

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DOWNS PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

HARLOW

LEA area: Essex

Unique Reference Number: 115016

Inspection Number: 187766

Headteacher: Mrs C Dromard

Reporting inspector: Mr R E Helliwell : 5535

Dates of inspection: 15th - 18th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707313

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

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Information about the school

Type of school: Nursery, Infant and Junior

Type of control: County

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: The Hides
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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs A Adnitt

Date of the previous inspection: May 1996

Information about the inspection team

R E Helliwell	Science; Equal opportunities.	Attainment and progress; Teaching; Leadership and management; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources; The efficiency of the school.
P Clark	Mathematics; Geography; Physical education.	Curriculum and assessment.
F Ruddick	Information technology; History; Art; Religious education.	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare.
S West	Areas of learning for children under five; English; Design and technology; Music.	
S Elomari	Special educational needs.	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Attendance; Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; Partnership with parents and the community;

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils attain well in art, design and technology, music and physical education.
- Many pupils attain well¹ at the end of Key Stage 2 in oral work, reading, science, mathematics, religious education, art, design and technology, history, music and physical education.
- A high proportion of teaching is very good or better, and there is a substantial amount of excellent teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2 and for pupils with special educational needs.
- Standards in art are very good.
- Standards of behaviour are very good - sometimes exemplary.
- Pupils make very good relationships with each other and with adults.
- Most pupils' attitudes to work are positive - and very positive within most parts of Key Stage 2.
- The curriculum is broad and well planned; mostly, assessment is used well to set for prior attainment; it is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and sports.
- There is very strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Nearly all pupils are very well monitored and supported - their personal development is good.
- Leadership and management are strong features.
- Relationships with parents are very good; they express strong support.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed and classroom assistants have a significant impact.
- In the main, funds are used efficiently; the school has made substantial improvements since the previous inspection.

Where the school has weaknesses

- A vast majority does not attain well in information technology at both key stages.
- A large number of pupils under achieve in science at Key Stage 1.
- Assessment, although more than adequate, is too burdensome and inefficient (except for pupils with special educational needs).
- Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged or provided for in Nursery, parts of Year 1 and in Year 2, and parts of Year 3.
- Some aspects of unsatisfactory organisation in the Nursery are detrimental to rates of progress, especially for boys.
- Those with English as an additional language are not adequately assessed for acquisition of English, or well provided for.

There are more strengths than weaknesses. This is an improving school. The weaknesses will form the basis of the governors' action plan which will be sent to parents and guardians of children at school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

- National Curriculum test results have improved substantially at Key Stage 2.
- It has implemented an action plan, focused on recommendations made at the previous inspection and has:
 - improved National Curriculum test results¹ and raised standards in many other subjects;
 - improved the quality of teaching;
 - established more rigorous monitoring systems;
 - strengthened the curricular plans;
 - adopted schemes to aid planning and progression;
 - improved provision in the Nursery;
 - raised expectations of what pupils learn in most years.
- It has not yet improved:
 - the efficiency of assessment, or established regular systems in all core subjects and information technology, to match pupils' work to National Curriculum Levels at regular intervals;
 - sufficiently the quality of annual reports of pupils to parents: most now have levels of attainment, some have weaknesses and targets; only a few have rates of progress in core subjects and information technology.

Standards in Subjects

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

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

The school is improving. It has made steady gains over the years 1995 to 1998, and quite rapid gains between 1998 and 1999 at Key Stage 2.

In English :	results in 1999 improved to	69%	from	53%	in 1998
In Mathematics :	results in 1999 improved to	73%	from	43%	in 1998
In Science :	results in 1999 improved to	88%	from	57%	in 1998

At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in most subjects are similar to national expectations², except in science and information technology. In art, standards are high. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are close to national expectations in writing and geography, and somewhat above those expectations in reading, oral

¹ National averages refer to the percentages of pupils nationally who achieve particular levels in English, mathematics and science in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments at ages seven and eleven.

² National expectations are those standards, laid out by Her Majesty's Government in the National Curriculum, which pupils are expected to achieve by a particular age.

communication, mathematics, science, religious education, design and technology, history, music and physical education; in art, standards are high. In information technology, standards are low.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	Under 5	5 - 7 years	7 - 11 years
English	Satisfactory	Mainly satisfactory	More than half is good or better
Mathematics	Satisfactory	At least satisfactory; mostly good or better	Mainly good or very good, very occasional weakness
Science		Satisfactory or good	At least satisfactory, often very good
Information technology		Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Religious education		Good	Good
Other subjects	Mainly satisfactory, some good, a little unsatisfactory	Satisfactory or good	Mostly good, very occasional weakness

Teaching for the under-fives is mainly sound, sometimes good, occasionally weak. At Key Stage 1, teaching quality is mostly satisfactory and often good early in the key stage. At Key Stage 2, teaching quality is most often good, sometimes excellent and very occasionally weak. It is stronger towards the end of the key stage.

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	Very good on the whole; occasionally exemplary. Most pupils are very courteous and polite.
Attendance	Satisfactory - but with high proportions of authorised absences owing to family holidays taken during school time.
Ethos*	Very positive - across the school as a whole - aided by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, teaching quality when it is very good or excellent, and the positive influence of other adults.
Leadership and management	A strong lead is given by the headteacher, governors and core subject curricular leaders.
Curriculum	Broad and balanced - well supplemented by extra-curricular activities such as music, choir and football.
Pupils with special	Very well provided for and well managed.

educational needs

Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development

Very strong aspects - very good provision.

Staffing, resources and accommodation

Good on the whole and, in the main, well used.

Value for money

More than satisfactory value for money is given - the school is improving and rapidly approaching giving good value.

* *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

- . Parents say strongly that they find the school approachable.
- . Parents say strongly that their children like school.
- . All aspects commented on in the questionnaire were substantially positive.
- . Any complaints are taken seriously.
- . Parents say their children are very well looked after, helped and guided.

What some parents are not happy about

atisfaction was expressed. Minor concerns were about homework.

The school has just introduced a homework policy - some is being set. It is too early to say if it will be effective. In inspectors' opinions, sufficient is planned to aid progress.

Key issues for action

- Key Issues from the previous report have been pursued and resulted in:
 - policies and schemes fully covering the National Curriculum;
 - improved provision for children under five, so that it now matches Government guidance in covering the Areas of Experience and the Desirable Outcomes³ which are recommended;
 - raised standards of teaching, except in information technology;
 - more rigorously monitored curricular provision;
 - teachers' raised expectations of what pupils are expected to do.

In order to improve further, governors, headteacher and teachers should:

- Improve attainment in science at Key Stage 1 (4, 88, 89)⁴:
 - especially in pupils' written records and diagrams (7, 89);
 - by teaching to higher expectations (9, 88, 89, 91);
- Improve attainments in information technology by ensuring (7, 8, 81, 100, 101):
 - more time is provided for teaching the subject (102, 104);
 - the Programme of Study is more fully covered (7, 8, 71, 85, 105, 106, 108);
 - pupils' attainments are thoroughly and regularly assessed (104, 108);
 - there is sufficient in-service training for staff (107);
- Improve progress for higher attaining pupils, particularly in parts of Year 1, in Year 2 and in parts of Years 3 and 4:
 - by providing more work matched to prior attainment in many subjects (9, 38, 72, 75, 91);
 - using more questions which are challenging and probing (83, 85, 89, 95);
 - ensuring work set is not too easy (20);
 - work is not repeated unnecessarily (31);
- Improve the provision and quality of support for pupils with English as an additional language by (69):
 - ensuring it is managed better (48, 76);
 - improving the quality of support (22, 28, 52, 72);
 - more thoroughly assessing pupils' levels of English acquisition (40, 76);
- Improve organisation in the Nursery, so that:
 - 'freely' chosen activities acquire more purpose and direction (20, 66);
 - all children experience the back-up activities related to English and mathematics which are provided, especially boys (20);
- Improve the efficiency of assessment procedures by:
 - ensuring they are not burdensome and become more manageable (31, 49).

³ Desirable Outcomes are those skills, knowledge and understanding which are deemed necessary to lay suitable foundations for entry to the early stages of the National Curriculum at age five. They are set out in government guidance as 'Areas of Experience' and 'Desirable Outcomes'. These are the expectations for the average nursery school child to attain, or be on course to attain, by age five.

⁴ Brackets denote some of the paragraphs in which more detailed reference may be found in the main body of the report.

Introduction

Characteristics of the school

1.The Downs Primary and Nursery School is set in a dense urban area close to, but separated by a main road from, Harlow town centre. Most houses are owner-occupied with some provided by local authority and housing associations. At entry, children's attainments are wide ranging, from some having quite low skills in using words and phrases to communicate thoughts and feelings, to some whose knowledge of words, numbers, letters and sounds is quite high. Taken as a whole, children's attainments are around those to be expected for their ages. There are 231 boys and girls on roll - around the average number for this type of school. In addition, 52 children attend the Nursery part time from the age of three - some attend mornings and some afternoons. Also, there were five children under five in the Reception Year when the school was inspected. Families represent mainly British, white European origins, although 17 children speak English as an additional language - a quite high proportion. The school registers 42 pupils as having special educational needs; of these, 18 have high levels of need for which extra support is merited, and five pupils have severe needs which qualify them to receive statements of special educational needs. Fifty-nine pupils are entitled to free school meals - about the average for primary schools nationally.

2.The school aims to work within its community and for its pupils to develop good personal relationships. It seeks to provide practical, first-hand experiences which deeply interest pupils and for them to become independent learners within a broad curriculum. Presently, it is giving priority to improvements in English and mathematics.

3.It sets its targets for 2000 to:

- 65 per cent of pupils to attain Level 4 or better in English;
- 50 per cent of pupils to attain Level 4 or better in mathematics.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1⁵

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20(14)	14(21)	34(35)

National Curriculum	Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Number of pupils	Boys	10 (8)	9 (11)	16 (13)
at NC Level 2 or	Girls	13 (15)	13 (21)	13 (21)
above	Total	23 (23)	22 (32)	29 (34)
Percentage at NC	School	68 (66)	65 (91)	85 (97)
Level 2 or above	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teacher	Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	9 (11)	13 (13)	12 (11)
at NC Level 2 or	Girls	13 (21)	13 (21)	13 (20)
above	Total	22 (32)	26 (34)	25 (31)
Percentage at NC	School	65 (91)	76 (97)	74 (88)
Level 2 or above	National	82 (81)	84 (85)	87 (86)

⁵ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Attainment at Key Stage 2⁶

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	25(14)	24(16)	49(30)

National Curriculum	Test Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	17 (6)	17 (6)	20 (9)
at NC Level 4 or	Girls	17 (10)	19 (7)	23 (8)
above	Total	34 (16)	36 (13)	43 (17)
Percentage at NC	School	69 (53)	73 (43)	88 (57)
Level 4 or above	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teacher	Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils	Boys	18 (7)	16 (8)	20 (11)
at NC Level 4 or	Girls	19 (8)	18 (8)	22 (10)
above	Total	37 (15)	34 (16)	42 (21)
Percentage at NC	School	76 (50)	69 (53)	86 (70)
Level 4 or above	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed		%
through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised absence	School 6.7 National comparative data 5.6
	Unauthorised absence	School 0.5 National comparative data 0.5

Exclusions

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

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:	%
	Very good or better 30
	Satisfactory or better 96
	Less than satisfactory 4

⁶ Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school

Attainment and progress

4. At the end of Key Stage 1, in 1999, 69 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or better in reading - well below national averages⁷ following on from 1998 when 91 per cent did so. School records show a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs in 1999. Over the years 1996 to 1998, girls performed better than boys in being about six months more advanced. In writing, 64 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or better - well below national averages and, as in reading, girls' performance was better than boys over the years 1996 to 1998. Teacher assessments were similar to National Curriculum test results. In mathematics in 1999, 85 per cent of pupils attained Level 2 or better - well below national averages, following on from 1998 when 97 per cent did so. In 1998, teachers' assessments of science show that results were broadly in line with national averages. In 1999, they were below national averages.

5. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999, 69 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or better in English - close to national averages and an improvement of nearly 15 per cent compared with 1998. In mathematics, 73 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or better - slightly above the national average - and an improvement of 30 per cent compared with 1998. In science, 88 per cent attained Level 4 or better - somewhat above the national average and an improvement of about 30 per cent compared with 1998. In all three subjects, boys' and girls' performances were similar over the years 1996 to 1998. Compared to similar schools, results in English and mathematics were similar and results for science were somewhat better.

6. By age five, most children attain the Desirable Outcomes⁸ - set out in Government guidance. They rôle play with confidence; nearly all write their names correctly. Most have a grasp of numbers 1-20, but are less knowledgeable of larger numbers. In understanding the world, many make very good models and use computers very well; they have some knowledge of living things in the environment. All have good levels of physical movement; they use space well and develop good co-ordination of their hands and limbs; nearly all use a suitable range of movements to express themselves well.

7. At the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils' attainments are close to what is expected⁹ for their ages in English, mathematics, geography and history. In art, standards for most pupils are well above those expected for their ages, and above the standards expected in religious education¹⁰, music and physical education. In science and in information technology, standards are below those expected - and particularly low in information technology. Pupils read with reasonably fluency, but mainly recognise whole words and make fewer than expected attempts to understand words in a number of ways. Most pupils count numbers and have reasonable accuracy in some tables, but in science many fail to grasp enough of the knowledge expected and they record work poorly, in both diagrammatical and in written forms. Many have a good grasp of the main points in the Agreed Syllabus in religious education - for example, there is good awareness of the major world faiths. However, many lack other than simple word processing skills in information technology, and lack confidence and competence in using computers as tools to graph and paint, or to control devices by giving instructions. By contrast, attainments in art are often very good. Pupils confidently use a range of materials, including paint, to communicate their ideas, feelings and personal interpretations of what they see and what they learn about. In design and technology, most make suitable models but carry out little evaluation of their work. In geography, they have some understanding of the local environment, and in history know something of such

⁷ National averages refer to the percentages of pupils nationally who achieve particular levels in English, mathematics and science in National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments at ages seven and eleven.

