

\_PRIVATE \_

Bishop Parker Catholic Combined School  
Bletchley  
Milton Keynes

LEA area : Milton Keynes

Unique Reference Number : 110481

Headteacher : Mr B. J. King

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Reporting inspector : Geof Timms  
21038

Dates of inspection : 11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707011

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school :	Combined
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	4 to 12
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	Barton Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3BT
Telephone number :	01908 372129
Appropriate authority :	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr J. Scott
Date of previous inspection :	22nd - 25th April 1996

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English  
French\_Attainment and progress  
Teaching  
Leadership and management  
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Attendance  
Support, guidance and pupils' welfare  
Partnership with parents and the community  
Equal opportunities\_\_Mike Duggan\_Art  
Physical education  
History\_Special educational needs  
\_\_Brian Fletcher\_Science  
Geography  
Music\_Staffing, accommodation and learning resources  
Efficiency\_\_Clifford Jones\_Mathematics  
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## MAIN FINDINGS

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils:	253	[broadly average]
Pupils with English as an additional language:	52%	[very high]
Pupils entitled to free school meals:	1.2%	[below average]
Pupils on register of special educational needs:	65	[above average]
Average class size:	31.6	

The attainment of pupils on entry to the Nursery is below that expected for pupils of their age, and also below average when compared with other schools in the local education authority. This is largely due to the fact that many of the children have English as an additional language. By the time they enter statutory schooling, their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations, although still affected by the language difficulties. The figure for free school meals is unrepresentative as the local authority do not provide school meals. An analysis of the catchment area and income support figures provides a more realistic view that up to 20% of parents are entitled to free meals.

### What the school does well

Attainment in English, mathematics and science is above average.

\_PRIVATE \_ The pupils have good attitudes towards learning and they make good progress.

The spiritual and moral development of pupils is good.

The quality of teaching is good overall with much that is very good.

The leadership and management is good and substantial improvements have been made since the last inspection.

The Nursery gives children a good start to their schooling.

The curriculum provided is good and the school has good systems for the assessment of pupils' progress.

The school gives good value for money\_\_ **Where the school has weaknesses**

\_PRIVATE \_ Pupils at Key Stage 2 do not do enough writing for a wide range of purposes.

They do not have enough opportunities for drama or for using research skills.

The middle school library is not sufficiently resourced.

Higher attaining pupils do not always receive challenging work, especially in mathematics.

Attainment in information technology is unsatisfactory.

Pupils are not given enough opportunities to take responsibility or to demonstrate initiative.\_\_

**Bishop Parker RC Combined School is a good school with many strengths which clearly outweigh any weaknesses. The governors, Headteacher and staff have worked hard to ensure improvements since the last inspection. They will produce an action plan to inform parents or guardians how the identified weaknesses will be addressed in the future.**

### How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made significant and sustained improvements since the last inspection. In particular the weaknesses found in the teaching and in the management of the school have been addressed and these aspects of the school's work are now good. Progress has been made in raising standards in English and science, although there is still too much variation between the attainment of different year groups especially at Key Stage 1. A lot of useful monitoring and evaluating of the teaching and the curriculum is now in place. The development planning has improved and now provides a good focus for the school's work. The provision for those pupils with English as an additional language has improved and these children now make good

progress. Assessments are used by teachers when planning work. Year 7 now learn a modern foreign language. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

### Standards in subjects

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

#### PRIVATE Performance in Compared with all schools Compared with similar schools Key

<i>well above average</i>	A			
<i>above average</i>	B			
<i>average</i>	C			
<i>below average</i>	D			
<i>well below average</i>	E	English	A	Mathematics
	C	Science	B	C

These results are based on pupils who have now left the school. The comparison with similar schools is based on an analysis of the catchment area most pupils are from. In 1998 standards in English at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average nationally. In mathematics they were average and in science above average. When compared to similar schools, English was still well above average and mathematics and science were in line with the average. Inspection findings are that present standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. Information technology standards are below average. The pupils make good progress in French and geography and satisfactory progress in all other subjects. The children in the nursery make good progress and reach a broadly average level of attainment on entry to the school.

### Quality of teaching

#### PRIVATE Teaching in: Under 5 5 - 7 years 7 - 12 years

English Good Satisfactory Good Mathematics Good Good Good Science Good Good Information technology Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Other subjects Good Good Good

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. In almost 60 per cent of lessons it is good and in 14 per cent of lessons the teaching is very good. The teaching of the Under Fives is good or very good in 87 per cent of lessons. At Key Stage 1 the teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 2 the teaching is satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons and good in over 40 per cent. At Key Stage 3 the teaching is good or very good in almost three-quarters of lessons. These percentages represent a much improved performance in all key stages in comparison with the previous inspection, when up to 40 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

*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

**\_PRIVATE \_\_Aspect \_Comment \_\_Behaviour**

\_The standard of children's behaviour is high. The majority of them are obedient, polite and friendly.  
\_\_Attendance

\_The attendance is satisfactory.\_\_Ethos\* \_There is a very positive ethos and the school is committed to raising standards.\_\_Leadership and management

\_ The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Governing Body demonstrate good leadership. The day-to-day administration and management of the school are very good.\_\_Curriculum\_The school provides pupils from Under Fives up to Key Stage 3 with an appropriate, broad and balanced curriculum. Only in information technology is the provision unsatisfactory. \_\_Pupils with special educational needs\_ The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The support they receive enables them to make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them.\_\_Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development \_The spiritual and moral development of the pupils is good. The social and cultural development is satisfactory.\_\_Staffing, resources and accommodation\_ The resources are satisfactory except in information technology, physical education and the middle school library. Staffing is satisfactory and accommodation is good although some classrooms are very cramped.\_\_Value for money\_The school provides good value for money.\_\_

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

**The parents' views of the school**

**\_PRIVATE \_\_What most parents like about the school\_What some parents are not happy about**

- The school enables children to achieve a good standard of work
- The children like going to school
- The school helps parents to understand what is taught
- Parents were happy at the attitudes and values the school teaches their children \_• The way the school handles complaints
- The school does not encourage children to get involved in more than their daily lessons.
- The school does not encourage parents to play an active part in the life of the school

—  
13 parents attended a meeting with the inspectors and 152 returned questionnaires about the work of the school. The inspection confirms the parents' positive opinions although the school could do more to help parents understand what is taught. Evidence gathered suggests that the school generally handles complaints well. Pupils can join a variety of sporting and musical extra curricular activities. Parents are encouraged to help children with homework and to help in school but this does not result in a very positive response.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to raise standards in the school the Headteacher, governors and staff need to:

**Key Issue 1:** improve attainment in English by:

providing more planned opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and a wider range of styles;

developing pupils' research and higher order reading skill at Key Stages 2 and 3;

improving resources in the Middle school library;

providing a wider range of opportunities for purposeful role play and drama.

(Discussed in paragraphs 51, 75, 76, 77, 80)

**Key Issue 2:** improve attainment in mathematics by improving the provision for the higher attainers.

(Discussed in paragraphs 17, 85, 86)

**Key Issue 3:** raise attainment in information technology by:

fully implementing the scheme of work;

improving resources;

providing further training for staff;

extending the use of information technology across the curriculum.

(Discussed in paragraphs 22, 24, 48, 51, 98-104)

**Key Issue 4:** provide more opportunities for pupils, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3, to exercise responsibility and use their initiative.

(Discussed in paragraph 12)

In addition to the above key issues, the governing body should consider making the following minor points part of their action plan:

provide further training for staff to develop their strategies for dealing with difficult pupils (discussed in paragraphs 15 and 33);

ensure that the current available funds are used to implement the school's priorities (discussed in paragraphs 51 and 54);

improve the resources for physical education, especially in gymnastics (discussed in paragraphs 51



and 143)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

Bishop Parker RC Combined School is situated in the Bletchley district of Milton Keynes. As it is a Catholic school, pupils come from a wider area than the immediate district. The majority of the pupils come from the Eaton Manor ward and the remainder from the south side of Milton Keynes. They come from a range of local authority and private housing.

The school was opened in 1975. At the time of the inspection there were 253 full time pupils on roll, with a further 70 children attending either the morning or afternoon session in the Nursery. This is broadly average for primary schools nationally.

Only three pupils are registered as being entitled to free school meals which is very low compared with the national average. However, the local education authority do not provide meals and this has an effect on the numbers who register. The school has fifty-three pupils who are recognised as having learning difficulties, one of whom has a statement of special educational need. 132 pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds, the majority of whom speak Italian as their home language.

There is a 39 place nursery class which takes children between the ages of three and four. Most of them transfer to two Catholic primary schools. Their attainment on entry to the Nursery is below average when compared with children of their age, largely because of the very high percentage who have English as an additional language. When they start in the reception class attainment is in line with that expected for children of their age. At the age of twelve the majority transfer to the local Catholic secondary school.

The school's mission statement contains four sections emphasising the Catholic nature of the school, the partnership with parents and the community, encouraging respect for each other and inspiring a joy for learning and achievement in the pupils. In addition, there is a detailed set of published aims which are intended to help each child reach a high level of achievement academically and socially.

