base a secure judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, the teaching is mainly good, with excellent teaching in Year 6. In the best lesson seen, every aspect of the lesson was very well prepared, and the teacher's expectations of pupils' behaviour and of their attainment, were very high. Pupils were informed of the content of the lesson at the outset, but were given the responsibility for identifying the learning objectives based on information given, and their attention was therefore carefully focused, before they watched a video-recording, on the main ideas. Writing frames provided support for their note-making, but without giving them pre-determined answers. The work challenged pupils of all abilities, including the most able, and the lesson was conducted at a very good pace. In all the lessons seen, teachers were secure in their knowledge of the subject and their teaching had a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Occasionally, however, pupils were denied an opportunity to contribute their own ideas until well into the lesson, and were given too little scope to use their initiative and take charge of their own learning.
102. The co-ordinator has only very recently been given responsibility for work in the subject. She has undertaken a useful audit of resources and is aware of the need to replace the more dated atlases and text-books in the school. The scheme of work in current use is a suitably modified version of the draft scheme developed by the QCA, but this will need to be reviewed in the light of developments in the National Curriculum 2000. The co-ordinator has not yet had the opportunity to monitor either teaching or pupils' work in the subject, although such measures feature prominently in the school development plan for the year 99-2000, and are to begin shortly. In so doing, it will be beneficial for the school to identify and disseminate the best practice that exists.
- 113.
113. **History**
103. The timing of the inspection meant that only two history lessons could be observed, both in Key Stage 1. Further evidence is drawn from teachers' planning, from displays and samples of

pupils' work, and from both formal and informal discussions with teachers and pupils. All available evidence indicates that pupils in both key stages make mainly sound, and occasionally good progress, and that, while most pupils attain average standards for their ages, a significant minority attain higher standards. When account is taken of their individual needs, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, attaining standards that broadly reflect their capabilities.

104. Pupils in Year 1 make sound progress and attain satisfactory standards for their age when exploring simple differences between the past and the present. They develop a satisfactory understanding of how kitchens and kitchen equipment have changed over the years, and can use words relating to the passage of time, as well as the correct terms for items such as 'washing-boards', 'flat-irons' and 'mangles'. They deduce that the introduction of electricity into households led to significant changes in the equipment used, and can identify the main differences between the machines in their own homes and those in 'grandad's kitchen.' They study artefacts carefully, developing simple skills of historical enquiry, and communicate their findings clearly in drawings and writing. Pupils in Year 2 make good progress in their study of the life and work of Florence Nightingale. They show good knowledge and understanding of hospital conditions at Scutari during the Crimean War, and they use a range of secondary sources competently, including pictures, texts and a video-recording, to ask and answer questions about the past. By the end of the lesson, they have some understanding of how British soldiers came to be fighting in the Crimea, and a good understanding of why Florence Nightingale acted as she did to improve the miserable conditions in the hospital there. Pupils in both years show an emerging sense of chronology as they draw comparisons between the way people lived 'then', and the way we live 'now'.
105. History is taught mainly in blocked units in Key Stage 2, and the timing of the inspection in the Autumn term meant that relatively little work by current cohorts of pupils was available for scrutiny. The scheme of work for history, teachers' plans, and the samples of work on display all indicate that pupils make sound progress in their studies of particular periods of history. They increase their understanding of similarities and differences between the various periods, their knowledge of significant historical events and personalities, and their grasp of differing perspectives of the same events. For example, the written work of pupils in Year 3 reveals a good understanding of the tensions that existed between Celts and Romans during the Roman occupation of Britain, explores the causes and effects of the battle between the Romans and the Icenii tribe led by Boudicca, and considers Roman rule from a range of viewpoints, including those of Julius Caesar, the Roman general Suetonius, the Greek historian Strabo, and the Jewish historian Josephus. Pupils in Year 5 demonstrate a secure understanding of the differences between the characters of Henry VII and Henry VIII. They use a time-line to show the relationship between the Tudor period and other key periods in British history, and they produce convincing written notes and accounts which reveal sound knowledge of significant events such as the Battle of Bosworth Field, and about the personality, political ambitions, marriages and divorces of Henry VIII.
106. Pupils respond well to history. They show a lively interest in the subject, are keen to answer questions, and concentrate well on written tasks, making good use of the resources available to them, and supporting one another. Occasionally, younger pupils call out spontaneously without waiting their turn to speak, and this detracts from their otherwise very good behaviour.
107. The teaching of history is at least sound, and sometimes good in Key Stage 1, but there is too little evidence to support an overall judgement about the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2. Lessons are well planned, with a variety of activities that build on pupils' earlier learning, and include practical investigations and demonstrations, as well as the use of artefacts and of secondary sources. Questioning is used to good effect to ensure that pupils recall key points from

previous lessons, and lessons are ended with a useful summing up of what has been learned. Teachers pay due attention to the development of relevant terms, dates and vocabulary. Occasionally, however, opportunities are missed to explore causes and consequences. For example, pupils learning about kitchens 'then' and 'now' would have benefited from considering the far-reaching effects on women's lives brought about by the widespread use of electricity in the home.

108. The history co-ordinator has only very recently assumed responsibility for the subject and, as yet, does not have a secure overview of teaching and learning in history across the school as a whole. She has carried out a useful audit of resources, and has begun to identify gaps in provision, particularly in respect of artefacts to support the periods studied. The QCA scheme of work provides a useful framework for teachers' planning. Educational visits within the local area, and those to places further afield such as Castle Hedingham and St Albans (Verulamium), enhance pupils' knowledge of specific periods of history and enrich their understanding of their own cultural heritage.