⁸ Desirable Outcomes are those skills, knowledge and understanding which are deemed necessary to lay suitable foundations for entry to the early stages of the National Curriculum at age five. They are set out in Government guidance as 'Areas of Experience' and 'Desirable Outcomes'. These are the expectations for the average nursery school child to attain, or be on course to attain, by age five.

⁹ National expectations are those standards, laid out by Her Majesty's Government in the National Curriculum, which pupils are expected to achieve by a particular age.

¹⁰ The school has adopted the Essex Agreed Syllabus and the expectations for religious education are set out therein.

aspects as the past - related to grandparents or to such people as Louis Braille. In music, standards of singing are good for most, and in other aspects of music - such as playing instruments - most pupils have satisfactory skills. In physical education, most pupils move well, have good control of their actions and use space thoughtfully when active.

8. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils meet and some exceed the expectations relative to their ages. Overall, attainment at the end of the key stage is more than average in reading, oral work, mathematics, science, religious education, design and technology, history, music and physical education. Most pupils' attainments in art are often very good. Attainments in geography are close to those expected for pupils' ages, but those for information technology are low. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils read with good fluency and reasonable accuracy. They have a more than reasonable grasp of texts and words to facilitate their understanding. Writing, although close to the standards expected, is rarely better than average for most - their work lacks the higher features of imaginative phraseology and telling choices of vocabulary. In mathematics, most grasp number bonds reasonably well, and have suitable knowledge of such things as circles, triangles and squares. Most have some knowledge of life and living things, but do not always provide simple scientific reasons for what they see and find out. In information technology, skills are limited on the whole; there is a reasonable grasp of word processing but little understanding of how to handle information in graphs and illustrate work with drawing programs. There is very little use of computers to control events, research for information, or to model numbers in repeated additions or to draw complex shapes. In religious education, most have at least a broad understanding of the aspects set out in the Agreed Syllabus, and many have quite refined knowledge of world religions and of concepts such as tolerance. In art, very many have good or even better skills at manipulating and mixing paint to achieve desired effects, and record many observations of such things as plants in good detail and with well proportioned shapes. In design and technology, most make models reasonably well but exceed expected standards in Year 6, and they often discuss the relative merits of their models, although they do not sufficiently record their evaluations. The majority has a reasonable grasp of features of the local environment and make interesting investigations into countries, such as in the work on Italy. In history, many pupils have a good grasp of such aspects as Britain post 1930, and record thoughts, feelings and their research well. Singing standards are good for the majority; they have a good sense of timing, accurate pitch and good control - standards in playing instruments are at least reasonable for most. In physical education, most pupils control their movements with good skill and imagination, and use space safely and creatively. They are less sure in evaluating their own and others' performances. Standards in swimming are good - by age 11, nearly all attain the required standard of 25 metres using a recognisable stroke and some exceed it.

9. Across the school as a whole, progress is at least steady in nearly all subjects for most pupils and is quite rapid for many, particularly towards the end of Key Stage 2 and in Reception. It is mostly steady but sometimes slow in the entry year, quite rapid at the outset of Key Stage 1, steady in the main in Years 1 and 2, steady at the outset of Key Stage 2, and thereafter increasingly rapid up to Year 6. Variations are caused by differences in teaching quality in different subjects and years, and when work for higher attainers is not well matched to their needs. Nearly all pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and are often well supported by teaching assistants. Often, they make very good progress in withdrawal groups, but occasionally progress is slow in those lessons where the work provided lacks challenge and interest. Sometimes, higher attainers lack enough work to challenge them in mathematics and science at Key Stage 1. Across recent years, the school has made gains at similar rates to schools in Essex and nationally. However, there were losses at Key Stage 1 between 1998 and 1999 - the school puts these differences down to a large proportion of pupils with special educational needs and is currently targeting some of these pupils to accelerate their attainment. At Key Stage 2, there were large gains made between 1998 and 1999. This is attributed to some changes in teaching approaches in English, mathematics and science. In lessons, progress varies - mainly in relation to teaching quality; in many it is quite rapid, in most it is at least steady, and in a few it is slow.

10. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained steady progress in the main - except for a decline in rates of improvement compared with national average gains in Key Stage 1 in 1999. In Key Stage 2, it has added to its otherwise steady improvement by accelerated progress in 1999.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

11. Nearly all pupils behave well and behaviour is very good as a whole. Behaviour in lessons is usually good and often very good. In only one out of the lessons observed during the inspection was the pupils' response unsatisfactory. At times, for example when pupils interviewed elderly visitors about life in the 1940s, in assemblies and at the swimming baths, behaviour was exemplary. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to learning. Children under five are usually well behaved and most are keen to join in. Nearly all pupils understand the differences between right and wrong. They treat the environment and equipment with good care. The school operates as a very friendly and orderly community. Almost all pupils behave very well in and around the boundary. A safe, secure and happy environment is established where pupils increase their self-awareness, confidence and respect for others. In discussions, all pupils expressed considerable pride in their school as being 'the best' and recent newcomers illustrated this by drawing comparisons from past experience. There is a general air of calm and harmony in the school with no evidence of bullying or harassment.

12. In both key stages, the vast majority of pupils shows good levels of interest in work. Most try hard to complete work they have been set and concentrate well. They listen attentively to their teachers, sometimes for long periods of time. The majority of pupils take a pride in the work produced, but in Key Stage 1 the presentation of the work is too often untidy. Towards the end of Key Stage 2, presentation is better, with good drawing and well-formed handwriting. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, persevere well to complete their work. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into the school community and respond well.

13. Nearly all pupils work very well together in small groups, and share equipment and books equably. When they are given the opportunity to work collaboratively on different aspects of a project or task, they do so well, but such opportunities are few. Many pupils do not sufficiently develop independent learning skills; for example, by using the computers or books to find out information for themselves. In Key Stage 1, dictionaries are not used sufficiently to develop independence. There is good practice in parts of Year 1 and in Years 5 and 6, but elsewhere pupils often remain too dependent on their teachers and do not sufficiently investigate things for themselves. In other ways, the personal development of pupils is good. All pupils are offered, and willingly undertake, an appropriate range of responsibilities; for example, they act as register monitors, give out books and tidy the classrooms. In the Nursery, children help to take care of the guinea pigs. They undertake these tasks conscientiously and often with enthusiasm. Although there is yet no formal school council, there are other opportunities for the pupils' voices to be heard through discussions with adults.

14. All pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into the school community, and the very good quality of relationships helps them to behave well. Most pupils treat books and equipment with due respect. Most behaviour in the playground is very good and well aided by the lunchtime supervisors' organisation of games and activities.

15. In the main, relationships throughout are very good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 willingly volunteer to take responsibility for younger pupils at lunchtimes and during breaks. They take this seriously and try hard to include young friends in games and conversations. The relationships between pupils, teachers and other adults are very good and show mutual respect. The incidence of bullying is very low, to the extent that some pupils do not understand what bullying is; pupils are confident that there will always be an adult to turn to in need. Many readily offer to help others and show concern for them.

Attendance

16. Attendance is satisfactory, being broadly in line with national averages for primary schools. Unauthorised absence is also broadly in line with the national average. A high proportion of authorised absence is the result of family holidays taken during term time. Almost all parents routinely inform the school of absence, by telephone or letter. The high level of absence caused by holidays has a negative effect on the progress of the substantial number of pupils involved.

17. The majority of pupils arrives promptly in the morning, but there is a considerable amount of lateness. There are, however, very few persistent latecomers. Almost all lessons begin on time.

Quality of education provided

Teaching

18. Teaching quality has a positive impact on pupils' attainments, especially in Reception, in parts of Year 3, and in Years 4, 5 and 6. Taken as a whole, teaching quality is sound at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. It has least impact in Nursery Years, in Year 2 and in parts of Year 3. Ninety-six per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and four per cent (three lessons at inspection) is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 1, teaching is mainly sound and sometimes very good - particularly at the outset. No teaching at inspection was judged to be unsatisfactory; about half of it was judged good or better. At Key Stage 2, two-thirds of the teaching is good or better, two-fifths is very good or excellent - just five per cent is unsatisfactory. During the inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson each of mathematics and physical education, and also in one lesson for the under-fives.

19. In a good proportion of lessons - at the outset to Key Stage 1 and in Years 4, 5 and 6 - teaching is often of very good or excellent quality. This occurs when very high expectations of pupils' behaviour are coupled with a strong regard for their equality. For example, in a history lesson when pupils' own ideas were drawn on for questions related to their historical enquiry into people's past lives. When this is also supplemented by a very good grasp of the Programmes of Study, as was so in this example, it resulted in a heightened interest for pupils when their learning became practical and was based on the use of skills in the pursuit of knowledge. In such lessons, pace is maintained and learning is well linked to clear teaching objectives. Also built in to such teaching are good amounts of direct instruction and the lessons are taught in a series which builds on previously taught and acquired understanding. A good example was in a science lesson about liquids. Moreover, all this very good or excellent teaching employs a wide range of methods, which cause pupils to interact well to provide suggestions, carry out activities and provide explanations. In addition, when activities also are well matched to pupils' prior attainment, all groups have easy access to suitable challenges which bring out the best in them. At times also, teaching is very well supplemented by classroom assistants; they aid progress by helping to reinforce teachers' objectives and maintain pupils' concentration. There is a high proportion of such teaching, especially in relation to special educational needs. The teaching of special educational needs withdrawal groups is never less than very good and is often excellent. Also, pupils working with a teaching assistant in withdrawal settings, both individually or in groups, are very well taught; work is appropriately planned and effectively implemented.

20. Very little teaching is of unsatisfactory quality. However, there is some where even higher quality is restricted by a lack of sufficient attention to pupils of higher prior attainment. This occurs to some extent in some otherwise satisfactory teaching in Key Stage 2. In science at Key Stage 1, there is some lack of appreciation of the knowledge and understanding required at the next level (that is, Level 3), there is some lack of expectation in mathematics and, quite simply, there is insufficient challenge provided for some pupils because work is kept to mainly the average expectations instead of frequently being related to higher standards. In a few lessons (one lesson for the under-fives, one of physical education and in one of mathematics), there is a lack of subject knowledge or, as in a lesson of physical education, teaching which simply did not work well on that occasion. For the under-fives, sometimes a lack of intervention by adults in their independent work - coupled with organisational problems - result in a discrepancy of access to all suitable activities. In particular, boys choose most often to 'play' at firemen or in construction, and miss out on follow-up activities related to reading, writing and number work. Some children of higher prior attainment thereby do not sufficiently extend their previous skills in the basic subjects of reading, writing and number.

21. Taken as a whole, most teachers have a reasonable grasp of most subjects they teach, and some have good knowledge and, therefore, high expectations. The good knowledge about art is widespread and has strong impact on attainment and progress; consequently, many teachers have suitably high expectations and so challenge all pupils well, including higher attainers. Nearly all teachers plan very well and most organisation is at least reasonably effective. Time is usually well used; the pace is at least steady and often sufficiently rapid to produce good rates of progress. Most teachers give constructive advice and guidance during lessons and mark work regularly. There is a school policy for marking and the overall standard is satisfactory, with the best placing emphasis on what pupils need to do next to improve their work. Many individual teacher records are very detailed; for example, spelling lists and multiplication tables learned by individual pupils are kept. However, not all assessments are dated to provide information regarding progress. Assessment, usefully, is often used to set or group pupils according to their prior attainment in English and mathematics. A little use is made of homework. However, implementation of the new policy is in its infancy, but when it is followed fully there is sufficient planned.

22. During the inspection, the support of teaching assistants was observed. This group, which includes special educational needs and English as an additional language classroom assistants, is of good quality in the main. There are many more strengths than weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs often receive very good support and progress is often very well enhanced by assistants who have the necessary skills and experience to support teachers well. Only on very few occasions were classroom assistants not sufficiently involved or lacked impact. This was the case when passive observation of the class teacher occurred for too long, or pupils with English as an additional language did not receive appropriate support. On the whole, the impact of this group is very positive on pupils' progress. At lunchtimes, supervisors play important rôles. More than usual, they join in with children's games and activities, organise events and ensure pupils are well looked after. They make significant contributions to good quality experiences for pupils at lunchtimes, and often act as confidants and aids to those who show any distress.

23. Taken as a whole, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Then, the proportion of teaching which was satisfactory or better was 85 per cent; now the proportion is 96 per cent. Then, the proportion of teaching which was very good or excellent was three per cent; now it is 30 per cent.

The curriculum and assessment

24. The curriculum for children under five is sound, being broad and generally well balanced. Teachers' planning is linked to the Desirable Outcomes for children of this age, and this reflects sound coverage of most areas of learning.

25. In Key Stages 1 and 2, with the exception of information technology, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the legal requirements for teaching subjects of the National Curriculum. This represents very good progress since the previous inspection. Aspects of curricular planning were criticised in the previous inspection report and the Key Issues for action included aspects of provision to ensure that National Curriculum Programmes of Study are fully in place for all subjects. There have been several positive developments: the school day for pupils in Key Stage 2 has been lengthened; the school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy in all year groups and has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy; good, clear planning structures have been established at long-, medium- and short-term stages; the headteacher and core subject curricular leaders now monitor planning; extra-curricular provision is now very good and a positive strength of the school.

26. There is good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education including sex education and drugs awareness, providing good preparation for the next stage of education. The requirement for collective worship is observed in daily class and whole-school assemblies.

27. Not all pupils have full access to a curriculum matched to their needs. For example, some higher attaining pupils in the Nursery, upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 do not always receive work which is challenging enough to help them expand on what they already know. They often work from identical work sheets without additional or challenging work to undertake until easier tasks have been completed. This often wastes time and slows their rates of progress.

28. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive very limited extra support on a regular basis. Presently, provision is uncoordinated, unhelpful and restricts access for them. On the contrary, pupils with special educational needs have proper and full access to the National Curriculum. These pupils have a wide range of appropriate assessment materials which are used effectively to identify needs and to assess progress. Individual targets are set out in pupils' individual education plans and are met very well; the plans are used regularly and matched to teaching. All recommendations of the special educational needs Code of Practice are in place and known to all staff and parents. Parents are informed termly, and at annual reviews, of the stages their children are at. Very good assessment procedures are in place, and pupil records are up to date. Day-to-day assessments are used well when pupils with special educational needs are being taught in class.

29. Curricular planning is based upon yearly, half-termly and weekly subject reviews. In the foundation subjects such as history and geography, planning takes place on a two-year rolling programme which allows good cross-curricular links between subjects; for example, music, art and multicultural education. However, the monitoring of medium-term planning to ensure continuity and progression in the foundation subjects is weak. Medium-term and weekly planning is monitored by the headteacher to ensure full curricular coverage. The effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy is providing added structure to teacher planning, which is benefiting pupils in increasing rates of progress. However, curricular planning lacks impact in building on knowledge in a systematic way in information technology.

30. Integral to the curriculum is a very good range of educational visits which enrich and extend pupils' class work. No pupil is excluded from these opportunities. Staff and parents organise and run a very good range of extra-curricular activities including football, netball, book-bug club, chess, music and country dancing. The many good quality displays of pupils' work around the school, such as a visit to the river Stort by pupils in Year 6, provide evidence of the value of such visits in promoting learning. The residential visit to Norfolk provides pupils with a good range of physical activities and structured access to a wide range of information technology experiences. All these activities positively enhance pupils' social development.

31. The school has good procedures for assessing pupils' work; the use of assessment to inform future planning is satisfactory. The school has made sound progress in improving its systems since the previous inspection. However, some elements still require 'fine tuning' to create a more manageable system. Assessment information is used inconsistently to set clear targets for learning and to influence planning; for example, when higher attaining pupils repeat work already covered in a previous year group. Group target setting, using data based upon pupils' prior attainments, as well as standardised scores, is being trialled; it provides a basis for a more efficient, less intensive assessment system in classes. It is intended that this information will be used at every stage throughout the school to inform planning and reports, and set individual targets for pupils. Presently, there is no system to ensure evaluations are used to inform future planning.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

32. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a strength. Assemblies meet statutory requirements and are broadly Christian in character. The effective use of music and singing in assemblies adds a spiritual dimension, and there are some opportunities for reflection. Across the curriculum, opportunities for spiritual development are often effectively used. For example, in Year 6, pupils have made a 'Wailing Wall' and written their own personal prayers to place in its crevices. In both art and music, pupils are encouraged to reflect upon the powerful effect of great paintings and music on the emotions. In some other subjects, particularly English and history, pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and to listen with sensitivity to the perceptions of others. They are also encouraged effectively to express their emotions

through sensitively written poetry. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop empathy with others; for example, in history when a Year 3/4 class wrote as if they were children in Roman Britain at the time of Boudicca, and when Year 6 pupils were interviewing people about their memories of the 1940s. Most pupils have a very good range of opportunities to wonder at the world around them and to reflect on aspects of their experiences and emotions. However, in science lessons, some opportunities for reflection on the miracles of the natural world are missed.

33.The provision for moral development is very good. All staff provide good rôle models for pupils, and a strong moral code is consistently reinforced. Almost all pupils understand the differences between right and wrong and behave accordingly. Staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and suitably use praise to reinforce good moral attitudes.

34.The provision for social development is very good. The school offers a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, for pupils to take responsibility and gain an understanding of how they can contribute to the school community. The school ethos supports this aspect very well and pupils are encouraged to play an active part. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are asked to help to look after younger pupils at breaks and lunchtimes, ensuring that they join in with games and activities. The lunchtime supervisors provide a range of games and activities and encourage pupils to take part; this makes a positive contribution to social development. The provision of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sport, makes a strong, positive contribution to team spirit. Currently, plans are in hand to institute a school council to assist pupils' development.

35.The provision for cultural development is very good. In religious education, pupils gain an understanding of some of the beliefs and cultures of major religions. In art, pupils look at work such as the Impressionists and Yoruba art. In music, they listen to compositions from a high number of cultures and have opportunities to play instruments from some of these. They gain an understanding of cultural aspects of history and study the local community in geography. Cross-curricular work is particularly strong. For example, pupils designed biscuits for Divali celebrations in design and technology after learning about Divali in religious education. Also, they produced imaginative artwork illustrating pieces of music such as 'Carmen' and 'The Firebird'.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

36.Support and guidance are very strong; pupils are well cared for. The monitoring of attendance meets statutory requirements, and appropriate action is taken should there be any unexplained absences or other causes for concern.

37.All adults provide appropriate rôle models, and relationships are very good between pupils, peer groups and staff. Classroom assistants play important rôles in promotion of the caring environment and help to ensure effective support. There are many opportunities for personal development; particularly where older children take responsibility for younger ones and act as mentors, playmates or first-line problem solvers. This suitably reinforces the school ethos of caring for each other. Good examples of taking responsibility for one's own actions are to be seen in written work about the importance of apologising. There are many examples of positive enforcement of behaviour: these include the 'Star of the Week'; 'Quiet School' awards; and the use of house points. All these properly underpin the school's aims and policies.

38.All pupils are treated respectfully, as individuals, and nearly all their needs are well supported both in class and in the school as a whole. However, in some lessons, higher attaining pupils are not given enough work to extend their prior knowledge and understanding at accelerated rates and thus increase expectations of themselves. In the main, all pupils have equal access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

39.The process of introducing children to the Reception class is well handled; many come into the main school from the Nursery, where they have already absorbed the positive culture of the school. Transfer of the Year 6 pupils is well facilitated through planned contact with the nearby secondary school and visits from former pupils.

40. Very effective systems are in place to monitor and record the academic progress and personal development of pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are suitably detailed and targets are precise, measurable and achievable. In some cases, appropriate behaviour targets are included. Proper efforts are made to maintain good relationships with the full range of special educational needs support services. There are good relationships with the school nurse and Education Welfare Officer. Police, the Fire Service and the Road Safety Officer pay frequent visits to keep children aware of potential dangers. However, there are some difficulties relating to the provision of educational psychological support. This slows pupils' assessments in moving from stage 4 on the Code of Practice to stage 5. Procedures for assessing and supporting pupils with English as an additional language are not well implemented; neither is support for this group sufficient in quantity or quality.

41. There are well documented policies on health and safety procedures. A constant check is kept daily by the site manager, and an audit is done by the headteacher at regular intervals. Child protection measures fully meet statutory requirements and an adult is delegated to oversee this. Staff are well informed of factors which may suggest that a child is at risk and are aware of the need for constant vigilance. There are designated 'First Aiders' and emergency procedures are clearly defined. Where safety in class might be an issue, for example when children are cooking, clear guidelines are given. Health, drugs and sex education are suitably interwoven in the school timetable, and parents are kept well informed about the subject matter.

42. The previous inspection judged the aspects of support, guidance and pupils' welfare to be strengths; since then these have been further improved and remain strengths.

Partnership with parents and the community

43. There is a high level of support for the school among parents; relationships with them are very strong. A substantial number choose to become active in its daily life. They support the school on trips and visits as well as helping with extra-curricular activities and in the classrooms. They value the ways in which they are encouraged to become part of school life and the open and welcoming attitude of the staff. Most parents appreciate the standards of work, the extra-curricular provision and state that their children like school.

44. On the whole, information is of good quality. The prospectus and the governors' Annual Report to Parents contain a wide range of useful information and satisfy requirements. The regular newsletters provide information about forthcoming events and celebrate school achievements. An appropriate range of letters and information is sent to parents. Pupils' annual reports were criticised at the previous inspection for failing to record academic progress adequately, or to set appropriate targets for future learning. This has been pursued and rectified. Comments in some reports reflect attainment, attitude and effort very well. However, in most, progress is still not reported sufficiently in terms of the rates made in pupils acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding. Targets for future learning are provided in all reports, but many are too general and lack the clarity needed to help parents support their children's progress. Regular consultation evenings are held; parents are welcome also to discuss their children's progress with teachers at any time. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are appropriately involved and informed at every stage, and have the opportunity to attend regular review meetings.

45. A new homework policy has been introduced recently, which plans that it is regularly set and marked. Pupils are expected to take their reading books home every evening, and the reading records include space for parental comment. Spellings and tables are also set as homework. Currently, a few parents feel that there is insufficient homework. However, a new policy was introduced in September. It is too early to say if this will prove effective, but there is now sufficient planned for pupils of this age. Not all homework is marked and followed up.

46. The school has very good links with the local community, which are used most effectively to enhance the curriculum and enrich pupils' experiences. Since the previous inspection, which judged that the school had good links, this aspect has been strengthened. Visits to local places of interest, for example Westoe, take place and pupils carry out fieldwork in the town in geography. The memories of local people are drawn on

interestingly as living history sources when pupils study life in Britain in the 1940s. The school has established links with a number of local firms to support work in science, and some sponsorship, mainly in the form of computers, is received from local businesses. Pupils and students from a number of schools and colleges attend for work experience or teaching placements. Sporting links exist with other schools, and a local football team is involved in a coaching programme. Links with the high school, to which almost all pupils transfer, are strong and some joint productions are held. The school works hard to ensure that the transfer of information is effective and that all pupils experience a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

The management and efficiency of the school

Leadership and management

47. Leadership and management are good in the main and improving, with strengths very much outweighing any weaknesses. These weaknesses, apart from those related to pupils for whom English is an additional language, are not serious and merit consideration only to strengthen further these aspects.

48. Governors have a very good grasp of the school and its achievements; they are in regular contact and make some visits about which they provide written accounts to their fellow governors. They are able to draw on a good range of data collected by the headteacher; these include: matching pupils' work to National Curriculum levels across the school; the examination of random samples of class work, followed by feedback to individuals; some monitoring of teaching, coupled with yearly professional interviews and agreed targets. The chair and vice-chair are informed of these. In addition, teaching quality is monitored through a partnership scheme whereby the headteacher and a neighbouring colleague exchange monitoring visits to each other's school, coupled with regular internal monitoring and feedback to individuals. All available data about outcomes - such as National Curriculum test results and end-of-year tests - are used to compare with quality of planning. The information gleaned is used to identify significant trends. The school development plan is a well set out document which gives clear indication of appropriate priorities for improvement. Gender variations have improved at Key Stage 2 by a broadening of the range of literature to include sufficient thought to be of interest to boys. The newly introduced pupil portfolios contain a range of work in the core subjects. However, pupils' work is not regularly and systematically levelled against national indicators using whole-school subject portfolios. Coupled to management rôles, the deputy headteacher is a good rôle model for teaching quality and a suitable back-up to the headteacher's strong lead. In addition, many subject leaders have a good grasp of their responsibilities and are involved in seeking improvements. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well managed and, usefully, the governors have a fully informed governor link; very good records are kept of these pupils, and individual educational plans are clear. The weak aspect is related to pupils whose first language is not English. Records about these pupils are unclear and their support is not well managed or effective. Pupils are not accurately assessed for their stage of English acquisition, and not provided with the necessary extra support they need and are entitled to receive.

49. Some improvements are necessary to strengthen leadership even further. Insufficient use is made of the examples of very good teaching quality, to spread very good practice to improve satisfactory teaching further. Governors do not sufficiently link the school development plan to strategic budget planning over future years, and pupils' work is not sufficiently compared with nationally expected outcomes in core subjects at Key Stage 1. This was to some extent evident in many subjects, but particularly in science. By

contrast, expectations for assessing pupils' work is very demanding of individual teachers' time. This results in attempts being made too often to assess individuals' attainment in too much detail. A more efficient system is used in parallel, whereby assessment is related to groups and samples of pupils' attainments, but at the moment inefficient use is made of the time available. Overlap occurs, and then assessment becomes cumbersome. Another minor weakness is that governors are not sufficiently informed of priorities related to the school development plan and discuss these, and progress in its implementation, too infrequently.

50. Taken as a whole, leadership and management provide a strong focus in giving a clear sense of direction, the establishment of a positive ethos and an emphasis on raising attainment. This direction is well set out in the development plan. Consequently, the school is improving. An increasingly sophisticated use is being made of data, such as National Curriculum tests to target groups and raise attainment. In line with the school's aims, effective use is made of the attainment targets in the National Curriculum related to practical experiences. For example, they are used in scientific investigations and historical evidence to refine understanding. The translation of these aims is very evident in Key Stage 2 and often adds interest for pupils. There is a good range of devices used in monitoring standards and teaching quality - including the annual review undertaken by the headteacher, and classroom observations which are linked to setting targets. This results in a positive ethos being created, in which pupils' relationships and good behaviour produce at least steady progress for most, and quite rapid for many towards the end of Key Stage 2. Many of the school's aims are realised, particularly those related to a curriculum to experience at first hand, and that related to realising attainment at Key Stage 2. However, when the quality of teaching and the match of pupils' work to national expectations are taken into account, the targets set for 2000 appear to be too low.

51. Since the previous inspection, the Key Issues from the report have been properly used to guide improvement. Many schemes of work recommended by the Government's curricular agency have been adopted; improvements related to the provision for under-fives have been sought - it is now satisfactory. The proportions of good or very good teaching have increased; a change-over to more manageable assessment is in process; a system to monitor teaching quality regularly has been set up and implemented; subject co-ordinators' rôles have been strengthened - but matching work to National Curriculum levels is still too infrequent; teachers' expectations have been raised and are now higher, especially in Reception Year, in parts of Year 3, and in Years 4, 5 and 6. Consequently, the school is well placed in its capacity to continue to improve, and advances since the previous inspection have been many.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

52. There are sufficient numbers of teachers who have suitable knowledge and experience to teach the National Curriculum to pupils aged 3+ to 11 years. There are more than sufficient numbers of support staff, including those for special educational needs. They are well deployed and, except for the support of pupils with English as an additional language - are usually effective and give good value for money. Accommodation is more than adequate - modifications to the internal spaces to provide more self-contained units have brought about a good match between the teaching methods preferred and the accommodation. In addition, there are some very well developed outside areas with variety and interest which make playtimes and lunchtimes more amenable for pupils.