The school's current priorities are :

- to continue to develop the literacy strategy;
- to support the introduction of the numeracy strategy;
- to support the development of information technology;
- to devise support material for the science scheme;
- to develop further the provision for art, design and technology and religious education.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 1

**PRIVATE** Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1\_Year\_Boys\_Girls\_Total\_for latest reporting year: 1998\_17\_19\_36

**PRIVATE** National Curriculum Test Results\_Reading\_Writing\_Mathematics\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_11\_11\_10\_at NC Level 2 or\_Girls\_16\_18\_15\_above\_Total\_27\_29\_25\_Percentage at NC\_School\_77\_83\_71\_Level 2 or above\_National\_80\_81\_84

**PRIVATE** Teacher Assessments\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_11\_9\_11\_at NC Level 2 or\_Girls\_17\_17\_17\_above\_Total\_28\_26\_28\_Percentage at NC\_School\_80\_74\_80\_Level 2 or above\_National\_81\_85\_86

### Quality of teaching

**PRIVATE** Percentage of teaching observed which is :\_%\_Very good or better\_14%\_Satisfactory or better\_97%\_Less than satisfactory\_3%

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

### Attainment at Key Stage 2-

**PRIVATE** Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2\_Year\_Boys\_Girls\_Total\_for latest reporting year: 1998\_12\_18\_30\_\_

**PRIVATE** National Curriculum Test Results\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_9\_8\_10\_\_at NC Level 4 or\_Girls\_14\_12\_13\_\_above\_Total\_23\_20\_23\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_77\_67\_77\_\_Level 4 or above\_National\_65\_59\_69\_\_

**PRIVATE** Teacher Assessments\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_8\_7\_9\_\_at NC Level 4 or\_Girls\_14\_12\_13\_\_above\_Total\_22\_19\_22\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_73\_63\_73\_\_Level 4 or above\_National\_65\_65\_72\_\_

### Attendance

**PRIVATE** Percentage of half days (sessions)\_\_\_%\_\_missed through absence for the\_Authorised\_School\_6.4\_\_latest complete reporting year\_Absence\_National comparative data\_5.7\_\_Unauthorised\_School\_0.6\_\_Absence\_National comparative data\_0.5\_\_

### Exclusions

**PRIVATE** Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year: Number\_\_Fixed period\_0\_\_Permanent\_0\_\_

## PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

### EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

#### Attainment and progress

By the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of the pupils are achieving standards which are well above average in English, above average in science, and broadly in line with the average in mathematics. However, attainment and progress has been inconsistent over the past four years due to a variety of factors including staff changes, responses to the previous inspection and a growing number of pupils with English as an additional language. The overall picture is one of improvement since the last inspection. When compared with schools with similar characteristics, results are well above average in English and broadly average in mathematics and science. The number of pupils reaching the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen recently. The attainment of pupils who have English as an additional language is broadly in line with that of the rest of the pupils, and indicates good progress made. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills to a satisfactory level in other subjects.

The baseline assessment of the children who are Under Five shows that attainment on entry is below average when compared to other schools in the local education authority in language, writing and number, but it is broadly average or better in social development and speaking skills. The rising number of pupils speaking Italian as their first language means that progress in language and literacy is slower than might otherwise be expected. Despite this the children make good progress towards achieving the expected learning outcomes in their knowledge and understanding of the world, creative and physical development, and their personal and social development. In mathematics, language and literacy attainment is satisfactory, and speaking and listening skills are well developed.

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

The 1998 national tests in English at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that attainment in reading and writing was close to the national average, although fewer than average numbers of pupils reached the higher levels. In 1999 the level of attainment fell sharply. This was as a result of a variety of factors including the loss of the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator. When compared to similar schools attainment is below average. However, by the end of Key Stage 2, the findings of the inspection are that the overall standard of attainment in English is above the national average, as it is when the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7. The 1998 national tests showed that the number of pupils reaching the expected levels was well above average and the number reaching the higher levels was well above average. When compared to schools with similar pupils, attainment in English was also well above average. In 1999 the level of attainment achieved by most pupils rose again.

In mathematics, by the end of Key Stage 2 the overall standards of pupils in the 1998 National Curriculum tests were broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining above the national expectation was also about average. This was an improvement on the 1997 figures and the early indications are that in 1999 the number of pupils who attained the expected level rose again. Pupils in Year 7 also achieve broadly average standards. The results of the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that attainment fell when compared to 1997 and is well below the national average. However, the early indications are that standards rose sharply in 1999. When compared to schools with similar pupils, in 1998 standards were very low at Key Stage 1 but broadly in line with the average at Key Stage 2.

In science, by the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain broadly average standards in science. These inspection findings are more favourable to the school than the most recent National Curriculum assessment results. In 1998, 80 per cent of the pupils attained at least the expected national level, and of these, 9 per cent attained a higher than average level. This was well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools. The inspection findings are due to recent improvements which have been achieved by a greater emphasis on experimental and investigative science, to which pupils have responded well. The overall attainment at Key Stage 2 is markedly different from that at Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain standards which are above the national average. In 1998, 77 per cent of the pupils attained at least the expected national level and, of these, 23 per cent attained a higher level. The proportion of those pupils who attained or bettered the expected levels were above the national average, and average when compared with the results of similar schools. The early indications from the 1999 tests show a very significant improvement upon the previous year. In Year 7, attainment is also above that which is expected nationally, and these pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' attainment in information technology is unsatisfactory by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. In Year 7 most pupils are reaching satisfactory levels of attainment. They have an inadequate understanding of information technology. Their knowledge and limited skills are not fully used to help their wider learning in the other areas of the curriculum. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have had a haphazard and varied introduction to computing skills. These do include some very good investigations in Year 1 with control technology and the floor robot. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have experienced a variety of skills and knowledge of a range of computer functions, but in an unstructured way. In Year 7 pupils use spread sheets successfully to support their mathematical investigations into probability.

Progress in most lessons is good. In the Nursery and in Reception good progress is made in personal

and social development, language and literacy, and mathematics. Progress in other areas of learning is also good and the majority of the children are on course to achieve most of the expected desirable learning outcomes by the time they are five. However, the children who speak English as an additional language make slower progress in early reading and writing skills and this affects their overall progress. At Key Stage 1, progress is good except for information technology where it is unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 2, progress is good in English, mathematics, science and geography. It is unsatisfactory in information technology but satisfactory for all other subjects. In Year 7 progress is good in English, mathematics, science and geography, and also in French. It is satisfactory in all other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. At times, especially where good support is offered, such as for children working with the staff providing additional literacy support, then progress is good. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.

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

The personal and social development of the children in the Nursery is good. They develop positive relationships with the teacher and classroom assistants. They are well motivated and co-operate effectively in group work, for example when making chapattis. They are very willing to help and were observed tidying up effectively at the end of a session.

In the main school pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. When the lessons are interesting and challenging they respond with enthusiasm, try hard and concentrate well. When the pace of lessons is slower or class management is less secure, they sometimes become noisy and their attitudes to learning deteriorate. However, most lessons were effectively controlled by teachers and there were many occasions when pupils were seen co-operating and collaborating well. Good examples were the way in which computers were shared, and the mature way in which pupils at Key Stage 3 prepared to conduct a scientific experiment.

Parents feel standards of behaviour are high and this was evident during the inspection. In assemblies, in the playground and in class pupils are mostly obedient, polite and friendly. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. There have been no exclusions since the last inspection. Pupils show respect for the fabric of the building, the grounds and their resources for learning. Bullying is rare and when it occurs it is clearly not tolerated. Neither the parents nor their children see bullying as an issue at the school. There is no sign of racial disharmony. Pupils relate well to adults and to each other. The ethos of the school, soundly based on Christian principles, makes a very strong impact on these positive and caring relationships.

Not enough opportunities for older pupils to be given responsibility or to use their initiative are created. However, by the time they reach Key Stage 3 the pupils are beginning to develop into mature and increasingly confident young people. They undertake small tasks efficiently and willingly and they help arrange and often play a part in assemblies.

### **Attendance**

Attendance for 1997/98 was 93 per cent and for 1998/99 was 92 per cent. This is broadly satisfactory though slightly below the national average. Unauthorised absence was broadly

in line with the national average and showed a slight improvement last year. Punctuality is still a problem and during the inspection an average of 15 pupils were late each day. Both the unauthorised absence and the lateness mainly involve the same few families and, although efforts have been made, more needs to be done to impress upon them the need for regular and prompt attendance. Time is well used during the day and no time is wasted in movement around the school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons. In almost 60 per cent of lessons it is good and in 14 per cent of lessons the teaching is very good. The teaching of the Under Fives is good or very good in 87 per cent of lessons. At Key Stage 1 the teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 2 the teaching is satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons and good in over 40 per cent. At Key Stage 3 the teaching is good or very good in almost three-quarters of lessons.

These percentages represent a much improved performance in all key stages in comparison with the previous inspection, when up to 40 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. During the present inspection only 3 per cent were unsatisfactory, demonstrating this great improvement. Staff changes, extra support and training for teachers, more monitoring and evaluating of teaching and improved support for pupils with English as an additional language, are among the major factors which account for the improvement. Expectations of behaviour and attainment are higher. The discipline kept by teachers is largely good, although throughout the school a small number of teachers have a limited range of strategies for dealing with the minority of pupils who misbehave. In a small number of lessons this means that the progress made by these children is unsatisfactory.

Teachers have worked very hard to introduce the national literacy and numeracy strategies successfully into their English and mathematics lessons and some of the best teaching observed was in these subjects. This has increased the amount of direct, whole class teaching of specific skills. Clear improvements in teachers' subject knowledge, especially in phonics and in science, have been made since the last inspection. However, the expertise in information technology, physical education and music is less consistent.

In the majority of lessons there is detailed lesson planning. In the best lessons the objectives are shared with the pupils, and returned to again at the end to assess progress. The lesson planning is based on appropriate schemes of work or half termly plans which ensure that lessons build on previous learning appropriately. In addition, a few of the best lessons were based on the teachers' assessments of the pupils' previous work. For example, in one lesson spellings were based on common errors made by the class. In most lessons the work was well matched to the abilities of the pupils. In a number of mathematics lessons tasks were not challenging enough for the higher attaining pupils.

For pupils with special educational needs the overall teaching has a positive impact on attainment and progress. The good teaching is carefully matched to their capabilities, their specific needs and their prior attainment. For example in one lesson with the additional literacy support assistant pupils in Year 4 practised sentence structures and worked on the number of syllables in words to help them decode unknown words in their texts. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is good. It is evident that their backgrounds and cultures are respected and

the provision has improved since the last inspection.