119. **Music**

109. Pupils make mainly sound but sometimes good progress in music, in both key stages. Their standards are mainly satisfactory for their ages, but their singing is above average.

110. In Year 1, pupils make satisfactory progress when recognising and repeating simple rhythms, using voices and percussion, and demonstrate sound listening and appraising skills. In Year 2, pupils make good progress in learning to play the recorder, and can understand some simple notation. Year 5 pupils achieve satisfactory standards when clapping rhythms and composing percussion accompaniment to rap verses. In Year 6, pupils make good progress when learning new songs, and satisfactory gains when playing percussion instruments. Pupils' singing is good, across the school, and makes a valuable contribution to the quality of assemblies. Their diction is clear, their control of pitch is generally secure and they know when to sing louder or more quietly.

111. Pupils have positive attitudes to music, across the school. Their behaviour is good in music lessons, and most are very keen to perform. They concentrate well and co-operate together effectively when given common tasks; and their level of commitment and enthusiasm is particularly evident when they sing.

112. The quality of teaching in music is mainly sound but is sometimes good. There is no music specialist in the school, and currently no music co-ordinator. However, teachers generally teach the subject confidently, making sound use of the guidance provided by commercial schemes of work for the subject. A good proportion of pupils benefit from tuition in piano and brass, and all Year 2 pupils are learning the recorder. In the most effective lesson observed, in Year 6, singing skills were taught particularly well.

123. **Physical Education**

113. During the inspection, dance and games skills were observed. Overall, in both key stages, pupils make sound progress and achieve standards that are average for their ages. The standards pupils achieve in games skills are a little above average, but their skills in planning and evaluating their work are underdeveloped.

114. Pupils in Year 1 enjoy dancing to a variety of music and change their movement appropriately as they interpret the movements of rushing shepherds or dignified wise men. Their movement reflects both the mood changes in the music and their feeling for the different roles. A minority of pupils in Year 2 move very expressively as barn owls, wild cats, moles or deer, varying the levels and the shape of their bodies and responding sensitively to the music. However, most pupils settle for a rough interpretation of the animals and do not refine or develop their movement. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make mainly good progress in developing games skills for a wide range of team games. Pupils in Year 3 make good progress in developing their football skills of dribbling, passing and heading and mainly good progress using these skills when playing a game. From records, evidence shows that all pupils attain the expected standards in swimming at the end of Key Stage 2, and many exceed these standards. However, throughout the school, pupils are given very little opportunity to plan or evaluate their performance or that of others, across all strands of physical education; and this aspect of their progress is unsatisfactory.
115. The pupils enjoy physical education and behave well in lessons. All pupils, including the youngest, change promptly and wear correct clothing. They show sound awareness of safety and understand the affect that exercise has on their bodies. In the best lessons, pupils work hard to improve their performance and listen carefully to instructions. Pupils show they have good sporting behaviour and co-operate well in team games.
116. Across the school, the quality of teaching is mainly sound and is sometimes good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and give good instruction in games. They are less confident when teaching dance, but make sound use of the broadcast programmes. In the best lessons, planning carefully ensures that pupils' learning is structured through the progression of skills. Lessons move at a brisk pace and teaching points are clearly demonstrated. Good relationships between the pupils and their teacher are a feature of all lessons. Throughout the school, pupils are given few opportunities to engage in planning and evaluating their performance. Occasionally, teachers will use individual pupils to demonstrate good work, but it is usually the teacher who points out the features, and not the pupils. Pupils are also not given enough encouragement to decide for themselves what criteria they would use to judge a good performance. As a consequence, they are not learning as well as they should from observing the performance of others, nor have they a clear understanding as to how their own performance could improve.
117. The carousel of weekly games activities used throughout Key Stage 2, provides the pupils with a firm foundation in games skills. Sufficient time is devoted to swimming and athletics, and outdoor and adventure activities are catered for in the summer term. The school has just resumed gymnastics lessons following a term without the hall, due to the fire. There is a sound policy, but at present no scheme of work. This is appropriately identified for attention on the school development plan. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities is provided by teachers and parents, and these are well attended by pupils. Rugby, football, cricket, netball and cross country running, are offered seasonally. A gymnastics club is available on a paying basis.

128. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

128. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

118. The inspection was carried out over four days by a team of four inspectors, including one lay inspector. Forty nine lessons, or parts of lessons, were observed during the inspection. For the majority of the time in school, inspectors visited classes, talked with individuals and groups of pupils and evaluated work. A sample of pupils from each year group, and across the attainment range, was heard to read: and pupils were questioned about their knowledge and understanding of books. A range of pupils' work, from each year group, was scrutinised by inspectors. In addition, the team studied documentation, including the school development plan and the figures for the budget. They also inspected registers, the records kept on the pupils and the teachers' planning documents. Inspectors met with a group of governors, and with the headteacher and all teachers. Discussions were also held with classroom assistants, the school's Senior Administrative Assistant and with parents who visited the school during the inspection. A meeting for parents was held on 3rd November 1999 and responses from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire were analysed.

130. DATA AND INDICATORS

130. 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	208	2	33	10

130. Teachers and classes

130. Qualified teachers (YR – Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	24.8

130. Education support staff (YR – Y6)

Total number of education support staff:	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	100

130. Financial data

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	375,136
Total Expenditure	379,847
Expenditure per pupil	1,880
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,767
Balance carried forward to next year	32,056

130. PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 208
 Number of questionnaires returned: 43

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	57	35	7	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	53	42	2	2	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	16	47	34	3	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	33	51	11	5	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	23	42	21	12	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	24	65	10	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	28	56	16	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	70	5	7	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	50	50	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	29	59	7	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	62	31	5	0	2