53. There are more than adequate resources. On the whole, they have a positive impact on the quality of education. There are sufficient books but some shortages of 'big books' to facilitate literacy teaching. There are good amounts of readily accessible resources for mathematics. Science resources are organised into boxes to match each class's work for the term and, although enough, there are some shortages; for example, in sensitive measuring equipment for teaching Level 5. Art is well resourced with plenty of materials and a good range of suitable artefacts. History is properly resourced and enhanced by good quality videos - but a lack of artefacts in school makes borrowing necessary. Geography is under-resourced with too few books of good quality and insufficient quantities of maps, photographs and globes. Computers are not well installed, neither is their organisation and acquisition considered sufficiently well over time - including governors' strategic planning. There are barely enough of good quality to ensure classroom activities can be well backed up by classroom teaching. Music is very well resourced - there is a wide range of good quality which suitably includes instruments related to non-British cultures. Physical education equipment is of good quality and

range, as is religious education for which there is a good range of artefacts. Resources for special educational needs are adequate, but there are not enough good quality computer programs for linking pupils' needs in individual educational plans to appropriate resources - such as spelling. Resources for the under-fives are mostly adequate, and enhanced by a very well resourced outside area.

54. Since the previous inspection, scientific resources have been improved and are now adequate. There are more books of better quality and the expanding range of different texts has impacted well on the attainment of boys at Key Stage 2.

The efficiency of the school

55. Most resources, including accommodation, are well managed and suitably impact on teaching quality. On the whole, they have a good effect. Classroom assistants, although more than the average number of hours are provided, are in the main managed well and enhance pupils' learning. The exception to the rule is assistance produced for pupils with English as an additional language. Extra efficiency is created by site management which incorporates much day-to-day repair and saves costs related to outside contractors. The budget is well controlled, and finance - especially that related to special educational needs - is well managed and effective. Good use has been made of resources to improve the grounds.

56. Financial planning is somewhat lacking at the strategic level. The spending plans are considered annually, rather than on a long-term basis. This has a negative impact on such resources as those for information technology - the provision and management of which are unsatisfactory. Although financial control is good, there has been no auditors' report for nearly four years; this prevents the governors from access to detailed assurances that all is well. Resources for supporting pupils with English as an additional language are not properly matched to varying degrees of English acquisition.

57. Overall, educational developments are supported well with grants for specific purposes, such as literacy, used properly. However, weaknesses in strategic budget planning somewhat reduce efficiency. On the other hand - and in line with governors' clearly expressed intentions - most extra classroom support is effective, especially in assistance of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. The impact of good grounds and skilful lunchtime assistance is very positive. Financial control is good - apart from the lack of a recent auditors' report.

58. The factors which affect the school's overall performance vary - as set out below. Parents backgrounds vary, from a few families in social stress to many with adequate social conditions and some good. Attainment at entry is broadly average; attainments at the end of Key Stage 2 are somewhat better than expected; pupils' attitudes and behaviour are at least good and often better; teaching quality is at least sound and sometimes better at Key Stage 1, and often good or very good at Key Stage 2 and for special educational needs. The school is improving; unit costs are quite high - but progress for most pupils is quite rapid by the end of Key Stage 2. Taking all the above into account, more than satisfactory value for money is given. The school is improving and rapidly approaching giving good value.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

Areas of learning for children under five

59. The Nursery class caters for children who are three to four years old. Children move into the Reception class at the beginning of the term in which they are five. There were five children under five in Reception at the time of the inspection and the equivalent of 26 full-time children in the Nursery - 52 attending either mornings or afternoons only. The hours of each Nursery session have been adjusted since the previous inspection so that both now last two-and-a-half hours. All children attend part time each day. They are taught by a class teacher who is assisted by a nursery nurse. A part-time assistant attends occasionally to support the two children for whom English is an additional language. At the time of the inspection, the nursery nurse post was newly covered by a temporary appointment owing to a recent maternity leave.

Language and literacy

60. The safe environments of the Nursery and Reception classes enable children to gain in confidence and make steady progress across the years to age five in this area of learning. By age five, nearly all have acquired the goals set out in Government guidance as Desirable Outcomes. In the Nursery, they converse easily with each other and with adults and build a suitable vocabulary. Some higher attaining children ask questions and make pertinent comments. These skills continue to improve in the Reception class. Early reading skills progress steadily. Children in the Nursery readily choose to 'read' a book and understand it reads from front to back and that pictures carry meaning. They enjoy quiet personal moments sharing a book with the nursery nurse or class teacher. These skills are developed rapidly in the Reception class and, through group reading, children soon pick out familiar words and read simple sentences. They discuss pictures, explain why things happen and suggest what they think might happen next. In the Nursery, children learn names and sounds of letters, and in small teaching groups pick them out in scripts. However, learning is regularly interrupted when the teacher's attention is diverted elsewhere. Sounds are acquired steadily, and structured extension activities further consolidate learning. In the Nursery, children enjoy writing and copying their names; by the time they are five, most write their own names using capital and small case letters. Children in the Nursery, for whom English is an additional language, make slow progress in their interactions with other children. Although they acquire vocabulary, there is no separate planning and no set learning objectives for them. Their English language acquisition is not properly assessed; there are no specially structured activities and no record of the acquisition of specific vocabulary.

Mathematics

61. Children make steady progress in mathematics in both the Nursery and Reception. By the time they are five, all are able to count to ten and most beyond this and match the Desirable Outcomes. In the Nursery, children familiarise themselves with numbers through rhymes, songs and counting games; however, they do not have enough opportunities to develop understanding of numbers beyond five in everyday situations. Displays are not used well to consolidate mathematical concepts; children do not have sufficient visual examples of shapes, capacity and measurement. Most children in the Reception class make rapid progress. They know simple shapes and use mathematical vocabulary, such as cylinder and sphere. They sequence objects and patterns and understand simple mathematical concepts.

Knowledge of the world

62.Children enter the Nursery with some knowledge of the world around them, but this improves only slowly. Although there are many opportunities provided for children to visit places of interest, such as the park or the animal centre, the knowledge they gain there is not sufficiently consolidated in classroom activities and teaching. For example, some children play with magnifying glasses, but do not use them for structured activities to examine leaves and fruits found on their walks. Similarly, magnets are left stuck together in boxes of toys and not examined properly to observe their unique properties. Visitors to school, such as the local policeman, suitably broaden children's knowledge, and in imaginative play, boys particularly enjoy enacting the work of firemen. However, there are not enough well-planned activities where children can build with a wide variety of sizes or shapes, and too often construction sets are left out for undirected play. In the Reception class, children make rapid gains in their understanding and are encouraged to investigate and question. By the age of five, nearly all attain the Desirable Outcomes. They record observations from their walks, identify leaves and magnify fruits to draw and paint. They build their own kitchen using large boxes, and use it for imaginative play; they choose suitable shapes and sizes and hold long discussions with adults on how to make switches, taps and movable containers for soap in the washer. All children learn to respect living creatures through their care of the two guinea pigs. They discuss animal habitats, referring particularly to the school hamster. Investigative skills are progressed well, and children are eager to impart information; for example, one child had made body organs in play dough - heart, kidneys, liver, intestines - and could correctly name them and place them in the body.

Physical development

63.Provision for physical education is good; physical skills are rapidly progressed. By age five, most children exceed the outcomes set out as 'Desirable'. Children improve hand/eye co-ordination and small motor skills through a variety of suitable activities. Through a wide range of well-planned indoor and outdoor activities they learn to stretch their bodies and to move with increasing dexterity and awareness of space and speed. Children in the Nursery benefit also from an excellent outdoor area where they use mobile toys, sand, a playhouse, and hidden paths and stepping stones through grass and shrubs.

Creative development

64.In both classes, children have opportunities to use their imaginations in their play. By age five, they have made steady progress and attained the Desirable Outcomes. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. They interact well in stories and rhymes, and enjoy singing both in the classroom and whole-school assemblies. In Nursery, they choose to play musical instruments, particularly enjoying those that bang or rattle. They listen to music on tapes and create their own dance routines. In art work, all have opportunities to paint in directed and free-choice work. They use colour freely, enjoying textures of thick and thin paint. They learn colours through painting rainbows.

Personal and social development

65.Progress is rapid and, by age five, most children have attained the goals set out as Desirable Outcomes. When children enter the Nursery, good relationships are quickly established between them, their families and their teachers. Similarly, parents are made to feel welcome. Some daily routines are introduced and, although they do not all respond immediately, most children begin to listen to instructions and to take turns at answering questions. In-group activities, opportunities are created for them to be independent. Most usually share equipment well, play co-operatively and behave sensibly. However, many children, particularly boys, do not quickly grasp the need to have regard for other children's work and they continually knock down others' constructions and scatter toys during imaginative play. Nor do they put equipment away when they have finished with it, rather they leave it scattered on the floor. In the Reception class, good work attitudes are quickly established and children respond to the stimulating environment created for them. The Reception teacher properly encourages them to listen attentively, to question, to improve their ideas and to make sensible, well-informed choices.

66.Although a happy environment is created, the organisation of the Nursery does not always ensure that assistants are used effectively or that group tasks are planned with specific learning objectives. When children self select activities, the boys more often choose constructional or rôle-play activities and rarely the follow-up activities related to number or literacy. In the Reception class, the teacher is well supported by a classroom assistant. Children who are 'rising five' work as a class with Reception and some Year 1 children

for 'lead lessons' and then consolidate work in small groups appropriate to their level of learning. Each teacher plans separately, but detailed records ensure that the Reception teacher is aware of prior learning. By the time they are five, baseline assessment tests for 1998 show that most of the children meet the Desirable Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. They do not all meet them fully in speaking and listening skills or in personal and social development. Children make satisfactory progress in the Nursery, with good progress in their physical development. Children who are 'rising five' make good and often very good progress in the Reception class.

English, mathematics, science, information technology and religious education

English

67. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 2 or above was 68 per cent in reading and 65 per cent in writing. These results are well below national averages. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 is also below national averages. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are improving and that a majority of pupils is on course to match expectations in 2000. At the end of Key Stage 2 in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above was 69 per cent. Work seen during the inspection indicated that, in the coming year, a majority of pupils will attain Level 4 and a small minority will exceed them. Overall, progress is steady over Key Stage 1, but it is erratic: some good progress is made in the early part of the key stage, but this is not maintained. Overall, progress in Key Stage 2 is steady. It is slow for some, particularly higher attainers, in Year 3 and Year 4, but quite rapid for many as it accelerates, and becomes good for most in Years 5 and 6. Over the years 1996 to 1998, the school has made progress similar to national trends and moved closer to the national averages. Between 1998 and 1999, the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 or better increased from 52 per cent to 69.

68. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards of speaking and listening meet expectations for the majority of pupils. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when speaking skills were found to be less well developed than listening skills. Most pupils listen carefully to stories and questions, and give sensible, articulate answers. Many concentrate hard when listening to tape recordings on headphones. When talking to classmates, most speak out with clear voices. They enjoy discussion of texts, particularly when humour is introduced, and often make pertinent comments and connections with previous work. This was evident in a Year 2 class where pupils enjoyed finding rhyming words and short phrases with alliterations. Most pupils talk freely to adults and often instigate short conversations. Higher attaining pupils, particularly those in the Reception class and Year 2, frequently use more complex sentence structure and select more interesting and imaginative words. Pupils who have special educational needs listen well and enjoy interaction with adults and peers, both in-group activities within the classroom and in individual withdrawal activities. However, pupils for whom English is an additional language insufficiently improve their acquisition of vocabulary or grammatical skills.

69. Throughout the key stage, many pupils do not have a sound knowledge of word strings, phonemes or spelling rules to relate their spoken vocabulary to their written work. Although deciphering techniques are discussed in text and word work, they are not sufficiently consolidated to allow pupils to use them automatically when attempting new words. Although all know their alphabet and are aware of the position of letters in it, they are not sufficiently independent to use dictionaries confidently to assist their spelling. Most pupils read at an appropriate level, but many have only a narrow range of decoding skills. They enjoy play scripts and attempt to change voices for the different characters. Most correctly indicate authors, illustrators, fly leaves and dedications; however, many are not familiar with the number of authors usually known by pupils of this age. Pupils do not consistently apply their knowledge and experiences to their written work. Although they enjoy literature and poetry, they do not sufficiently improve their creative writing. They are aware of simple punctuation, common and proper nouns and 'linking' words, but do not readily use these to enliven their own writing. Moreover, both writing and copied spellings are frequently careless. This is a deterioration

from the previous inspection when handwriting was found to be good.

70. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards in speaking and listening exceed expectations for a majority of pupils. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils listen attentively to questions and give thoughtful, well constructed answers. When discussing texts, they often volunteer relevant information, ideas and hypotheses. They speak clearly and distinctly in addressing an audience. They converse with adults in mature ways, adopting polite and respectful attitudes. This was particularly evident when Year 6 pupils interviewed elderly visitors in preparation for writing their biographies in history.