The teaching of the under fives demonstrates a good knowledge of the nationally agreed desirable learning outcomes and of how young children learn. The teachers in Key Stages 1 to 3 use a variety of approaches, appropriate to the tasks set. For example, in French, Year 7 pupils work in pairs to practise their vocabulary and pronunciation for part of the lesson, while at another time the teacher has a whole class question and answer session. Where the methods were less appropriate progress is unsatisfactory. For example, in a physical education lesson at Key Stage 2 pupils were not given enough time to be active and explore the tasks set, and so improve their performance.

The marking of pupils' work is good throughout the school. Examples of very good annotation of work are common. These encourage, challenge and correct errors appropriately as well as making suggestions for future improvement. Good records are kept by teachers and the day-to-day assessments made are used in the planning. Homework is appropriate, and grows in quantity through the school. By Year 7 pupils are receiving an appropriate amount for their ages. The teachers and their support staff work well as a team. There is satisfactory communication between them, and the support staff are usually aware of the objectives for the tasks given them.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

The curriculum for the under fives is good. It is broad, balanced and is effectively planned in all areas of learning. The transition to the National Curriculum in the reception class is unobtrusive and effective. There is excellent provision for play, both indoors and out, which includes large play equipment. The requirements of pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language are successfully catered for. The provision for personal and social education is effective.

At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 the curriculum is broadly based, providing pupils with experiences in all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, personal and social education and health education. This includes appropriate sex and drug misuse education. In addition, there is now provision for a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3, which did not exist at the time of the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are met, except in information technology where pupils do not meet the full range of the curriculum.

The curriculum is generally relevant and promotes pupils' personal development. There are occasions, particularly in mathematics, when the needs of the highest attaining pupils are not fully met. An appropriate time is allocated to each subject, including literacy and numeracy. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education. There are written policies for all subjects and a variety of appropriate school-devised, government or commercial schemes of work. These provide effective help for the teachers in planning their lessons. The present provision of schemes of work is a good improvement since the last inspection.

The structure of the curriculum is basically sound. Links between short, medium and long term planning are becoming well established, making it possible to plot the skills and knowledge of pupils as they move through the school. The one exception is information technology where there is a scheme of work but the resources to support this are inadequate and the day to day class usage is haphazard and not well structured. Equipment available stands idle and there is

a lack of staff expertise. Pupils throughout all key stages are not offered a broadly based information technology curriculum. Pupils of differing abilities are catered for with a range of strategies including extra staffing and support. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits are provided for pupils.

Procedures for assessment for children under five are very good. From each child's first day in the school assessments and recordings are made in all areas of learning. The progress of each child is very successfully monitored. Children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are identified early and suitable support is given through effective individual education plans.

Throughout all key stages procedures for assessment are satisfactory, and they are used especially well in Key Stage 2. The school administers tests each half term in English and mathematics. Pupils' attainments are then assessed against National Curriculum levels. This then informs planning and target setting for the next term for each pupil. Portfolios of work illustrating agreed levels of attainment have been made for each of the core subjects that support teacher assessment well. These records track progress but do not make clear what the higher attaining pupils know and understand. In other subjects some assessments are being developed to record attainment and track progress, particularly for the higher attainers. Pupils have few opportunities to assess their own work and progress until they reach Year 7. However, a termly sample of work representing each attainment target in English, mathematics and science is discussed between pupils and teacher, and targets for future improvement are set.

The analysis of national assessment results is used as a source of detailed information on individual pupils. This analysis is successful in identifying strengths and weaknesses which, in turn, inform future planning. This is having a beneficial effect on improving standards. It has raised teacher awareness of the need for rigorous assessment analysis that clearly identifies pupils' knowledge and understanding.

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

Provision for the spiritual and moral development of all pupils is good overall. The aims and mission statement of the school clearly identify the values and attitudes promoted. Provision for pupils' social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Spiritual development is promoted through assemblies, religious education, lessons in personal and social education and the daily life of the school. There is a daily act of worship and time for prayer and reflection prior to lunchtime and the end of the afternoon session. One topic of study, "Families and Homes", culminated in a whole school assembly when all pupils shared their experiences. Other world religions were reflected in this assembly too. Pupils are taught to respect and care for each other, and this has a positive effect on the way they work together.

Their opinions are sought and valued in discussion in many lessons, but there are too few opportunities to express and develop their thoughts and feelings through the creative arts.

Moral development is good and is encouraged by way of the school's behaviour code, as expressed in class rules and the consistent reminders from all staff on a clear sighted sense of right and wrong. The Catholic ethos of the school pervades and underpins this important aspect of pupils' development. Staff provide good role models and expect pupils to achieve high levels



of good behaviour. This includes respect for others and their property. Assemblies help to reinforce these values. Parents support the values and attitudes promoted by the school. The good behaviour of all pupils towards each other, whatever their grouping, has a significant impact on their learning and harmony within the school. There were two new pupils who started during the period of inspection and the caring ethos of the school helped them to integrate easily. Pupils are involved in charity work which supports a range of initiatives. There are few planned opportunities for older pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and within the school community. Mature relationships between staff and pupils are developed in Year 7.

Social development is effectively promoted through the school ethos and extra-curricular activities. No residential visits, at present, are made and this affects the promotion of independence and the development of social skills. The school is involved in regular sporting fixtures with local schools. These help to develop a sense of fair play and team spirit. Children are taught to respect the environment and respect the natural world.

The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Their knowledge of their own culture is underpinned with visits to cathedrals, museums and other places of historical and cultural interest. However, opportunities to experience cultures other than Western European are few. Although there is a good display of artefacts from the major world religions in the middle school, there is an absence of appreciation of other world cultures as expressed through music and art. Links with Moslem art, mathematics and information technology are developed at Year 4. There is a co-ordinator responsible for the multicultural work of the school, who has been in post for just over a year. The policy is recent, but the planning is haphazard and consequently there is little multicultural development through the wider curriculum.

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

The school has effective procedures for ensuring the educational and personal support and guidance of its pupils. Academic progress is carefully recorded. Work is clearly and helpfully marked and regular assessments take place. Children with special education needs and those for whom English is an additional language are well provided for and supported. Pupils who move to the school in the middle of an academic year are welcomed into a Christian community and settle in happily and easily. Parents are happy with the attitudes and values the school promotes. They particularly praise the help and guidance given to children and their parents in preparation for first holy communion and for confirmation. However, older pupils are given little encouragement to undertake responsibilities or to demonstrate initiative. Opportunities are missed for children to take on responsibility through the house system, the library or by older pupils helping younger ones.

Pupils' behaviour is well managed and the few pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour are well controlled. The behaviour policy has a helpful section on bullying but, although effective, the policy needs clarifying and up-dating. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored though care needs to be taken to ensure all registers are completed consistently. Efforts have been made to improve punctuality but the importance of pupils arriving on time still needs impressing on a few families.

Child protection procedures are those laid down by the local authority. The designated member of staff has had child protection training. However, there is a need to ensure that all staff are aware of basic procedures. This is particularly important for new and less experienced staff.

Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. Personnel from the local authority have very recently undertaken a comprehensive risk assessment. The playground has been resurfaced and no major threats to health or safety were observed. However, the gate into the nursery is in poor condition and needs repairing or replacing and proper drainage needs to be provided under the drinking fountain in the playground. First aid provision is very good with a designated medical room and five members of staff holding current first aid certificates. Assurances were given that fire drill takes place termly but the school needs to ensure that this is always properly recorded.

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

Parents are satisfied with the information they receive about the school and about their children's progress. The prospectus is detailed and letters inform parents about forthcoming events. Neither the prospectus nor the governors' annual report to parents fully meet statutory requirements as they do not compare the school's National Curriculum test results with national averages. Pupils' annual reports give a clear idea of pupils' attainment and progress and set achievable targets for English, mathematics and science. Parents' consultation evenings held in the Christmas and Easter terms are well supported though attendance in the summer tends to be limited to those who have queries about their children's reports. Information to parents of children with special educational needs is good and they are thoroughly involved with their progress. Since the last inspection, parents have been given information on the curriculum to be studied. However, though the homework expectations are useful, the format only allows for limited information and too many educational terms are used for this to be meaningful to the average parent. The school has organised curricular events to keep parents informed of recent curricular changes but, other than the morning meeting held to explain the numeracy strategy, they have been very poorly attended.

Several parents help in the nursery, particularly in the mornings. They are encouraged to help in the main school but only two parents help regularly. Most help their children with homework when required and the recently introduced homework books now enable them see the work when it has been marked. The 'Friends of Bishop Parker' raise money for the school, and occasionally for charity. A few highly committed parents, parent-governors and staff run the association. Most parents are unwilling to help organise events, and support for functions is varied. Coffee mornings, held twice a term, attract between 20 and 30 parents and summer fetes are well supported.

Links with the community are largely parish based. Together with the parish, the school has contributed to good causes ranging from supporting a parish in Uganda to sending gifts and money to a home for Albanian refugees in Athens. The school also regularly supports other national charities. Student teachers and work experience students are welcomed. There are very strong links with the receiving secondary school and also with three other Roman Catholic combined schools in the area. Links with schools outside the Catholic community mainly involve sport when the school has had success in cross country running, football and athletics. Although situated on the edge of an industrial estate the school has no links with business, industry or commerce. Pupils take part in educational visits at least once a year and the school welcomes occasional visiting speakers. However, community links, other than those with the parish, are under-developed and do not make a sufficiently significant contribution to the enrichment of the curriculum.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the school is good. Since the previous inspection the management of the school has improved a great deal. Although one post on the senior management team is still to be filled, the educational direction provided by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher is clear and correctly focused on raising standards. The Governing Body provides very positive support for the school.

The staff work well as a team. There have been a number of changes, especially in Key Stage 1, over recent years, including the untimely death of a senior member of staff during the last school year. This the school community found has had a lasting effect and is taking a long time to get over. The selection of staff has improved and the process is now well thought out and effective. A replacement for the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator has been appointed for later in the year. During the interim the Headteacher has had to take on some co-ordinator roles, such as that for special educational needs. He has ensured that procedures meet the code of practice. All staff are aware of the procedures and they work closely with the co-ordinator and the extra support now provided for literacy, to plan and review the pupils' work. Good records of progress are kept by the additional literacy support assistant. The recent introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has correctly been the focus of the school's energies recently and they are already having a beneficial effect on much of the teaching and learning in English and mathematics.