71. Throughout the key stage, although pupils' attentions are drawn to spelling rules and word strings, their work is not sufficiently well consolidated, and they do not automatically relate these to their written work. Careless mistakes are made regularly. In some year groups, these are corrected in re-drafted work, but this does not consistently happen over the key stage. All pupils read with reasonable fluency, and higher and average attaining pupils have a suitable bank of decoding skills to decipher unknown words. All enjoy reading play scripts and do so competently with enjoyment, confidence and excellent characterisation. At the end of the key stage, all are familiar with contents, indexes and glossaries and use dictionaries and thesauruses competently. They list favourite authors and compare and contrast the content and style of their books. As they progress through the key stage, pupils write for an increasingly wide range of audiences. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when there was a limited use of poetry or letter writing throughout. Most pupils enjoy writing poetry: simple versions, such as 'I will put in my box' lead to more detailed and very thoughtful work on the emotions. By Year 6, most of their poetry is not only well written but also very carefully presented. Imaginative writing is planned in a progressively more complex manner to develop story lines and use more mature sentence structures. However, throughout the key stage, pupils do not use a sufficiently wide range of well selected vocabulary in their written work, and too infrequently write freely and at length. Throughout, pupils practise handwriting; however, formation and size are rarely consolidated enough to increase skills rapidly. By contrast, at the end of the key stage, well-planned handwriting lessons perfect skills, and nearly all pupils acquire a mature and legible style. English skills are often used effectively across the curriculum, particularly in parts of Year 4 and in Years 5 and 6. This is especially evident in geography in the use of Tennyson's poetry in work on rivers. In design and technology, pupils' spoken skills enable them to evaluate their work well. Information technology is not yet an integral part of literacy, although some Year 6 pupils have the necessary skills. Work samples contained only limited examples of information technology.

72. Pupils enter the school with most achieving the expectations for their ages. In Reception and Year 1, progress is mostly good in all aspects, but slows over the rest of the key stage so that at the end, although many reach the expectations for their ages, very few exceed them. Progress is erratic in Years 3 and 4. In some lessons, it is only moderate whilst in others it is good. Progress accelerates in Year 5 and is rapid for many in Year 6. Increased progress is a direct result of good or very good teaching. Throughout the school, higher attainers sometimes do not make the progress expected of them because they are not presented with challenging tasks. Pupils with special educational needs make quite rapid progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make slow progress because they have limited support in the progressive acquisition of English, both in the spoken word and in use of grammar and vocabulary.

73. Almost all pupils are attentive and behave well. There are good relationships between all adults and pupils. Pupils often work co-operatively, sharing books and pooling ideas sensibly. However, few in the lower and middle part of the school take enough pride in the presentation of their work. In Year 5, attitudes are good; in Year 6, they are nearly always very good. Here, nearly all pupils are well motivated, take pride in their work, display excellent work attitudes and create a very good working atmosphere. They value each others' contributions in discussion and applaud spontaneously and appropriately.

74. In the three lessons observed in Key Stage 1, teaching was satisfactory. In the eight lessons seen in Key Stage 2, the teaching was always satisfactory, sometimes good or very good and on two occasions excellent. Overall, teaching quality is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The teaching in

withdrawal groups for pupils with special educational needs is always very good or excellent.

75.All teachers have positive relationships with pupils, but on occasions the pace of work is slow and expectations are too low. Some work is not well matched to prior attainment and lacks challenge and stimulation. In Years 5 and 6, where all teaching is good or better, most work has pace and rigour, and pupils often are appropriately challenged. Questions often probe and provoke thought. Most teaching builds on prior learning. Planning is good in Key Stage 1, and often very good in Key Stage 2. Well deployed and skilful classroom assistants often have a very positive effect on pupils' learning. They have trained alongside teachers, and this enables them to make very worthwhile contributions to literacy lessons. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented, and is having a positive effect across the curriculum. The standard of attainment of boys is being raised by the use of a broader range of non-fiction texts.

76.The management of English is generally sound. The co-ordinator monitors teaching to identify strengths but not weaknesses. Plans are in hand to deliver further training in reading and writing for information - Module 6 of the Literacy Strategy. National Curriculum tests are analysed to identify strengths and weakness; this has helped to raise standards. Additional Literacy Strategy material is being introduced to support lower attaining pupils in Years 3 and 4. Resources are satisfactory in range and quality and are supplemented by the visiting mobile library. Tapes are particularly well used to improve listening skills. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is unsatisfactory. There is no specific planning to ensure a progressive acquisition of English language skills and no detailed records of individuals' progress to identify what they have learned and what they need to do next. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have initial support only. One pupil in this key stage is incorrectly identified as having special educational needs.

77.Since the previous inspection, standards have improved in speaking and listening at Key Stage 2 and the proportions of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or better have increased. Handwriting standards have deteriorated at Key Stage 1.

Mathematics

78.National Curriculum test results show that in 1998, at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments were well above national averages; these results were well above the average for similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 2, the results of tests in 1998 indicated pupils' attainments were well below national averages; and below the average for similar schools. Both the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and achieving above it were below average. At the end of Key Stage 1, 1999 test results were lower than the previous year by a large margin. At Key Stage 1, the performance of boys was well below national averages in direct comparison to the girls' results which were well above the national averages.

79.Now, standards have improved; in Key Stage 2 in 1999 they are above national averages and have improved more rapidly than the average national rates. This represents good progress in pursuing the Key Issue in the subject action plan to improve standards in mathematics. There is a greater proportion of higher attainers in this year group, but other factors also made a significant impact. The school's participation in the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact. Also, provision for higher attainers has improved, enabling them to undertake additional and more advanced work. There was no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 2 in the 1998 national tests. Over years 1996 to 1998, there was improvement in attainment, similar to national trends.

80.In Key Stage 1, pupils are given a sound foundation on which to build their mathematical knowledge. Most recognise and order numbers to 20. They accurately match numbers to quantity and count confidently. They know the names of an appropriate range of two- and three-dimensional shapes; for example, in Reception class, pupils confidently identify conical and cubic shapes. By the end of the key stage, they confidently add and subtract numbers up to ten, and some understand the significance of the digits in numbers up to one hundred. Most pupils make up their own sums of money and some add amounts in written form. The majority is familiar with all four rules of number, knows some multiplication bonds and develops early ideas of division. Most pupils identify halves and quarters accurately, and shade in the appropriate fractional part of diagrams. Most recognise odd and even numbers, and improve appropriate measuring skills,

accurately measuring a metre; for example, in a lesson involving comparison in length, they identified objects in the classroom measuring 'more' or 'less' than one metre. Very many pupils tell the time to the nearest quarter, and know the names and months of the year, days and seasons. Pupils use tally marks occasionally when collecting data, and draw and read simple charts and graphs reasonably well.

81.Examination of pupils' work, and discussions with them, indicate levels of attainment above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of the key stage, pupils add, subtract, multiply and divide numbers with growing confidence, involving a range of numerical forms including fractions, percentages and decimals. They undertake long multiplication successfully and most know their multiplication tables. Many pupils demonstrate and clearly explain a range of strategies by which they calculate their answers, and work confidently with some numbers up to, and sometimes in excess of, a million. In work related to shape, most pupils confidently and accurately identify symmetrical shapes, including rotational and two-dimensional. They understand timetables involving the twenty-four hour clock, and give accurate readings in digital time. Pupils increase previous knowledge of faces, edges and vertices, to describe properties accurately, using correct mathematical language. Most have grasped some of the basic ideas of bearings and understand something about angles to 360 degrees. Many pupils are aware of the language associated with probability; for example, 'certain', 'possible' and 'expected outcomes'. Areas of shape are very often calculated accurately, including measurement of the perimeters of regular and irregular shapes. Less well grasped is the use of information technology to provide a source for databases to assist investigations or calculate products. In upper Key Stage 2, most pupils improve their skills well, and they look carefully at information given, investigating a range of mathematical situations. For example, most investigate shapes and their properties, and record their findings in simple tables. They are very proficient at recording and identifying number patterns and use the information gained to good effect. The use of regular homework has a positive impact on standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Levels of attainment in using and applying mathematics are good at the end of this key stage.

82.The approach to the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is effective; standards of numeracy are good, especially in upper Key Stage 2. Most pupils show confidence with their numbers; they regularly practise number bonds and tables. A significant feature is many pupils' facility to apply problem solving mathematics in different situations across a range of subjects. They are well aware of, for example, the methods of rounding numbers up and down relating to decimals. Year 6 pupils show a good understanding of mathematical language. However, there are shortcomings. Mental work in Year 2 sometimes does not build progressively on what pupils have already learned, and curricular planning lacks a systematic approach to the use of numeracy skills in lower Key Stage 2 and upper Key Stage 1.

83.With the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, there has been movement away from the regular use of workbooks to a more balanced approach which includes mental mathematics, group activities matched to prior attainment, and a wide use of appropriate resources. These changes have affected teachers' subject confidence in parts of upper Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, somewhat slowing progress. Currently, most pupils are making steady progress in lessons, but rates of progress are more rapid in upper Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. Here, in some lessons, lack of pace, rigour and subject confidence fails to challenge higher attaining pupils. However, most pupils with special educational needs make good progress; they benefit from good teaching and high quality support from classroom assistants. In most lessons, teachers provide work which is matched to these pupils' levels of prior attainment, but relate it well to that undertaken by the rest of the class.

84.Pupils' responses are good and occasionally very good; this has a positive impact on their learning. Most pupils are keen learners and willing to answer questions during mental mathematical sessions and listen carefully to their teachers. Nearly all work well in groups, as with some good collaborative work observed during the inspection when, for example, pupils shared and compared their methods of solving mathematical problems. Most pupils exchange ideas with each other to good effect, staying on task during these periods

and during independent work sessions. Behaviour is very good for nearly all and most pupils show good levels of motivation and confidence.

85. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and often good at Key Stage 2, with some very good teaching observed in both key stages. In better lessons, teaching makes high expectations clear at the outset of lessons, and makes clear what pupils are to learn. This has a very positive impact on pupils' understanding and standards achieved. In addition, good teaching shows a clear understanding of mathematics, facilitates clear explanations and provides challenges for higher attaining pupils when questions are probing. Most planning is good, and nearly all lessons follow the recommended structure of the National Numeracy Strategy well. Teaching methods and organisation are mostly sound in Key Stage 1, often good in Key Stage 2, and sometimes very good in upper Key Stage 2. Most teaching devises work at an appropriate level for different groups of pupils, although work is often not sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining pupils in Year 2. In nearly all teaching, relationships with pupils are very good; their effective management enables them to maintain very good levels of behaviour. Most lessons proceed at a quick pace and the interest of pupils is sustained well. Use of day-to-day assessment is satisfactory; however, the useful marking of pupils' work by providing targets to improve standards is inconsistently employed. The use of information technology to support work in mathematics is unsatisfactory - not enough is done, particularly in setting investigations and modelling number patterns, or making programs to generate complicated shapes.

86. Leadership of the subject is good. The subject co-ordinator monitors both National Curriculum test results, and any assessment information currently available, to identify priorities for improvement. Well-defined curricular targets have been set for both key stages. Medium-term planning is monitored against pupils' work to determine levels of subject coverage in respective attainment targets. There are very many procedures for assessment of standards, but the school has not refined ways to use assessment data to ensure teachers' lesson planning results in activities which are matched consistently to individuals' levels of prior attainment. The mathematical curriculum is broad and balanced, fully meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources are of good quality, well stored and clearly labelled. The subject leader has completed an audit of resources to ensure that there are sufficient to implement successfully the National Numeracy Strategy. These resources are well organised and confidently used by pupils.

87. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved at Key Stage 2; the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or better has increased from 43 per cent in 1998 to 73 per cent in 1999.

Science

88. Teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that, in 1999, pupils' attainments were below national averages. At Key Stage 2, attainments were above national averages in National Curriculum tests. Currently, pupils' work is somewhat lower than National Curriculum assessments at Key Stage 1, with barely a majority on course to attain the expectations and very few to exceed them. At Key Stage 2, work is similar to results in that most pupils' attainments meet and some exceed national expectations: most are on course to meet or exceed expectations at the end of the key stage. Compared with similar schools, results are better than average.

89. Work and classroom observations show that, by the end of Key Stage 1, barely a majority will match and few, if any, will exceed national expectations. Following a suitable foundation in the Reception Year, where work suitably reflects Level 1 requirements, most pupils acquire some basic grasp of forces, animals and their characteristics. In Year 1, although most pupils know something of light sources and of sounds, the work is often more characteristic of working towards Level 1 and very little of Level 2 to entice higher attainers. In Year 2, most pupils know some differences between healthy and unhealthy foods, and have some knowledge of electricity; however, their work is more characteristic of Level 1 and little is at Levels 2 or 3. Most pupils do not set out what they know adequately, do not use a sufficiently wide scientific vocabulary and written and diagrammatic work is weak. Consequently, little of scientific value is recorded to remind pupils adequately of what they have learned when they record their work.

90. Most pupils' work is on course to attain or exceed expectations by the end of Key Stage 2. In Year 3, they know something of different substances and their properties by testing materials, although work is mainly at Level 2 rather than some being suitable preparation for Level 3. Many give suitable reasons about fair tests, but do not explain their findings adequately. In Year 4, some are able to give suitable reasons about why tests are fair and understand why some materials are insulators. They record some results well in tables to show what happens. However, many rarely put forward their own ideas or make simple predictions, and rarely draw suitable conclusions from their observations; for example, to explain why some materials act in particular ways. They, in common with some Year 3 pupils, do not use enough scientific vocabulary. In Year 5, most know something of different substances and are able to carry out investigations based on previous knowledge and understanding; for example, in attempting to separate soluble and insoluble substances. Most know something of changes in state between solids, liquids and gases. Work is mostly within Levels 4 and 5. In Year 6, most have a more than adequate grasp of solutions and mixtures between solids and liquids. They have more than adequate grasp of forces such as gravitational pull and friction, and are able to make predictions based on what they already know. However, most do not give sufficiently detailed explanations for what occurs and do not say if what happened is what they expected and why. Their predictions are not adequately detailed as being based on scientific understanding.

91. Most pupils make steady progress across the school as a whole - but progress for higher attainers is slower than expected at Key Stage 1. Progress in Year 2 is not sufficiently rapid from September to the time of inspection - not enough work is planned and taught, and does not become more suitably detailed as the key stage progresses. Progress for most pupils in Reception Year is quite rapid, good amounts of work are covered and higher attainers are often well challenged. At Key Stage 2, progress for all groups in Year 3 is steady, but somewhat slower than to be expected for pupils of higher attainment. Most make quite rapid progress in Year 4 in acquiring scientific knowledge, but less rapid progress in investigations. In parts of Year 4 and especially in Years 5 and 6, rapid progress is made for all pupils - including higher attainers. Across the years 1996 to 1999, the school has on average maintained standards at Key Stage 1 and improved them at Key Stage 2.

92. Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and many behave very well. They successfully try to pay attention and most often conversation is centred on the tasks to hand. Occasionally, there is restlessness when the teaching fails to provide enough to do, or the pace of learning slows when pupils lack attention to assist them in their work. By contrast, when the teaching is deeply interesting, they are able to discuss things well and compare and contrast ideas to solve the interesting problems they have been set.

93. No unsatisfactory teaching took place during the inspection. Some teaching is very good. Seven lessons were observed. At Key Stage 1, in two lessons teaching was of good quality and in one it was satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, in two lessons teaching was of very good quality, in one it was good and in another satisfactory.

94. The very good teaching is characterised by: good quality planning and preparation; work which is graded by difficulty and set at different levels for each main group; a very good understanding of the Programme of Study; excellent behaviour management with consistently high and fair expectations for all pupils; well-assessed prior knowledge of the pupils; and lessons well structured so that each part builds successfully on the previous section. In addition, the lessons are taught as part of a series studying the same theme. An example was when a Year 5/6 group studied the problem of being marooned on a desert island without fresh water. Each group was given a different mixture of water and materials which they had to separate to provide fresh water to survive. Progress was swift because the teaching, coupled with the group activities, provided many opportunities for the pupils to revise their learning, draw on what they had learned and apply this to see if it was indeed the case.

95. In the satisfactory teaching, all pupils gain from the teaching to some extent but it does not regularly enough offer challenges to higher attainers. Furthermore, questioning does not encourage pupils to give simple scientific explanations about what occurs, or sufficiently revise the proper scientific vocabulary; for example, 'conduct' rather than travel when applied to electrical circuits. Other teaching is weakened by introducing group work with insufficient prior instruction. This reduces the pace of learning when groups await their turn to receive further instruction in order to proceed. In particular, higher attainers do not receive

sufficient challenges when this occurs.

96. Most teaching is well planned and suitably draws on the scheme of work to devise lesson plans - often in a series - to develop understanding of a theme such as 'forces' or 'electricity'. This gives good continuity and progression, especially at Key Stage 2. All teaching controls pupils reasonably well and some very well. Most teaching shows reasonable expectations and a little shows so good an understanding of the science scheme that it makes suitably high demands of the pupils. Most lessons are well organised and time is used well; there is a good balance struck between direct instruction, questioning and pupils' activities. Often, a suitable plenary properly revises the work. During inspection, a particular strength was that many activities were well matched to pupils' prior attainments which enabled them to apply previous knowledge rather than be lost in puzzling what to do. Most teaching draws on reasonable understanding of pupils' attainments to conduct future work. However, in Year 2, the Programme of Study is not sufficiently drawn from Level 3 to extend higher attainers. At the moment, there is little evidence of much homework related to science, but there is a new policy in place.

97. Science is well managed; there are many strengths and a few weaknesses. A good lead is provided, the scheme produced by the Government's agency is used well as a basis for planning work, and plans are monitored regularly by the subject leader. Work is looked at on a regular basis, but not levelled by comparing it to National Curriculum levels; assessments are planned to take place at the end of each 'block' of work. There is a simple but clear policy, but it is less clear about assessment than the practice advocated and followed by most. The policy is backed up by a section within the school development plan which sets out suitable tasks to continue to seek improvement. Over the last two years, there has been only a little in-service training related to science teaching, although the subject leader offers advice and guidance when teachers' plans are monitored. The subject leader does not support teachers' statutory assessment of science at the end of Key Stage 1. The observation of teaching shows there is a need to do so, because teachers are unsure of the appropriate levels at which science should be taught. Teaching quality is sometimes monitored by the headteacher, and some science teaching has been included with feedback to individuals as appropriate - not all teachers have been included in observation of science and some would benefit from further advice and guidance. Future plans for science include time for partnership teaching to be provided with the co-ordinator and some class teachers.

98. Science resources are adequate. The subject leader provides boxes of suitable equipment to each class to match the block of work under study, and there is a basic pack of equipment - such as jars and magnifiers - permanently in each class. The range is reasonable, but the quantities of some equipment are small. There are too few charts and illustrations of such things as life cycles and body systems, or large pictures to show micro-organisms. There is a newly-purchased CD-ROM. There are shortages of sensitive measuring equipment for detailed investigations of electrical current and changes in weight at Level 5. The previous inspection criticised science resources as being unsatisfactory. They have now been supplemented and are adequate.

99. At the previous inspection, investigational and experimental science was a weakness; this aspect is now at least satisfactory and sometimes better, so there is clear evidence of improvement taking place. Work is more often matched to prior attainment and planning is much stronger regarding continuity.

Information technology

100. At end of Key Stage 1, standards are well below national expectations and below them at the end of Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1, most know what keys can do, but cannot always find them on the board. Pupils are hesitant and slow to acquire the necessary skills. Most are aware of such terms as menus, draw, fill and colour, and use space bar, cursor and icon box reasonably well. Most have little knowledge of application of information technology in everyday life. Some have heard of the Internet but have little knowledge of its significance.

101. In Key Stage 2, most pupils continue with and improve these skills but add few more. Most can use keyboard functions - mouse, select, delete, print, save and retrieve - without adult supervision. Some use the

word processor to write extended prose or poetry and save and retrieve it. They change fonts, correct mistakes and modify their work as keyboard and word-processing skills improve as they move through the key stage. Most use the 'E-mates' to draw, enlarge or pick out details with some competence. Many are able to use the various graphic art packages quite effectively to illustrate poems and other extended writing or to produce abstract designs with pleasing colour combinations. There is little evidence of pupils' facilities to use information technology to explore and solve problems in a variety of subjects. There is little knowledge of control as used in, for example, roamer turtle toys or vehicles. No evidence is to be found of knowledge of how computers can assist in exploring possibilities and working out 'What would happen if...?' type of questions; nor is there knowledge of using computers to recognise patterns in, for example, mathematical sequences or to predict outcomes. Pupils have little grasp of using computers to draw complicated shapes from a set of instructions programmed in, or of how external events, such as changes in temperature, can be measured and graphed using information technology.

102. Progress at both key stages is slow for most and steady for a few. It is very occasionally rapid for those who have access to computers at home. Pupils at both key stages, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in developing basic word processing skills. Progress in controlling, monitoring and modelling is slow because of limited opportunities to experience these aspects. Higher attaining pupils make slower than expected progress as they have limited opportunities to use information technology in class, particularly in science and mathematics, although there are some opportunities in art, geography and English.

103. Most pupils at both key stages enjoy using computers and are happy to work in pairs or groups sharing equipment. They are articulate in discussion of their work, but are not always completely clear as to what they are doing, and many lose interest because of lack of dexterity. Most answer questions enthusiastically and are polite and well behaved. They treat the equipment with due care and respect. The more knowledgeable are very willing to help those who are less competent than themselves.

104. In the two lessons observed, teaching in one was sound and in the other good. Only these two were observed and judgements are formed from these, scrutiny of work, and discussions with pupils and the information technology co-ordinator. In Key Stage 1, good use is made of competition to increase pace and concentration. Links to English word level work are well used as revision opportunities. However, the high level of under confidence in the staff and lack of well-grounded subject knowledge impede the potential for progress; additionally, not enough teaching takes place. At both key stages, opportunities are not fully exploited to explain information technology in everyday life or to use it to enhance knowledge and understanding in other subjects - a particular example is in mathematics for sequencing number patterns and predicting outcomes. Planning is mostly sound, but sometimes no reference is made to pupils' checklists or assessments. All teachers form positive relationships with the pupils and appropriate encouragement and guidance are given. Sometimes, there is a loss of pace during lessons; for example, when pupils have to wait before being allowed to go to the computer suite. Little capital is made of the fact that some pupils have prior knowledge because of their access to computers at home. Records of achievement are kept in the form of checklists, but they are not effectively incorporated into future planning and insufficiently define the levels attained. Information technology is not taught often enough to identify its curricular study and to ensure sound progress.

105. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. It lacks breadth and depth. Some teaching relates to the communication and handling of information, but any related to control or modelling techniques is rare. There are too few cross-curricular links to other subjects, such as mathematics and science, but good use is made of information technology in art, some in English and occasionally in geography. Too little use is made of information technology to support those with special educational needs. There is as yet no policy for assessment and it plays little part in informing future planning.

106. Leadership of the subject is sound. Considerable effort has been made to improve provision. Advice has been sought from outside agencies and knowledgeable volunteers, and this has helped. However, there has been insufficient in-service training to raise the level of competence and confidence of the staff to cover the whole of the curricular requirements. There is as yet no policy for assessment, so this plays no part in informing future planning. The school development plan clearly identifies information technology as a priority, but it is anticipated that nationally expected standards will not be reached for Key Stage 2 until 2003;

this means that in the interim some pupils will be deprived of full access to the curriculum to which they are entitled.

107.Many of the staff lack the competence and confidence to deliver the curriculum in its entirety, but some of the classroom assistants have reasonable knowledge and then they give effective support to some pupils. There has been insufficient staff development in the form of in-service training. There is inadequate space in the area set aside for the computer suite to allow it to be used in whole-class teaching; this limits its impact and complicates organisation. The 'E-mates' are useful in that they can be transported into classrooms with ease, are of a suitable size for pupils to handle and increase the access for whole-class use. However, these too are not as reliable as is desirable and so cause frustration in many users. There are computers in each classroom, but these are rarely used except in early years. There are some programmable toy roamers, but no evidence of their use or planned work with them. The recent acquisition of new computers has improved the previously impoverished resources, but the new machines are proving unreliable and are not properly linked with each other. Inevitably, this limits their effective use.

108.The previous inspection found that provision for information technology was unsatisfactory. Much has improved since then, but there is still some way to go. There is now a scheme of work based on the Government curricular agency's guidelines. There has been considerable improvement of resources with the setting up of the computer suite. However, computers are still not used frequently enough, and there is too little cross-curricular development. Assessment procedures are lacking and, although teaching competency has improved, it is still not impacting well on information technology in its own right or across the curriculum. National Curriculum requirements are still not being met.

Religious education

109.At Key Stage 1, most pupils' attainments are slightly above the standards set out in the Agreed Syllabus, relative to pupils' ages. At Key Stage 2, the majority exceeds the standards expected.

110.At Key Stage 1, most pupils know the salient points of some Bible stories, such as, the 'Good Samaritan' and Jesus choosing his disciples. They know the names of many disciples and are aware of the significance of the choice of Matthew. They have some grasp of other religious festivals such as Divali, are suitably aware of self vis-à-vis others, express feelings and make simple moral judgements as to whether actions and behaviour are, for example, wicked, good or greedy. At Key Stage 2, most pupils write with sensitivity and show awareness of feelings and emotions, both their own and those of others. They express these through prose, poetry, drama, art and music. Most have some knowledge of features of other religions such as, in Judaism, the Menorah and the Wailing Wall. Most have some knowledge of Hindu Gods, for example, Rama, Sita and Ganesha, and the stories connected with them. In Buddhism, they understand the belief of care for all living things and the ideas of creation, and formulate some basic ideas of their own beliefs using appropriate language.

111.At both key stages, there is evidence of: spiritual development in the appreciation of the world and the beauty and interest therein; strong moral development in concepts of right and wrong; social development in caring for and having tolerant attitudes towards each other; cultural development in the study of the British cultural heritage of Christianity, and the understanding of the impact of religion on cultures throughout the world. Some pupils at Key Stage 2 use research and enquiry to further their knowledge and understanding.

112.Progress at both key stages is steady for all, good for many and very good for a few. At both key stages, higher attainers make good progress. Some make very good progress at Key Stage 2, and show a good grasp in their understanding and application of moral concepts and sensitivity to feelings in themselves and others. Average and lower attainers make steady progress, and a sizeable minority make good progress in knowledge of personal beliefs and the facility to express themselves in words, art and music. As they proceed through school, most improve their facility to show empathy with the feelings of others, gain confidence in expressing themselves in a variety of media, and build on their knowledge and understanding of Bible stories and those from other religions. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially where they use non-verbal means of communication of religious education themes in art and music.

113. Most pupils show an enthusiasm for the subject and respond well in class. Scrutiny of work indicates that most take pride in presentation. Nearly all collaborate well in classwork, carry the principles they learn in religious education of caring for others into their general behaviour, and talk willingly about their own beliefs and discuss those of others. They show respect for one another's opinions in class and form good relationships with their peers and adults in school.

114. All teaching observed was at least sound and 80 per cent good or better; subject knowledge is strong in most, but occasionally insecure in a little. Many staff have good knowledge, generate considerable enthusiasm for the subject, and encourage deeper insight by challenging pupils to think 'Why?' and 'How?', instead of simply imparting factual knowledge. There are very well established cross-curricular links with art, music, history, geography and English. The subject is approached from a variety of angles making it more accessible to all, regardless of prior attainment. Some good support is given to pupils with special educational needs when extra help is available from class assistants. Planning in the long term is very detailed year on year and medium- and short-term plans are good. Records of pupils' progress are regularly updated. There is informal assessment within classes, and annual overall assessment is undertaken, but this is not consistently used to inform future planning. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects are well covered. Assemblies and class teaching are closely linked to enhance the principles taught with stories, readings and prayers carefully chosen to augment classwork and the ethos of the school. Assemblies fully meet statutory requirements.