Since the last inspection the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has greatly improved. The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have observed literacy lessons, along with some of the Governing Body, and subject co-ordinators also monitor pupils' work and teachers' planning. This work has led to discussions with staff on an individual and whole

staff basis and has generally led to a more open atmosphere and understanding of the criteria for improved teaching. In addition a great deal more analysis of test results is now undertaken. The school has begun to assess and track the progress made by groups of pupils such as those with English as an additional language. Reading ages have also been tracked to identify classes where extra input is needed, such as enhanced support.

The governors fulfil most of their statutory duties well, although the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not contain comparisons of the school's test results with the national averages. They have a high profile in the school. There is an effective structure of committees and they are appropriately involved in budget setting and monitoring expenditure. The action plan from the previous inspection has been successfully implemented. As well as sitting on committees a number of governors help in school or help run extra curricular activities. The school development plan is largely produced by the school, although governors do have an opportunity to discuss it and monitor its progress at their meetings. They are not involved in the early stages of its production, or in working groups looking at aspects of the school's work.

The development plan is a detailed and full document which correctly focuses on the identified priorities. It is a practical document and the work of the school is based on it, although a number of the priorities do not have sufficiently detailed financial information attached. Subject co-ordinators do not have control of their own budgets delegated to them, and therefore are not involved in planning the resourcing of developments in their areas. Development planning has clearly been successful as is evident from the improvements since the last inspection.

The school has a good mission statement produced through a process involving all members of the school community. In addition more detailed aims and objectives provide a focus for the improvements in standards seen over recent years. Where unexpectedly poor results occur, such as those in Key Stage 1 in 1999, the school now analyses the reasons for this and how to ensure that improvements continue. The targets set for future test results are challenging. Targets for non-academic improvement, such as improving attendance, are not specified. Overall, there is a very positive, caring but purposeful ethos in the school, with a commitment to improvement.

The provision for pupils with English as an additional language has improved since the last inspection. The school has developed much better management and deployment of the extra staffing they receive, although the post of co-ordinator will not be filled until later in the year, and at present the Headteacher is overseeing the work. This support is very well planned and has a positive effect in enabling pupils to take a full part in lessons. During the literacy lessons staff support individuals in the whole class session, and then work with small groups during the group sessions. The support offered by the staff is at least satisfactory, and in many cases, of good quality. Detailed records of pupils' progress are kept and these provide a clear picture of the success of the present provision. The school has also begun to analyse test results to track the performance of those pupils who have English as an additional language.

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

Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in the matching of staff to the demands of the curriculum, the arrangements for the professional development of staff and the standard of accommodation and learning resources.

There are now sufficient teachers, suitably qualified by training and experience, for the age group they teach. There is also a good balance of youth and experience. Teachers provide a good range of expertise across the curriculum and subject co-ordinators are generally well matched

to their subject area. There is a lack of expertise in the teaching of information technology which is recognised in the school development plan as an area in which improvements need to be made. The role of the subject co-ordinator is satisfactorily defined, and from time to time some subject co-ordinators help to monitor curriculum development and teaching in their subject. Since the last inspection four subject co-ordinators have attended training courses in their subjects with significant benefit to teaching and learning. Support staff for pupils who have English as a second language are now fully deployed to work with all pupils who are entitled to this help. Very good use is made of the skills of a support assistant who leads and rehearses the Year 7 recorder band.

Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported by classroom assistants who liaise with the class teacher in ensuring that the targets set for these pupils are achieved.

All adults who work at the school work closely together and their prime concern is the academic and social development of the pupils. The team work is apparent in the school on a daily basis and it creates a secure environment in which pupils are able to learn.

The arrangements for the professional development of teachers are well planned and reflect both the needs of the teacher and the school. Appraisal takes place annually and teachers are provided with personal targets to enable them to develop their strengths and remedy weaknesses. In-service training days are well used and focus on agreed aspects of the school's curriculum and organisation, and have the effect of strengthening team work. Newly qualified teachers are looked after well and an experienced teacher acts as mentor ensuring that support is available when it is most needed. New teachers work towards their own targets and, together with colleagues, review their progress.

Learning resources are satisfactory overall. They are good in mathematics, science, art and English, except that there are insufficient books in the Key Stage 2 library. Books which reflect a multicultural society are in better supply than at the last inspection. Resources are unsatisfactory in physical education, especially for gymnastics, and for information technology where the ratio of computers to pupils is too low. The school is planning to remedy this deficiency in the near future. Resources are well managed and provide good support for the pupils' learning. Subject co-ordinators do not yet have full control of their own budgets and are therefore unable to plan effectively for refurbishment and renewal.

Accommodation is good. It is bright and clean. It is well maintained and enterprisingly used. During the last two years the governors and the Headteacher have concentrated resources upon improving the school environment and this has had a positive impact on the quality of learning. Classrooms are newly decorated and the roof has been replaced and no longer leaks. The outside area has been substantially improved although more play facilities are still needed. The school field is in very good condition and offers an excellent facility for sport. There are stimulating and fresh displays of pupils' work in the corridors and classrooms. Overall, the effective management of the school's accommodation and learning resources has a positive effect on the standards attained by the pupils.

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

Since the last inspection there have been substantial improvements in the management and use of the school's finances. The school is steadily developing effective methods of regulating its finances and ensuring that all expenditure is in the best interests of the pupils. Spending is regularly checked by the Headteacher who administers the budget effectively and well. The governors' finance committee meets regularly to review expenditure and assess future

needs. The secretary provides the governors with detailed statements of the school's account.

The school currently has an underspend of more than 10 per cent of the school's basic budget. In the previous year the underspend was 16 per cent. These figures are in excess of those which are normally found. However, the governors and Headteacher have plans for the immediate release of the surplus funds to provide for a computer suite, which will greatly enhance provision in this area. Further spending is also planned to improve play facilities. Cost effective measures and success criteria are being developed to ensure that the school spends its money wisely and that wastage is kept to a minimum. Any savings will be diverted into the educational needs of the pupils which, on the whole, are being well met.

1. Budget setting links satisfactorily to the school development plan and reflects the school's educational priorities for the good of the pupils. However, several aspects of the development plan are not fully costed but this will be rectified in the light of the current figures. At the moment spending plans are only set for the next year and longer term financial planning has yet to be achieved. The funds set aside for pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are well used to support their full access to the curriculum.

The school has a code of practice for financial management set by the local education authority. Its own guidance for sound financial practice is still in draft form. Day-to-day financial control is very good. The school secretary is meticulous in checking delivery notes and invoices and in maintaining records of all expenditure on computer. All accounts are fully backed up and there is a useful direct line to the local authority. The school fund account is correctly audited separately.

Accommodation is used well. The management of learning resources is good although subject co-ordinators do not yet manage their own budgets. The day to day administration of the school is very effective. It enables teachers to teach and pupils to learn through systems which are flexible and responsive.

Financial control is very good and the budget is prudently managed. Costs for each pupil are broadly in line with the national average. Taking into account all aspects of the school's work, especially the overall progress pupils make, the school provides good value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

The children enter the Nursery after their third birthday. They transfer to the Reception class in time to spend at least two terms in there before beginning statutory schooling in the term after they are five. The physical separation caused by the buildings presents problems to the staff but they work hard to ensure that the Nursery takes a full part in the life of the school.

A pupil profile is completed when the children start in the Nursery and baseline assessment is undertaken when they start in Reception. The results of these show that attainment on entry to the school is below that expected nationally, especially in language and number skills owing to the high number of children who have English as an additional language. A very high number have Italian as their first language. When compared with other schools in the local education authority, attainment on entry to the school is below average in language, writing and number, but it is broadly average or better in social development and speaking skills.

From the evidence of the inspection and the assessments it is clear that good progress is made in personal and social development, language and literacy, and mathematics in both the Nursery and in Reception. Progress in other areas of learning is also good and the majority of the children are on course to achieve most of the expected desirable learning outcomes by the time they are five. However, the children who speak English as an additional language evidently make slower progress in early reading and writing skills and this affects their overall progress.

#### **Personal and social development**

The children make good progress in this area. The Nursery is run in a way which encourages children to select some of their own activities independently and to take responsibility for accessing and tidying away resources. Little time is found for reviewing and discussing their work at the end of the session. The majority of the children enter the school with confident speech and behaviour patterns, and they quickly establish effective relationships with each other and with the adults in the class. For example, it is noticeable that children work well together on activities, sharing and co-operating effectively for their ages. When they are in the reception class the level of discussion between children is noticeably improved. By the time they are ready to begin Key Stage 1 the majority of the children have learnt to work and play together co-operatively. Not enough opportunities for planned role play and drama activities are provided. Most are welcoming towards visitors and happy to discuss their work. The staff work hard to create an environment where children can develop their feelings in a positive way, improve their self esteem and learn to work independently.

#### **Language and literacy**

Attainment is broadly that expected for children of their age and most will achieve the majority of the desirable learning outcomes for this area by the time they are five, although those with English as an additional language are unlikely fully to achieve this level. They make good progress, especially those with English as an additional language. A number of dual language books are available in the Nursery and Reception classes. Speaking and listening skills are good on entry to the school and a great deal of work goes into improving these

through, for example, the teacher and nursery nurses using every opportunity for talking through their work with the children. Most children can recognise their names and are able to speak in sentences. Children know that print carries meaning and they enjoy sharing books with adults. Some are able to retell the story from the pictures. The reception class builds on this work by enabling pupils to practise more formal letter formation skills through tracing and copying. Most of them are devising their own ways to record science experiments. They are well started on reading and are learning the sounds of letters.