115. The school follows the Essex Agreed Syllabus and also incorporates a syllabus designed for the early years which provides appropriate approaches for that age group. There is additional material used which has been drawn up by an external adviser to assist those whose subject knowledge is less secure. The school also benefits from the range of commercially published material which covers the study of other religions more helpfully than was the case in the past. The festivals and main principles of other religions are given proper attention to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world. Strong cross-curricular links with English, art, music, history and geography greatly strengthen provision. Planning for continuity and progress is good. Equal access is provided for nearly all pupils, and those with special educational needs are often given appropriate support. Spiritual development is greatly enriched in religious education through discovering: a sense of awe and wonder in the natural and man-made world; the greater universe; how to express feelings effectively in words, pictures and music. This properly enables those for whom the written word is difficult to describe abstract concepts like love, depression and anger in colour, texture and tone. Moral development is appropriately encouraged through reading Bible stories and other texts, both religious and secular, and the discussion of how behaviour affects others within groups and in the wider community. Social development successfully arises from the ethos of caring for each other which the school maintains. Pupils are made aware of how other people relate through shared religious beliefs, or how relationships fall apart as a consequence of intolerance. The idea that nations can unite in peaceful co-operation is emphasised successfully; for example, in reading the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Cultural development is suitably enhanced through: the teaching of how British Christian-based culture has changed and developed over the centuries; how it affects painting, music and church architecture; and by studying the cultures of other faiths and racial groups to identify similarities and differences which underlie them.

116. The subject is well managed. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and schemes updated as required. Thus, staff members grasp the necessary information in religious education and this has a positive impact on quality of teaching. Informal support is given and advice made available to staff with regard to provision. However, there is little formal monitoring of teaching quality. Suitably, records in the form of 'tick' sheets are kept regularly, and an annual audit of work is undertaken by the co-ordinator to assess the effectiveness of subject coverage and the standards achieved. There has been no recent in-service training, but an external advisor has helpfully supported the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus. Resources are broad in range, with a variety of texts and artefacts connected with the main world religions. The acquisition of a variety of versions of the Bible is currently under review to enable pupils to have access to texts of an appropriate level, relative to age. There is sufficient funding for the subject; resources have been updated and increased appropriately over the last few years. Resources - texts and artefacts - are well used to enhance knowledge and understanding. The support staff is sensibly deployed and gives good assistance where needed. Successful achievement of the school's aims is very much evident with religious education. Particularly, those

aims relate to: treating pupils as individuals; caring for others; developing sensitivity; providing a range of cultural experiences; and encouraging self expression. All of these impact well on the creation of a positive ethos. The links between assemblies and classwork are strong and become interwoven in the daily practice. Statutory requirements are fully met.

117. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, particularly, by encouraging pupils to question 'Why?'. Resources are now well used and a great deal of detail has been added to the scheme of work. The link between assemblies and class teaching continues to be a strength.

Other subjects or courses

Art

118. Very little art teaching was observed because of the timetable construction and inspection priorities. Judgements are based on: scrutiny of work both in class and displayed around the school; pupils' personal portfolios and sketchbooks; and discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinator. At Key Stage 1, most pupils' work meets nationally expected standards relative to age and many exceed these. At Key Stage 2, most exceed nationally expected standards.

119. At Key Stage 1, most pupils first of all learn to observe personal characteristics in those around them and extend this to observation of natural and man-made forms. Good use is made of colour and most work in a variety of materials in both two and three dimensions. There are suitably individual representations of 'Incy Wincy Spider' in Reception and Year 1 and recognisable self portraits in Years 1 and 2. Most pupils are able to illustrate their written work appropriately, and there is awareness of the proportions of the human body from quite early in the key stage.

120. As pupils move up through the school, skills and techniques become more apparent. There is some very imaginative work resulting from studies of artists like Van Gogh and Monet. Picasso's fragmented images are well captured using colour and shape to evoke the style of the artist without being copies. There is also a large number of pieces of work which arises from cross-curricular links with music. Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake', Handel's 'Music for the Royal Fireworks' and Saint-Saens 'Carnival of the Animals', among many others, inspire vibrant and lively figurative and abstract representations. There are also some well executed and imaginative paintings - the result of pupils listening to the modern music of Ben Eno and its free interpretation. Most pupils use their sketchbooks well to experiment with colour shades related to different artists, and to try out different approaches to the same subject; for example, in work on observation of a rock, and in use of different materials to portray textures and shapes. Natural and man-made forms are well observed in many pencil drawings of flowers and musical instruments. Pupils absorb something of the flavour of art from other countries: there are some highly successful pieces based on the designs on a door in Yoruba, Nigeria. Many pupils at both key stages use graphic art packages on the computer and 'E-mates' to produce lively and colourful designs.

121. Most pupils, in all groups, make at least steady progress at both key stages, and many make good or very good advances in techniques and interpretation, which become very sophisticated by Years 5 and 6.

122. All work on display indicates that pupils greatly enjoy art, try very hard to improve their skills and take great pride in what they do. They are very willing to discuss the themes of their work and some evaluate it well, and also that of others. Nearly all pupils behave well in class and show that their knowledge of other artists is not forgotten once a particular study is over - many show deep interest in recalling past studies.

123. Two lessons were observed, but it was only possible to assess the quality of teaching in one because of shortage of time and lack of evidence in the other. In the one full lesson assessed, the teaching was very good, enhanced by good subject knowledge and an enthusiastic approach. The expertise of many staff adds depth to teaching the subject. From the scrutiny of teachers' planning it is clear that this is good and closely linked across the curriculum with music, history, geography, English, design and technology and religious education. Extra value and significance is added by the imaginative displays of pupils' work in classrooms and public

areas. The visit to Henry Moore's house and the study of Nigerian art have both proved very fruitful sources of inspiration for teachers and pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class and often produce work above the quality of their writing and oral skills.

124. The leadership of the subject has some strengths and some weaknesses. Assessment takes place informally in each class, and a comment is added to pupils' individual record sheets annually. However, there is no policy to direct assessment to inform future planning. Suitably, there are weekly meetings within key stages where staff members confer and are given guidance, if required, on how to facilitate pupils' exploration of techniques and experimentation with materials to raise the quality of work. There has been some useful in-service training which has added depth to the existing knowledge of some, and helped those who lack confidence to cover the Programmes of Study. Resources, which suitably are reviewed every year, are of good quality and are used well. They include a kiln, which properly provides every child with the opportunity to have a piece of pottery 'fired' at least once every year.

125. Since the previous inspection, some of the criticisms have been effectively used to assist improvement. The provision is now greatly improved and art is a considerable strength. Standards are now good, art has its own significance in the timetable and there are many varied opportunities for imaginative and creative work linked to the culture of this country and those of others. Most teaching shows expectations are high and there is no over direction to inhibit pupils' originality. Indeed, the striking quality observable in the pupils' work is its originality coupled with good control of the materials. The scheme of work is based on the Government's curricular agency's guidelines. It is to be reviewed again this coming year.

Design and technology

126. Only three lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are made from evidence gained from scrutiny of work, displays and talking to pupils. Work shows that in Key Stage 1, standards are well above expectations for pupils' ages in Reception, and in line with expectations or better elsewhere. In Key Stage 2, standards meet expectations in Year 3 and parts of Year 4 and exceed expectations in Years 5 and 6. In the lessons observed, in both key stages, pupils' knowledge and understanding were above expected standards for their ages. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be below those expected.

127. Pupils in the Reception class build their own well-designed kitchen from large boxes and miscellaneous 'junk'. They clearly explain what they want to use, and why, and properly discuss ways of overcoming problems; for example, for the washing machine they devise switches which turn, compartments for washing powder which move in and out, and an outlet hose at the back. Frequently, they successfully solve such problems themselves, turning to the teacher for approval. They select appropriate fixatives and colours to assemble their furniture, and evaluate it during imaginative play. Other pupils suitably draw on their own ideas to make simple models where 'Incy Wincy Spider' moves up and down, and make individual models skilfully, using boxes and tubes. They select materials sensibly and their models are built securely and carefully. At the end of the key stage, pupils make good quality puppets which move with two sticks. In accordance with the Programmes of Study, they draw plans and then discuss what is easy and what is difficult when making their puppets. In Year 1, pupils make 'pop up' models of buildings they see on the way to school; they select materials and fixatives sensibly and understand the use of hinges to make flaps move. Higher attaining pupils devise flaps at other angles and begin to think of more complicated ideas. Much of the work in Key Stage 1 has a cross-curricular connections to such as science, geography or mathematics.

128. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Years 4 and 5 look at biscuits for celebrations. Some plan to make biscuits for Divali. They consider recipes with appropriate ingredients and flavours, and shape and relate their 'products' to appropriate packages. Most evaluate their ideas sensibly. In Year 5, pupils sample a variety of biscuits, record consistency, texture, shape, ingredients, taste and suitability for occasions such as the new millennium, Easter or Christmas. Properly, they plan to design suitable packages. In Year 6, pupils successfully use their knowledge of forces to make prototypes of toys which balance or move. They produce detailed plans, identify 'customers' and give appropriate reasons for their choices of materials. They evaluate their prototypes in very detailed ways - some add weights, some add more parts and some redesign.

129. In the two lessons seen, pupils behaved sensibly and worked hard. They concentrated on tasks and used materials carefully taking note of safety aspects. They supported each other positively and shared equipment without fuss. In Years 5 and 6 particularly, very good working atmospheres are created. There is much collaborative discussion on how work can be improved and pupils persevere well until all succeed.

130. The quality of teaching seen was good or very good. Teachers have positive attitudes and are well prepared with resources to hand. Directions are clear and learning objectives suitably emphasised. Pupils are directed to make choices, and given time to think for themselves to formulate ideas. Evaluation skills are progressively improved by probing questions.

131. The co-ordinator has a good overview of the subject and manages it well. She has introduced new recording sheets and schemes of work which ensure progression and continuity of skills. Although design and technology is often used to link with other subjects, proper attention is drawn to improving pupils' skills. Teachers' plans are monitored to ensure coverage of the Programmes of Study. From this, gaps have been identified; for example, a lack of working models. Resources are stored orderly in a central place; two mobile work trolleys are available when needed. The quantity, quality and range of resources are adequate to allow pupils access to the full range of technical experiences suitable for their ages.

Geography

132. Most pupils make steady progress at both key stages, but their sound knowledge, skills and understanding of geography are not always reflected properly in the amount of written work produced. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. Other evidence was gained from scrutiny of pupils' work and in talking to them. Overall, in both key stages, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment when given extra support.

133. Since the previous inspection, standards in the quality of learning have improved in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, pupils study their school locality and successfully build upon their work with directions and the use of plans and maps. Most identify different places in the locality using photographs. The lesson observed required pupils to locate a photograph of a well-known local landmark accurately on a map. Most pupils identify different places they pass on their daily journey to school. They use appropriate geographical terminology when referring to rivers, streams, villages and cities, and ask questions and communicate their findings clearly. A much-travelled bear returns postcards from different localities; this adds interest and increases pupils' knowledge of their own locality and places further afield. In Key Stage 2, progress is also steady for most pupils in all groups. Pupils in lower Key Stage 2 confidently locate Bangalore on a map with accuracy, and make telling comparisons between it and their own environment. Many are aware how different weather conditions can affect our lives. In upper Key Stage 2, most pupils locate accurately the position of their school, the river Stort and their homes on Ordnance Survey maps. Most use four-figure co-ordinates to locate given features with accuracy, and are aware of major travel routes from Harlow into London.

134. Nearly all pupils enjoy their work, and responses to learning are good. Most maintain high levels of class discussion when presented with interesting resources and well-planned educational visits. Most take pride in the presentation of their work, and record their findings of investigations and field trips clearly and accurately. They work well collaboratively, show initiative and enjoy working independently or in small groups. Behaviour of the vast majority is very good. Nearly all pupils use resources with care; the older ones show responsible approaches to their learning and are keen to succeed.

135. The quality of teaching in one of the lessons observed was good and in the other satisfactory. Most teachers' knowledge and understanding are sound. In the better lesson, the methods employed stimulated pupils' interest through first-hand evidence. Teachers' planning is good and learning objectives precise. This gives teaching a clear focus on what pupils are to learn within lessons, and activities are planned in appropriate sequences to build upon pupils' previous experiences and skills. The time taken to discuss learning at the end of lessons is sometimes too short to be fully effective. There is appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum. There are very good links with other subjects to support the development of pupils'

musical, numeracy and artistic skills. In Year 6, in a study of the local river, both literacy skills and interest are enhanced by the use of poems written by famous authors. However, the use of information technology skills is under-developed in the support of geographical understanding. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and very effective use is made of planned residential field trips in Norfolk.

136. The management of geography is sound, there are some strengths and some weaknesses. The geography curriculum is supported by a suitable policy and a scheme provided by the Government's curricular agency. Presently, there is too much emphasis placed on factual content of the curriculum at the expense of geographical skills which need to be acquired. Monitoring of standards in geography is unsatisfactory; work is not compared with national expectations or against examples to judge its quality. Detailed regular assessments are not used to target future learning priorities. Learning resources are adequate, well stored, clearly labelled and accessible. Very limited use is made of computer programs to provide additional learning materials. Since the previous inspection, standards have remained at similar levels.

History

137. At Key Stage 1, most pupils meet and a few exceed nationally expected standards relative to ages. At Key Stage 2, the majority at least meets, and most pupils exceed, nationally expected standards.

138. At Key Stage 1, most pupils are aware of their own personal timelines and extend these to cover parents and grandparents. They understand differences in life then and now, for example in toys, games and holidays, and are beginning to imagine how people in the past may have felt. They have some knowledge of famous people and their contributions to history, such as Louis Braille and Florence Nightingale.