### **Mathematics**

Attainment is broadly average although the language difficulties experienced by some make it unlikely that they will fully achieve the desirable learning outcomes by the age of five. They are making good progress due to the well-planned teaching and the range of appropriate activities provided. In Reception children learn to order and match numbers from 0 to 10. The higher attaining children can add one more and those with English as an additional language receive good support from the staff. During one lesson a child with special educational needs made very good progress in learning the principle of adding 'one more'. In the Nursery children know and sing a variety of counting songs and rhymes. The staff use the available resources well to extend the children's knowledge and understanding of mathematics.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

The majority of the children in the Nursery make good progress and are on line to achieve the desirable learning outcomes in this area. They are gaining knowledge about themselves and the world around them. For example, they confidently use computers, the mouse and keyboard, follow instructions and cause events to happen in a virtual world. In addition, they have access to tape-recorders and radio controlled cars which they use with growing skill. After a local walk children learned about autumn leaves, 'conkers' and fruit. They clearly begin to appreciate some of the wonder of nature. In Reception children are beginning to control a floor robot with some accuracy. They devise their own tests to find ways of making a wheel turn, using water, sand and a variety of other materials. They then devise their own methods of recording.

### **Physical development**

Children's physical development is good. When they enter the Nursery their physical skills are quite well developed and they move with confidence and enthusiasm. The outdoor space provides some opportunities to play, run, use physical education apparatus, ride cycles and create imaginative role play areas. In Reception children have access to the full range of the school's physical education resources. Opportunities are also made to develop sharing and other social skills, and the children's independence, as well as their co-operative skills, are enhanced by their physical development. All children use scissors, paint brushes, pencils and other tools with varying degrees of success. Opportunities to use a variety of wet and dry modelling materials are available in both classes.

### **Creative development**

The progress made by children, and their attainment in this area of learning, is good. Good opportunities for children to explore a variety of materials and media are created. The children in the Nursery, and in Reception, experience a range of painting, printing and drawing opportunities. Younger children used the leaves they had collected to create rubbings and



prints and the necessary skills were carefully taught by the staff. In the Nursery, opportunities to listen to sounds made by musical instruments help to develop listening skills and the children do learn some songs and nursery rhymes. In Reception this work is extended effectively. Children listen to sounds in their environment and try to create loud and soft sounds. They discuss texture, rhythm and mood.

The quality of teaching in the Nursery and in Reception is at least good and often very good. In the Nursery there is one teacher and three nursery nurses. The children have home groups for some sessions where staff have responsibility for up to 13 children. The curriculum in both classes is appropriately planned and takes good account of the desirable learning outcomes. Staff all work well together as a team and have a good knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of the younger children. Good records are kept on a day to day basis and these are transferred to detailed individual records which build up into a comprehensive and clear picture of each child's progress. Good routines are established at the start and end of the day, and this helps create the ethos of support and security which the children clearly need and in which they can succeed. All adults support the children sensitively, but also encourage independence.

## **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

### **English**

The children enter the school with broadly average attainment in English. However, there is a wide range of ability and in particular, a large percentage of children who have English as an additional language, and who speak Italian at home. Their speech and language development is often good but the language difficulties are evident in their sentence construction, spelling patterns and, when they can read, the pupils' comprehension of much of what they have read. They make good progress in the under fives and through Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and the findings of the inspection are that many are achieving at above average levels by the time they leave the school.

The 1998 national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that attainment in reading and writing was close to the national average, although fewer than average numbers of pupils reached the higher levels. In 1999 the level of attainment fell sharply. This was as a result of a variety of factors including the loss of the Key Stage 1 co-ordinator, the number of staff changes in the first school which resulted in reduced level of experience among staff, and the higher number of pupils with English as an additional language or with special educational needs in the class. When compared to similar schools attainment is below average.

By the end of Key Stage 2, the overall standard of attainment in English, as shown by the inspection evidence, is above the national average, as it is when the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 7. The 1998 national tests showed that the number of pupils reaching the expected levels was well above average and the number reaching the higher levels was also well above average. When compared to schools with similar pupils, attainment in English was well above average. In 1999 the level of attainment achieved by most pupils rose again, as it did nationally.

These figures point to overall satisfactory or better standards. This is based on good progress made from when pupils enter the school to the end of Year 7. However, the present dip in results at Key Stage 1 has been recognised by the school and steps are being taken to address it. A new Key Stage 1 co-ordinator has been appointed to bring experience to the key stage and the needs

of the growing number of pupils with English as an additional language are being addressed more effectively. The Headteacher and subject co-ordinator monitor progress more thoroughly and are beginning to use this information to target groups of pupils. The progress being made by the majority of the pupils is at least good.

2. In 1998, at Key Stage 1, the boys did better in the national tests, when compared to the national figures, than the girls did. At the end of Key Stage 2 there is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls, although the boys perform less well, and to a similar extent as they do nationally. The high percentage of pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and reach a good level of attainment. The pupils with special educational needs who receive extra help also make good progress towards the targets set for them and reach an appropriate level of attainment.
3. The last inspection found that standards in English were satisfactory or better although the progress made was more variable especially at Key Stage 2. The progress made by all groups of pupils has improved since then, although there is not yet enough emphasis on more complex reading skills for the older pupils. The introduction of the national literacy strategy has provided more structure to the teaching of reading skills and this is also having a positive effect on the progress made in lessons.
4. Attainment in speaking and listening is good and the progress made is good in all key stages. The majority of the pupils are articulate and have good opportunities to speak to a variety of audiences, including in assembly, in front of the class and in pairs or small groups. They talk freely and maturely to adults. In one Key Stage 2 class children have a regular opportunity to prepare and deliver a talk to the class about a theme such as hobbies. A great deal of work is done to improve pupils' speaking skills, with adults making the most of every opportunity to question and encourage sentence answers. The literacy lessons with their focus on shared reading and group question and answer sessions are also helping improve pupils' skills and they take part in discussions with increasing confidence. Not enough role play and drama are provided, especially for pupils at Key Stage 2, and so opportunities for the further development of pupils' confidence in speaking are lost.
5. The evidence of the inspection shows that many of the children enter the school with broadly average levels of basic reading skills. Listening to children read demonstrated that many of them enjoy reading and have a sound ability to decode unknown words, and they are attaining good levels for this stage in the year. They make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 1 where they begin to learn early phonic skills and read familiar words. By the end of the key stage the higher attaining pupils can read some complex words, although in 1999 a third of the pupils have reading ages which are below their chronological ages. By the end of Key Stage 2 this has dropped to a quarter. The older pupils have reached a satisfactory level of skill but in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 not enough attention is given to extending and developing their skills through using the library and researching using computers. Many of the pupils read with some expression. The school uses more than one commercial reading scheme and the co-ordinator has worked hard to level books and provide a range of materials in different genres to give pupils the chance to widen their reading experiences. The good support for the pupils with special educational needs has helped them progress well towards the targets set. Those who speak English as an additional language also receive good support and, through dual language books, targeted support and a lot of hard work, they make good progress in learning to read and understand English.
6. Attainment in writing is satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 2. Progress is often good but not enough opportunities for a wide range of writing, including creative writing, poetry and writing for different purposes, are provided for the older pupils. However, in Year 6 pupils have written play scripts for known stories, although some pupils confuse this with narrative writing. Other good work involved summarising a chapter of a reading book. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are joining sentences with appropriate words, writing instructions for another person, and sequencing stories into the correct order. Pupils learn to write letters and numbers well in Key Stage 1 and in their early years in

the school. Handwriting skills are generally good and this results in good writing across the curriculum. Not enough opportunities are available for pupils to use a word processor, including the skills of drafting and re-drafting their writing.

7. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at Key Stage 1. They enjoy the whole class shared reading sessions, are willing to answer teachers' questions and usually sit attentively when others are talking. Most can work independently or in small groups for an appropriate length of time. They also demonstrate pride in the finished quality of their work. At Key Stage 2, the overall attitudes of pupils towards English are satisfactory. They are often willing to join in class discussions but on occasions do not listen properly to each others' views. They mostly work hard and show interest in the tasks set.
8. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is good or very good in half of the lessons and is never less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, 4 out of every 5 lessons are good, and again no lessons observed were unsatisfactory. In Year 7 the teaching is at least satisfactory and on occasion of good quality. This has clearly improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have worked very hard to introduce the literacy strategy successfully and this has had a good effect on the structure, planning and teaching in lessons, and has resulted in some of the best teaching found in the school. The marking of pupils' work is good with some comments which explain to pupils how to improve and what weaknesses to address. At Key Stage 1 the teachers have a sound subject knowledge of phonics and this is widely used in their teaching. Staff in all three key stages based their planning of aspects of the lessons on mistakes which were being commonly made by pupils. For example in Year 7 one teacher based the spelling work on recent errors which had occurred in pupils' work. Many of the literacy lessons contained some work which is well matched to the needs of the pupils, although more emphasis is needed on providing sufficiently challenging work for the higher attaining older pupils. Support staff and volunteer helpers are deployed in a variety of ways, but they often spend part of their time listening to the teachers' input. Although this may be necessary at times, the deployment of staff needs to be reviewed so they are used to greatest effect in helping the pupils.
9. The management of the subject has improved since the last inspection, and a lot more monitoring of teaching and learning now occurs. Lessons are observed and pupils' work is scrutinised. The governing body have played an appropriate part in this work and a number of them have observed the national literacy strategy lessons. The Key Stage 2 library is under-used and under-resourced for a school of this size. There are not enough books in many sections. Very few pupils have any clear idea of how to find a book, although they are more familiar with the conventions of using a book, such as contents or index.

## **Mathematics**

10. At the end of Key Stage 2, the overall standards of pupils in the 1998 National Curriculum tests were broadly in line with the national average. The percentage of pupils gaining above the national expectation was also above average. This was an improvement on the 1997 figures

and the early indications are that in 1999 the number of pupils who attained the expected level rose again. The results of the 1998 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 show that attainment fell when compared to 1997 and is well below the national average. However, the early indications are that standards rose sharply in 1999. When compared to schools with similar pupils, in 1998 standards were very low at Key Stage 1 but broadly in line with the average at Key Stage 2. The evidence of the inspection is that attainment is satisfactory at all key stages.

11. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress. Most pupils have a good knowledge of numbers. They select the appropriate operation when solving addition and subtraction problems. Their mental recall is developing well. They recall number facts to ten, many to twenty and beyond. More able pupils use their two times table to solve problems with two digit numbers. They have a good knowledge of 2D shapes and their properties.
12. At the end of Key Stage 2 the use and application of mathematics in a variety of problem solving situations is clearly seen. Pupils are developing an appropriate mathematical vocabulary. The school has wholeheartedly subscribed to the implementation of the national numeracy strategy. Mental arithmetic is receiving an enthusiastic response from pupils and staff. This enthusiasm and application is beginning to show in improved results and attitude, although attainment is slightly dampened by language difficulties. Pupils' accuracy and speed of calculations have increased greatly. Most pupils add and subtract numbers with great accuracy and confidently use their knowledge of tables in multiplication and division sums. They work confidently on problems of shape including the introduction of right angles. Pupils systematically collect, record and interpret data, but do not use computers to display their results.
13. At Key Stage 3 some excellent work was observed on probability. Pupils know and understand the usage of mode, median, mean and range in the investigations on probability. They also use the class computers proficiently to produce spreadsheets.
14. Pupils have very positive attitudes to mathematics throughout the school. They show good concentration and levels of perseverance. The behaviour of all pupils is good. In whole class mental sessions pupils respond enthusiastically. They respond especially well when the level of challenge is right. There is the potential to develop strategies to encourage the latent abilities of high attainers. Pupils' work, especially at Key Stage 2, is not always presented neatly in a logical, mathematically structured way. Marking, with evaluative and developmental statements, has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language make good progress at all ages, especially at Key Stage 3.
15. Throughout the school the quality of teaching is good. In 50 per cent of lessons teaching is good and in 10 per cent it is very good. The remaining 40 per cent of lessons are satisfactory. Across all key stages the best teaching incorporates a range of well planned learning activities that are carefully matched to pupils' individual needs. In these lessons teachers have high expectations. In all lessons pupils are well organised and managed. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the subject and are well prepared. They make good use of plenary sessions to conclude lessons and reinforce specific learning aims.

Frequent assessments of what pupils have learned or what their specific weaknesses might be, assist in informing the planning and delivery of the subject. The effectiveness of these subject profiles could make a substantial contribution to the attainments of the higher ability pupils.

16. Regular testing of pupils, combined with the results of national standard assessments, provides information that is used to establish broad targets for pupils in all age groups. The analysis of this detailed information is at an early stage of development but should enhance the delivery of mathematics and good lesson planning. There are good cross phase liaison links with the secondary school mathematics department.
17. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. Her positive attitude and example are successful in leading colleagues to attain greater results and achievements for all pupils. The subject is well resourced, but under developed in the mathematical use of information technology.

## Science

18. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils attain broadly average standards in science. These inspection findings are more favourable to the school than the most recent National Curriculum assessment results. In 1998, 80 per cent of the pupils attained at least the expected national level, and of these, 9 per cent attained a higher than average level. This was well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools. The inspection findings are due to recent improvements which have been achieved by a greater emphasis on experimental and investigative science, to which pupils have responded well.
19. The overall attainment at Key Stage 2 is markedly different from that at Key Stage 1. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain standards which are above the national average. This is an inspection finding which confirms the most recent National Curriculum test results. In 1998, 77 per cent of the pupils attained at least the expected national level and, of these, 23 per cent attained a higher level. The proportion of those pupils who attained the expected levels was above the national average, and average when compared with the results of similar schools. The early indications from the 1999 tests show a very significant improvement upon the previous year. In Year 7, attainment is also above that which is expected nationally, and these pupils are very well prepared for the next stage in their education.
20. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are inquisitive and observant. They want to know and they are eager to find out. Therefore, they make progress which is often good and at least satisfactory. They understand how movement needs a force, and they experiment in the classroom with pushes and pulls and examine the results with interest. They go into the playground to study the movement of fallen leaves or that of a plane travelling across the sky. They prepare for a visit to the local park where they will investigate the movement of a water wheel. Pupils investigate the proposition that the person with the largest hands is also the person with the largest feet. They make accurate measurements, place them in ascending order and record their conclusions. Year 2 look at what happens when widely differing materials, from olive oil to tomato sauce, are cooled, and learn whether the process can be reversed. They also know that contaminated food is not to be eaten.
21. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue to progress well, learning the essentials of scientific method and investigation. Their curiosity continues as they find out more about the world in which they live. Pupils make comparisons about water flow through sand and clay and plan to check their conclusions on a field visit. They make classroom parachutes and compare descent times according to the number of holes in the fabric. From this they learn about air resistance. Pupils can relate science to keeping healthy. They measure the pulse at rest and after vigorous activity. They check and chart their results. Links are made with the performance of the school cross country team. Year 6 consolidate their knowledge of air and water resistance by performing a number of experiments, among them, how many marbles are needed to sink a paper boat.
22. Pupils in Year 7 continue to make good progress as they prepare for an experiment using every day acids and alkalis, which will ultimately allow them to determine the best proprietary cure for indigestion.

23. Pupils at all stages are helped to progress by learning and using the technical language of science. They understand the idea of a 'fair test' and therefore make good progress when doing experiments. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all the pupils and those with special educational needs or English as an additional language receive good support from the classroom assistants, who work very closely with the teachers.
24. Pupils respond very well to science lessons. Most are eager young scientists who want to find explanations to why things are as they are. They think about what they are doing and ask questions. Mostly they stay on task and sustain interest, even in the longer lessons. They respond enthusiastically and safely to practical work. The pupils listen to each other and work well together. They are happy to pool their knowledge. Older pupils are adept at arguing about the best scientific method.
25. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory, and mostly it is good. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They plan well. The best lessons are well structured and allow for a good balance of exposition, demonstration and practical work, although computer programs are not used as often as they might be to support learning. Teaching is carefully sequenced so that pupils can see the logic of what they are being taught, and most lessons move at a brisk pace. Teachers encourage the development of enquiring minds and frequently ask the pupils what will happen next. Older pupils have too little opportunity to decide upon their own experiments. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and behave well. Resources are always to hand and experiments are set up before the arrival of the pupils.
26. The science curriculum is effectively planned by colleagues working jointly. The scheme of work used provides clear learning objectives for all pupils, including extension work for the most able and support for pupils with special educational needs. Resources are good, well maintained and easily accessible. The 'wild area' in the playground helps pupils to appreciate the delicate balance of nature. Overall, science is taught positively in an environment which is conducive to the maintenance of good standards of learning and to the development of young enquiring minds.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Information technology**

27. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is unsatisfactory. In Year 7, most pupils are working at a satisfactory level of attainment, which emphasises their earlier under-achievement, but their overall understanding of information technology is inadequate. Their knowledge and limited skills are not fully used to help their wider learning in the other areas of the curriculum.
28. In the Nursery, pupils have access to a computer and acquire the basic functional skills of using the mouse and responding, successfully, to screen instructions. Their basic needs are met. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have had a haphazard and varied introduction to computing skills. These do include some first class investigations in Reception and Year 1 with control technology and the floor robot. From evidence of observations and scrutiny of work it would appear that many aspects of the curriculum are covered, but in an unstructured way. These experiences include word processing and data handling. This



leads to the production of simple newsletters and the use of colour and design for producing bilingual Christmas cards.

29. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have experienced a variety of skills and knowledge of a range of computer functions. Most of this evidence was gathered from previous work samples as little direct use of computers was observed during the inspection. In Year 3 they successfully use a CD ROM to access text and pictures on the Ancient Greeks to complement their work in literacy. In Year 7 pupils use spread sheets successfully to support their mathematical investigations into probability.
30. The overall progress made by pupils through each key stage is unsatisfactory. At Year 7 this situation becomes satisfactory with more varied experiences and links across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language maintain the same progress as their peers. Progress, over shorter periods, varies according to the frequency with which pupils have opportunities to work with computers. During the period of inspection, these opportunities were insufficient in many of the classes. Most computers were not in use. Younger pupils recognise and successfully use letter and number keys, the space bar and the return key. Pupils' understanding of simple control technology is good at Year 1. Year 3 pupils use the CD ROM. At Year 4 pupils use the computer to produce fairly accomplished reflective patterns reproducing Moslem mathematical designs.
31. Pupils behave well when working on the computers and are very willing to work collaboratively. Higher attainers work with the less computer literate pupils very successfully, even in Reception, with the floor robot. Pupils observed at work are conscientious, stay on task, show great concentration and interest in the subject. They are willing to talk about their work and explain it well.
32. There was limited opportunity to observe teaching during the inspection. Apart from some small group work, there was no direct teaching. The progress of the pupils would indicate that the teaching in the subject is unsatisfactory. The quality of the teaching, underlying the evidence and observations, suggests considerable variation in confidence and expertise of the teachers. Information technology work is not well planned and too many opportunities for the use of computers in other areas of the curriculum are lost. There is little assessment of the learning pupils have achieved. The limited opportunities for word processing, control technology, data handling and the use of CD ROMs nevertheless make a valuable contribution to pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy. Pupils do not have regular computer experience and they are given insufficient opportunities to acquire broad based knowledge and understanding of the technology. The school has recognised the need to develop this subject and has made it one of their priorities. The plans and resources to improve standards are in place.
33. The subject is led by an experienced co-ordinator who has the necessary expertise to develop the subject. The school has recently adopted a nationally agreed scheme of work to underpin the subject curriculum. The resources, both hardware and software, are inadequate to provide equality of access for all children. This includes peripheral resources, such as the concept keyboard, which are not used enough to support the learning of pupils with special

educational needs and those with English as an additional language. There is little or no structure at present to the use of information technology in all classes and all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are not receiving a consistent and well planned curriculum which builds on a progression of skills which would adequately prepare them for the next stage of their education.