139. At Key Stage 2, there is much to show that most pupils gain an empathetic understanding of life in the past and a grasp of chronology. They write about different periods of history, such as, the Romans and their confrontations with Boudicca with some understanding of the violence of the time, and also compare this with the Ancient Greeks and their war rituals. They detect changing patterns in architecture, clothing, weaponry, jewellery and medical knowledge, and some begin to grasp why these changes happened and how they impacted on the lives of ordinary people. This was seen in some very creative play writing which showed considerable insight into the treatment of witches and the attitudes to doctors and dentists in the sixteenth century. As they proceed through the key stage, many become aware of the idea of bias in documentation and how historical sources give distorted and differing views of events. Many pupils learn to make logical deductions from historical evidence; for example, in their study of the Anglo-Saxon settlement at West Stowe. By the end of the key stage, many pupils show that they can prepare for and conduct an investigation from first-hand evidence, record results, pose searching questions and draw sensible conclusions.

140. Progress at Key Stage 1 is steady for most and often good for high attainers and pupils with special educational needs. At Key Stage 2, almost all make at least steady and the majority makes good progress with occasionally very good progress evident in higher attainers. At Key Stage 1, most demonstrate a growing facility to show empathy with people in other times and have a greater grasp of the passage of time. In Key Stage 2, these skills improve, and a greater depth of understanding, development of deductive powers and the ability to carry out research become apparent in many. Pupils with special educational needs make at least steady progress and many make good progress when supported in class.

141. Most pupils enjoy lessons and are enthusiastic about the subject. Many take great pride in presentation, whether in art form, poetry, play scripts or rôle play. They work well in groups and co-operate in investigations. When local, older people come into the school to add their memories to the study of Britain in the 1940s, they are treated with great courtesy and respect by all pupils.

142. Four lessons were observed; one lesson was judged satisfactory, one good, one very good and one excellent. There is a wealth of good subject knowledge amongst the staff and this generates great enthusiasm in the pupils. Very good use is made of rôle play to add to the understanding of the past. Far from simply imparting factual information, teaching enables pupils to develop opinions, ask pertinent questions and come to understand 'Why?' and 'With what result?' There is a good breadth of approach through art, prose

writing, poetry, play scripts and examining evidence from primary and secondary sources. Very good use is made of site visits. Good cross-curricular links are evident with art, music, English, design and technology and geography. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well catered for in the teaching. Some effective use is made of sheets to record what pupils know, what they have learned and what they would like to know more about. These are completed after a topic has been studied in some classes - but this practice is not consistently applied. Records of pupils' progress are kept meticulously, but are not always used to inform future planning. Occasionally, some staff imagine a lack of confidence in their own teaching quality, but this is largely unfounded.

143.The management of history is sound. Planning is monitored informally through discussion but formal procedures are not in place. The scheme of work is based on that suggested by the Government's curricular agency in line with the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. There has been no recent in-service training. Support staff are used effectively and staff expertise is put to good use. Very good use is made of links with older people in the local community who are invited to come into the school as living history sources. There is an extensive range of text books of appropriate levels of difficulty, which are well used, but too few artefacts. However, these are sometimes supplemented by loan from the local school library service.

144.Since the previous inspection, the provision of history has improved. Many pupils now show the facilities to conduct enquiry and understand change, and their grasp of continuity has improved. The rates of progress have increased for most pupils as a result of implementing enquiry/research opportunities. The quality of teaching has improved with 50 per cent now very good or outstanding. However, there is still insufficient assessment of pupils' work to assure standards attained and the progress made.

Music

145.The previous inspection found standards satisfactory and generally in line with national expectations. There has been some improvement - now, throughout the school, standards in singing, listening and appraising exceed age-related expectations. Standards in composing meet expectations. The standard of singing for the school choir is very good. Over both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress in composing, good progress in singing and very good progress in listening and appraising the work of composers.

146.Pupils listen quietly to music as they enter assembly. They enjoy participating and sing well in unison from memory, paying suitable attention to diction, phrasing and rhythm. They sing in a bright tone keeping well in pitch. They pay proper attention to the mood of the hymns, adapting dynamics appropriately. The quality of singing and the obvious pleasure pupils have in it enhances the quality of assemblies and positively enhances spirituality. Suitably, throughout, pupils listen to the work of many composers. They illustrate their work in large murals, for example Tchaikovsky's 'Swan Lake' and Rimsky Korsikov's 'Scherezade'. They fully capture the magnificence of Stravinsky's 'Firebird' and the rich flamenco dancers of Bizet's 'Carmen'. They write synopses of each composer's life. Accurately, they relate instruments to music as in Saint-Saen where strings represent clucking, piano represents water and cello a swan. They follow well the order of instruments as they build up properly the story, as in 'Firebird', where strings are followed by wind instruments and then percussion.

147.In Key Stage 1, pupils listen to the music of Eno and then draw the pictures which come to mind. These are diverse, ranging from hot deserts to balloons drifting on the wind. When following taped lessons, pupils successfully pick out and repeat simple rhythms and compose patterns of their own for others to follow.

148.In Key Stage 2, Years 3 and 4 build a composition to depict arctic scenes. They use long, short and 'cold' sounds, and relate them to various instruments. They use voices effectively to create the sound of wind. At the end of the key stage, all pupils learn to play the recorder reasonably well. They pay particular attention to technique and know why this is important. They read music well and identify the value of crotchets, quavers and minims correctly and take proper notice of beats to a bar and repeats. They play in unison with clear, resonant tone. Music is often used in other curricular areas; for example, in art where pictures are inspired by Debussy's 'La Mer' or instruments are drawn in still life; in physical education it is used to stimulate movement, dance and country dancing; and in science it is used in work on sound. During

the lunch break, several small groups of unsupervised pupils were heard voluntarily rehearsing music for concerts in sensible and well ordered manners.

149. Pupils take part in many out-of-school activities. They sing in the Civic Centre and at aged people's homes. They take part in musical performances with the local comprehensive school and in their own school productions. Musicians visit, and pupils have sung on the local radio. Music is an integral part of the curriculum and pupils benefit greatly from this. Its use enhances the school ethos and culture. All pupils enjoy music, and the pleasure they take in singing is obvious. They listen to instructions carefully so that they are clear of what they are to do. They take care of instruments and share them appropriately. They take turns sensibly and do not interrupt whilst others perform.

150. In the three lessons seen, teaching quality was at least satisfactory and on one occasion very good. Teachers follow a published scheme; this gives them confidence to work at a brisk pace and holds pupils' attention and interest. In the very good lesson, teaching was very well prepared to build on previous learning. A brisk pace was maintained and most pupils made rapid progress. The teacher's good knowledge and love of music was evident and these, together with positive attitudes and very good relationships, greatly contributed to the attitude of the pupils and enhanced the quality of their work.

151. Music is well co-ordinated. A new policy is in place and a published scheme of work has been adopted. This ensures that all teachers have suitable support for lessons and continuity and progression of skills are assured. Assessment recording sheets are in place. Resources are of good quality and there is a suitable range of instruments from other countries.

Physical education

152. Overall, progress in physical education is good for the majority of pupils and most attain standards which are above levels expected for their ages. This is similar to judgements made at the time of the previous inspection.

153. In Key Stage 1, pupils are suitably confident on the large apparatus and move across benches in different ways, jumping off and landing correctly. They use space with growing confidence, as observed during a lesson in lower Key Stage 1 involving them moving in patterns to a poem. Pupils imitated a spider, displaying size and speed, balancing and rocking movements with good levels of control. At Key Stage 2, pupils acquire good levels of skill passing and controlling a football. They understand the skills required to dribble a ball with increasing hand/eye co-ordination. Pupils use a wide range of skills linked to different games. Most are knowledgeable about the rules of football and netball. In upper Key Stage 2, most pupils achieve good levels of expertise in country dancing. Here they co-ordinate sequence, time and movement very effectively with their respective partners. Pupils work very well in pairs and groups. There is firm evidence of the successes that the school sporting teams have in competitive sports; this positively enhances the standards attained in games. The residential visit to Norfolk further improves pupils' physical skills when undertaking a range of adventurous activities.

154. Most pupils enjoy lessons. Their attitudes are good and their responses have a positive impact on progress. Nearly all listen well to their teachers and interpret instructions carefully with due regard to their safety and the safety of others. They concentrate well and work together giving positive support and encouragement. During a game involving a professional instructor, as observed in a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils' behaviour was excellent. They displayed very good levels of fairness, abiding by the rules of the game. Most select equipment sensibly, and put it away in a careful manner.

155. The quality of teaching is good overall and occasionally it is very good, as observed during a Reception/Year 1 dance lesson and during an extra-curricular dance session. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers have a good level of subject confidence and expertise and provide clear, concise explanations and demonstrations to support these good standards. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, expectations of the quality of movements are not sufficiently high, the activities lack challenge and progression in the lesson and the use of apparatus is not sufficiently demanding of pupils' efforts. Most teachers manage their classes well

and lessons are well planned with suitable opportunities to warm up at the beginning and cool down at the end. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support, and make good progress against their prior attainment. All teachers are good rôle models for their pupils; for example, all change for physical education. Although teachers often inform pupils how to improve their performances, they do not give sufficient opportunities for them to analyse their own and each other's efforts. The tuition provided by the community football programme is of very high quality, and suitably enhances the high profile of the subject.

156. The management of the subject is good; there are more strengths than weaknesses. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and works enthusiastically to provide pupils with a range of physical education activities, including opportunities in extra-curricular provision in which she is ably assisted by other staff and parents. There is no record of the activities undertaken by pupils or the attainments achieved, and only limited monitoring of standards of physical education. Resources for the subject are good overall. There are good supplies of small games equipment appropriate to the needs of pupils. Spacious, well-marked, hard play surfaces of good quality enhance overall provision. The adjacent field, used for football activities, has a poor playing surface which makes the acquisition of ball skills and team work in games more difficult.

The inspection of the school included a focussed view of swimming which is reported below

157. A swimming programme operates throughout the year with an intensive swimming session for upper school non-swimmers during the summer term. Swimming records indicate that 98 per cent of the previous Year 6 attained the minimum standard of swimming 25 metres or more using a recognizable stroke.

158. During the inspection, 40 pupils from Years 3 and 4 attended the local leisure centre, a walking distance of one kilometre from the school. Pupils were very well supervised by the accompanying class teacher and adults during the fifteen-minute journey. Changing facilities are very good. Supervision and tuition from the poolside is satisfactory. Pupils, divided into four attainment groups, received tuition for 20 minutes. A group of ten confident swimmers demonstrated good confidence and improving stroke technique in the deep end of the main pool. Assessment of pupils' progress was undertaken by the class teacher observing a group of ten pupils at the shallow end of the main pool. Limited interaction took place between pupils and swimming instructors.

159. Pupils have a very positive attitude to swimming. They are enthusiastic and highly motivated. All pupils behave very well, listen attentively to instruction and work hard to develop confidence and stroke technique. At times, the behaviour of some pupils was exemplary.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

Summary of inspection evidence

160. Five inspectors spent the equivalent of 20 days in school. Seventy-five lessons, or parts of lessons were observed. Many observations lasted for over an hour; the average time was 45 minutes. Approximately 54 hours were spent in class observations. Some time was spent in observation of assemblies. All the work of 48 pupils of differing levels of attainment was scrutinised. Their work was assessed by comparing it with the guidance provided by the Government's curricular agency in National Curriculum exemplars, and then compared with the work of pupils in class. Work was also assessed for progress, quality of pupils' presentation and quality of teachers' marking. The reading attainments of a similar sample of pupils of a full range of attainment were compared carefully with National Curriculum levels. At the same time, pupils were assessed on their interest, knowledge of books and the ways in which they read and understood texts. In addition, many pupils had work scrutinised in class and some were heard to read from worksheets and textbooks. Pupils in Year 3/4 were accompanied to their swimming lesson and observed in the pool. A group of Year 6 pupils was engaged in structured discussions about their work in information technology, and many pupils were assessed in their oral competence in class. Most lunchtimes and playtimes were observed at least in part.

161. Discussions were held with the headteacher, chair of governors, other governors, most full-time teachers and the co-ordinator for special educational needs. The site manager, consortium manager and administrative assistant were engaged in informal discussions about their work, and lunchtime supervisors were observed at work. Classroom assistants were observed in their support rôles. A pre-inspection meeting for parents was held, and points raised by them were taken into account, as were their responses to the questionnaire sent out and returned prior to the inspection. Some parents were engaged in discussions about the school as they arrived and left after escorting their children. All documents provided prior to the inspection were read: these included policies, governors' minutes, curricular planning documents, the school development plan and the previous inspection report. Samples of pupils' class reports and records were examined, and all teachers' planning was scrutinised. All teachers who wished it were given a professional debriefing about their work as seen during the inspection week.

Data and indicators

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full- time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR - Y6	231	60	5	59
Nursery Unit/School	26	0	0	0

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (YR - Y6)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23

Education support staff (YR - Y6)

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked each week	166

Qualified teachers (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26

Education support staff (Nursery school, classes or unit)

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked each week	32

Primary and Nursery school

Average class size:	29
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FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	(forecast)	1999/2000
		£
Total income		543,154
Total expenditure		578,259
Expenditure per pupil		2,351
Balance brought forward from previous year		46,834
Balance carried forward to next year		11,729

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out: 231
 Number of questionnaires returned: 59

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	44	49	5	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	64	34	2	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	31	49	19	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	37	49	10	3	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	41	51	9	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	37	53	9	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	34	53	12	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	24	56	12	7	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	41	49	10	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	34	53	14	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	58	39	2	2	0

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents commented that they thought there was insufficient homework. There is a newly established policy in place - it began in September 1999. In the inspection team's judgement, there is sufficient planned for pupils of these ages.

Summary of responses

About a quarter of questionnaires sent out was returned; the sample is sufficiently large to be reasonably sure that the community's views are properly reflected.

ational expectations are those standards, laid out by Her Majesty's Government in the National Curriculum, which pupils are expected to achieve by a particular age.