## **Art**

34. Although lessons were not observed in all classes, evidence from past work and displays indicates that pupils in all key stages, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress. In the early years of Key Stages 2 and 3, pupils make good progress. Overall there has been an appreciable improvement in progress in Key Stages 1 and 3 since the last inspection. Pupils use a range of materials to represent their ideas, for example pencil, crayon, pastel, paint, charcoal, textiles and clay. They learn about artists such as Van Gogh, Mondrian, Lowry, Hiroshige, Seurat and Bruegel, and can effectively copy their styles using different media and techniques.
35. Using examples of Mondrian's paintings, pupils in Year 5 were able to develop a collage pattern and improve their design skills, which they developed further using a computer. They express their ideas and feelings with sensitivity, as in Year 1 work on Seurat's paintings when pupils used paints effectively to depict patterns, using circles and strong patterns, and where observational drawings in the style of Lowry are also in evidence. Another good example was noted in a Year 6 lesson where pupils used stylised designs in the fashion of Van Gogh and Hiroshige to compare landscapes, concentrating on perspective, and to express mood. Work based on other cultures is represented by three-dimensional Greek masks produced by Year 3 and busts in clay of Roman personages created in Year 4. Such lessons provide pupils with opportunities for spiritual reflection and widen their cultural experience.
36. Pupils enjoy art work and have positive attitudes towards the subject. They work with concentration and can describe various techniques in good detail. A good example was noted in a Year 3 class working with clay and clay tools to produce a Greek oil lamp. Good collaboration takes place where pupils discuss their work with each other and are confident when evaluating their own or another's work. This was exemplified in a discussion with a group of Year 6 pupils who acknowledged the talents of others in the class's use of line, tone, shade, light and smudges to create realistic effects when sketching.
37. Much of the art is taught in topics when pupils learn about artists' lives and their styles. The quality of teaching is generally sound, although a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed at Key Stage 2 due to the time taken to gain all pupils' attention, and the lack of opportunities for creative exploration of the materials as the task was over-directed. The majority of the teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and expertise. Some are artists in their own right. They give good praise and support, and encourage pupils to try out new ideas. Sketch books in Key Stages 2 and 3 are used effectively to help develop pupils' techniques and illustrate progression.

38. The co-ordinator, who is well qualified, is keen to develop the subject further. The scheme of work ensures that pupils are taught a variety of skills and learn about different artists and cultures. Linking art with other subjects, for example history, religious education and information technology, is a sound feature of the planning. The school promotes pupils' work through quality displays around the school.

### **Design and technology**

39. Two lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. These, plus the scrutiny of pupils' work, classroom displays and careful examination of teachers' planning, indicate the pupils make satisfactory progress in design and technology across both key stages and in Year 7. The quality of the work is in line with national expectations for their ages. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make progress in line with their peers.
40. The coverage of the subject has been planned as fortnightly lessons. From their early years work in the nursery, pupils learn the fascination of cams and gears with simple large construction kits. While in Year 3 they link the subject with history and design medieval tiles. In Year 4 they attempt making a wallet and decorating it with cross stitching. Year 5 pupils design board games connected with "Building a better home". In Year 6 they had disassembled a slipper in order to study its manufacture and to redesign the product themselves. Year 7 were engrossed in food technology. Their work into the design of a fruit salad from tasting and costings to the finished article was a model of food technology. Their recorded work on display was exemplary. This design of a recipe shows the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the scientific principles of healthy eating.
41. The pupils observed in design and technology lessons enjoyed their work. They talked enthusiastically about their investigations and the materials used. Their behaviour in the small number of lessons observed was good.
42. The curriculum is designed around a national scheme of work. It is planned to ensure that pupils encounter a range of materials and make a variety of products. However, there is insufficient consideration in the planning of the actual skills and techniques that are developed in the long term. There is a mismatch of activities to the previous skills of the pupils. At Year 4 there were over ambitious expectations with the completion of an embroidered wallet. Frustrations surfaced with a variety of different sized needles, an inability to thread needles and to complete the stitchwork successfully without sewing the wallet together. There are few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their work. Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs or language difficulties, and any special help is normally given by the class teacher.
43. There is an updated policy and an approved, national scheme of work. Resources, generally, are more than satisfactory. This includes a wide range of construction kits. There are, however, not enough opportunities for the co-ordinator, who is based in the Nursery, to observe colleagues at work and spread around ideas and good practice.

Monitoring is undertaken on an annual sample of books and work. Assessment of the subject and an evaluation of the scheme of work is due later this year. There have been improvements since the last inspection. There are better resources and the subject has a higher profile in classes. Opportunities for using skills in numeracy and literacy are provided.

## **French**

44. It was only possible to observe one French lesson with the pupils at Key Stage 3. During the lesson pupils revised some vocabulary and sentence structures from previous lessons. They are able to respond well to the teacher's questions and their accents are particularly good. The majority of the pupils can understand and give directions, both orally and by following pictures in a textbook and instructions on a tape recording. They know the correct names for a variety of buildings in a French town, such as post office, swimming pool and town hall. Since starting French at the beginning of the year the pupils have clearly made good progress.
45. Pupils enjoy the subject. They listen attentively and try hard to produce appropriate responses. They record their work neatly. When given the opportunity to work in pairs they do so sensibly and make good use of the time available to practise their vocabulary and accents.
46. The quality of teaching is good. The teacher's own knowledge and expertise in the subject is good, and her enthusiasm and liveliness helps encourage those find the language more difficult. An interesting aspect of her work is to ensure that the pupils who speak Italian at home do not get confused with some of the similar vocabulary and pronunciation. Lessons are well planned after good liaison with the local secondary school to ensure compatibility between the work in Year 7 and Year 8. The resources are appropriate and well used to enable good progress to be made.

## **Geography**

47. Pupils make consistently good progress in geography at Key Stages 1 and 2, and in Year 7, where they are well prepared for the transfer to senior school. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language also make good progress throughout the school and are well supported by classroom and support teachers. Since the last inspection greater emphasis has been placed upon acquiring the skills of geographical enquiry and the use of the correct language. There is now much less copying from the board and much more opportunity for pupils to find out for themselves and to engage in field work. Across the key stages, pupils relate what they are doing to the local area. Good progress is achieved through the practical application of skills.
48. At Key Stage 1, pupils build well on the basic skills learnt in reception for looking at people and places. Younger pupils learn to use the words 'near' and 'far' correctly for objects in the classroom and apply their observational skills to a study of the playground and its setting. They return to the classroom to plot their findings on a simple map. Pupils

walk around the local area identifying key places, like the post office and church, from maps and photographs. By the end of the key stage they know about the rivers and canals of the local area and can locate them on a map. They know the points of the compass and are able to plan routes and give directions. Later, they will use their knowledge in orienteering. They know about the effects of weather on people and their surroundings, and the way it affects the clothes they wear. They make comparisons between different countries and extend their knowledge and understanding of the wider world.

49. At Key Stage 2, pupils study transport and complete a survey about routes to the school which they illustrate on a block graph. They learn about the different uses to which land is put and use correct terms like 'recreational' and 'industrial'. Pupils continue their study of the weather and design and make instruments for measuring wind speed and direction. They know about pollution of air and water and how to avoid it. One class conducted an animated debate about building a new housing estate on local parkland. They use words like 'conservationist' accurately and are skilled in debating the issues. By the end of the stage pupils have learnt many of the skills of geographical enquiry and know how to apply them to the local environment. In Year 7, pupils continue to progress well in a study of rural and urban settlements. They know how Milton Keynes fits into this picture.
50. Pupils respond well to geography lessons. They want to learn and they are keen to contribute their views. There was a sea of hands from those pupils eager to give their views in the land use debate. The 'Chairman's' decision was a point of high drama! They listen sensibly to each other and are sensitive to different views. They keenly anticipate field work.
51. The quality of teaching is good, and in Year 7 it is very good. Teaching is bright, imaginative and stimulating. The lesson on housing development is a good example of an innovative approach which promotes a vigorous pupil response. Lessons are carefully planned and linked to each other, so that pupils have a clear sense of direction. Teachers use questions well, taking care to include everyone. They listen to the pupils and make use of what they say. This makes pupils want to contribute more. Relationships are generally good and praise is plentiful for work well done. Teachers plan well for the effective use of resources, although computer programs are not used as often as they might be.
52. The teaching and learning of geography has developed well since the last inspection. The recently appointed co-ordinator expects to introduce more field work into the curriculum which will enable the pupils to apply enquiry skills still further. The scheme of work amply reflects the programmes of study in the National Curriculum. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is satisfactory and developing well. There are regular staff meetings to plan the way forward.

### **History**

53. It was only possible to observe lessons at Key Stage 2 during the inspection. However, it was clear from this, from a scrutiny of pupils' work in all key stages, photographic evidence and discussion with pupils, that they enjoy their work. Progress of pupils, including those with special educational needs, is sound in all three key stages, which is a significant improvement

since the last inspection, especially at Key Stages 1 and 2. The subject, which is mostly topic-based, is covered in sufficient depth to ensure that pupils develop appropriate historical skills, understanding and knowledge.

54. Pupils at Key Stage 1 have an understanding of time passing and ways of life in the past. In Year 1 pupils are able to speak about how their grandparents lived when they were young. They could sequence the type of clothing worn by them when they were young by looking at photographs. In their study of homes and houses they distinguish accurately between flats and houses, and understand that a house is not necessarily a home. Pupils in Year 2 use stories, pictures and adults talking about their early years to find differences between the past and now. For example, a group of Year 2 pupils sensibly explained the difference in hospital conditions now and in Florence Nightingale's era. The standard of pupils' work, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, improves quickly when they are taught to record their work on a time line.
55. At Key Stage 2 pupils in Year 6 could discuss with enthusiasm and recall facts about periods in history which they had studied. They knew why the Romans invaded Britain, that the Anglo Saxons introduced crop rotation, and that Churchill was a major political figure during the Second World War. Pupils in Year 5 know the importance of primary and secondary sources in historical studies. They use this knowledge effectively while studying the 'class divide' in the Tudor period through close examination of written evidence from the time. Pupils in Year 4 develop their understanding of chronology by beginning to appreciate the development of the Roman Empire. How the Romans lived at home or in the countries of occupation is brought to life by a notable collection of relevant artefacts. At Key Stage 3, pupils in Year 7, while studying medieval life, express confidently how the English language has been developed by a variety of invaders and settlers.
56. Teachers demonstrate knowledge and expertise. They use good questioning skills to extend the pupils' understanding of history. Pupils' opportunities to develop higher order research skills are less evident. There are planned links with other subjects, particularly art and English. For example, Year 7 pupils while visiting St Albans Abbey dress up and role play scenes from medieval life. In Year 3, pupils produce Greek oil lamps linked to their topic on Ancient Greece. Visits to museums and old towns in the local area enhance the pupils' understanding of the subject and bring it to life.
57. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject and especially enjoy the visits. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 class where the teacher illustrated in the first person the importance of Prometheus and Pandora in the Ancient Greeks' view of creation.
58. The enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has recently assumed the post, intends to give the subject a high profile and build a portfolio of pupils' work. The scheme of work and structure for assessment, which has appreciably improved since the last inspection, ensures progression, particularly in the area of chronology. Resources are satisfactory, well maintained and easily accessible to pupils and staff.

## **Music**

59. During the inspection it was possible to observe only two lessons in music. Therefore,

judgements about the quality of provision and the pupils' progress were supplemented by talking to pupils and teachers, and by a scrutiny of written work and teachers' plans.

60. Pupils make satisfactory progress in music at all key stages, which is an improvement since the last report. The pupils who are taught to play the flute, clarinet or violin by visiting music teachers make good progress. The curriculum provides a satisfactory selection of musical activities and pupils have the opportunity to play and compose music, and to listen to the music of others and to say what they think about it.
61. In Reception and Year 1, pupils stand in the playground, eyes closed, listening to the sounds of nature. They return to the classroom to describe what they have heard and to imitate the sounds on percussion instruments. They record their work, play it back, and suggest ways in which their performance might be improved. They know the difference between loud and soft and how to clap in rhythm. They compose short pieces and select the most appropriate rhythm for walking and skipping music.
62. At Key Stages 2 and 3 pupils listen carefully to music and correctly identify instruments and musical form. Pupils are familiar with the elements of music and, for example, recognise differences in pitch and texture. They are familiar with the popular works of classical composers and understand how music is used to define characters and create mood, particularly in film music. They have the opportunity to listen to music from other countries and identify the different musical patterns. In Year 7, pupils study mediaeval music and then compose their own short pieces using wind and percussion instruments.
63. Pupils at all key stages sing satisfactorily, although they sometimes have difficulty in pitching and sustaining a note. However, they sing enthusiastically and with enjoyment. This was observed particularly in the reception class where action songs were performed with energy and humour.
64. Most pupils respond well to music lessons. They anticipate them with pleasure and take a full part. Pupils work well together and share their knowledge in preparing for performance. The attitude and the standard of performance of the recorder band are both excellent. These pupils are developing high quality musicianship.
65. Teaching is always satisfactory and sometimes good. A support assistant provides exemplary teaching for the recorder band. Teachers are developing confidence in their musical knowledge and plan lessons well, aided by the recently revised scheme of work. They successfully balance creativity and control and allow older pupils to develop ideas independently. Pupils have too few opportunities to make notes of what they have done and

this makes learning less secure. Some of the longer lessons for older pupils include too much theory and not enough practice. Resources are satisfactory and used well. Relationships are usually good.

66. Pupils from the school regularly take part in a local music festival. The local authority music service provides a composition workshop for pupils in Year 5. Each term pupils take part in a musical afternoon at which they display their talents to the whole school and to parents. There is a concert at Christmas, and the school has recently performed the musical 'Bugsy Malone'. An opportunity is lost in assembly where pupils do not yet listen to a planned programme of music as they enter and leave. Since the last inspection, the new scheme of work, and the additional support provided for teachers, has had a beneficial effect on pupils' progress though the curriculum. Progress is better than at the last inspection and many pupils have a good range of musical experiences.

### **Physical education**

67. During the inspection the focus was mainly on dance and gymnastics. It was not possible to observe any lessons at Key Stage 3. Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, make satisfactory progress overall. In evaluating their own performance and that of others, pupils' skills are being soundly developed.
68. At Key Stage 1 pupils demonstrate imaginative ideas in dance, co-ordination in running, jumping and skipping, sustained exercise and good posture. They perform the basic actions of travelling, turning, balancing and rolling with appropriate control. They show sequences of linked movements on the floor and apparatus, sometimes including both in the routine. Younger pupils effectively maintain balances and are aware of others while moving around the hall.
69. During gymnastics, pupils at Key Stage 2 travel both on the floor and on the apparatus, changing shape, speed and direction effectively. However, they often lack appropriate control and technique in take-off and landing when moving on to and jumping off apparatus. In dance, pupils respond appropriately to music and narrative, developing a sequence of linked movements and steps. They show increasing control and use of speed and tension to express feelings and moods as they advance through the school. Pupils make good progress in swimming and by the end of Key Stage 2 nearly all can swim the expected 25 metres, with many swimming 1,000 metres or more.
70. Pupils clearly enjoy physical activities and adopt a positive and enthusiastic approach. They work energetically and the majority are keen to succeed. By Year 6 most boys and girls know the basic rules of football and netball. Many attend extra-curricular activities such as soccer, netball and cross country clubs, which are used well to further interest and skills. School teams take part in inter-school competitions for football, netball, cross-country and athletics, continually reaching the final stages, and are often outright winners, especially in football and athletics. Pupils generally listen attentively to instructions and co-operate well in group and team activities. However, there are occasions when some are inattentive and unruly. They respect and value the efforts of others, for example by applauding the movement and



step sequences in line dancing. Behaviour is usually good, but some pupils become uninterested when they have to wait too long for their activity.

71. Teaching is generally sound, with some examples of good practice, particularly during dance. Good subject knowledge, for example in the dance techniques of poise, flow and tension, and high expectations of pupils' involvement promote good standards. On the odd occasions when instructions are not clear, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise skills or when pupils are not appropriately challenged, teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers use demonstrations well to illustrate good practice, for example when emphasising balance, using high and low body parts. Health and safety issues are always uppermost in teachers' minds, and they ensure that the hall is as safe as possible when its multi-purpose function is taken into account.
72. The teachers plan adequately from a commercially produced scheme of work. The hall, playground and good - sized playing field enable the full curriculum to be taught effectively. The equipment, some of which is inadequate, especially gymnastic mats, is not always easily accessible, particularly for younger pupils, and presents storage problems, due to the multi-functional nature of the hall.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

73. The team consisted of 6 inspectors, including a lay inspector, who spent a total of 19.5 inspector days in school. The inspection team:

- spent approximately 80 hours observing lessons and reviewing children's work
- attended a sample of registration sessions
- attended assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities
- had lunch with the pupils on several days
- observed pupils' arrival at and departure from school
- observed all teachers at least three and most several times
- had discussions with the Headteacher, teaching and non-teaching staff, the Chairman of Governors and other governors
- reviewed all the available written work of a representative sample of three pupils from each year group and heard these and other pupils reading
- held informal discussions with many pupils
- analysed a large amount of documentation provided by the school both before and during the inspection, including:
  - the school prospectus;
  - school policies
  - the governors' annual report to parents;
  - minutes of governors' meetings;
  - financial statements;
  - the school development plan;
  - subject policies and planning;
  - pupils' reports and records, including special educational needs records
- held a meeting attended by 13 parents and considered 152 responses from parents to a questionnaire asking about their views of the school.

## DATA AND INDICATORS

### Pupil data

\_PRIVATE \_\_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 - Y7\_253\_1\_53\_3\_\_

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers (YR - Y7)

\_PRIVATE \_\_Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) \_9\_\_Number of pupils per qualified teacher\_28\_\_

#### Education support staff (YR - Y7)

\_PRIVATE \_\_Total number of education support staff\_5\_\_Total aggregate hours worked each week\_68.5\_\_

\_PRIVATE \_\_Average class size:\_31.6\_\_

### Financial data

\_PRIVATE \_\_Financial year: \_1998\_\_

\_PRIVATE \_\_£\_\_Total Income\_431 737\_\_Total Expenditure\_424 140\_\_Expenditure per pupil\_1 656\_\_Balance brought forward from previous year\_61 615\_\_Balance carried forward to next year\_69 212\_\_

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

\_PRIVATE \_\_Number of questionnaires sent out:\_256\_\_Number of questionnaires returned:\_152\_\_

**Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

\_PRIVATE \_\_Strongly agree\_Agree\_Neither\_Disagree\_Strongly disagree\_\_I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school\_20.5\_60.9\_9.9\_5.3\_3.3\_\_I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)\_31.6\_58.6\_3.9\_5.9\_\_The school handles complaints from parents well\_14.2\_56.1\_14.2\_8.8\_6.8\_\_The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught\_21.9\_63.6\_10.6\_2.6\_1.3\_\_The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress\_24.5\_60.3\_8.6\_6.0\_0.7\_\_The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work\_28.2\_63.8\_4.7\_2.7\_0.7\_\_The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons\_21.6\_55.4\_14.2\_7.4\_1.4\_\_I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home\_22.8\_56.6\_13.8\_4.8\_2.1\_\_The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)\_21.3\_66.0\_7.3\_4.7\_0.7\_\_The school achieves high standards of good behaviour\_20.5\_59.6\_13.9\_6.0\_\_My child(ren) like(s) school\_36.2\_58.6\_2.6\_1.3\_1.3\_\_

**Other issues raised by parents**

A few parents felt that communication with the school over special educational needs was not very effective.