

INSPECTION REPORT

SEAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Seal, Near Sevenoaks

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118605

Headteacher: Keith Gillett

Reporting inspector: Lynn Adair
21095

Dates of inspection: 8th to 12th May 2000

Inspection number: 189568

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Zambra Way Seal Sevenoaks Kent
Postcode:	TN15 0DJ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. Keith Blackburn
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Lynn Adair	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Under fives; Science; Information technology; Art; Design technology; Special educational needs.	The school's results and achievements; How well pupils are taught?
John Edmond	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well the school cares for its pupils; How good the school's partnership with parents is.
Tom Allen	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Religious education; History; Equal opportunities.	How good curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils are.
Kevin Hodge	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Geography; Music; Physical education.	How well the school is led and managed.

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Seal Primary is a smaller than average voluntary controlled Church of England school for boys and girls aged 4 to 11 years old. It has 173 full-time pupils on roll, drawing its pupils mainly from the village in which it is situated. Attainment on entry varies each year. It is broadly in line with pupils of the same age nationally, although a slightly larger proportion of the current pupils in the reception class had below expected levels of attainment when they entered the school in September. Thirty two pupils in the school have special educational needs, comprising just over 18 per cent of those on roll, a figure which is below average. Four pupils have Statements of Special Educational need, which is an above average proportion. There is no significant ethnic minority. Almost 7 per cent of pupils have free school meals, which is lower than average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Standards achieved by pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are broadly satisfactory, with some good attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2 and in design and technology at both key stages. Children under five do not make enough progress. Across the school, pupils' good social skills and positive relationships contribute significantly to their gains in learning, although pockets of misbehaviour in some classes reduce these gains. The quality of provision, including teaching, is broadly satisfactory, with strengths in the school's links with community and other schools. However, the quality of the curriculum requires improvement, as does teaching in the under fives and in the early parts of each key stage, to ensure that all pupils benefit and learn as well as they can. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Expenditure per pupil is average and overall the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- School results show high standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, and these are reflected in much of the work of current Year 6 pupils.
- Standards are above those expected of pupils of similar ages in design and technology.
- The good quality of provision and support for pupils with special educational needs enables these pupils to make good progress.
- The school promotes pupils' social development well. Pupils show a good level of initiative in lessons in planning their work, and carry out additional tasks responsibly outside of lessons.
- The school has developed good links with the community and very good links with other schools, which contribute effectively to the quality of learning opportunities for pupils.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Provision for the under fives, especially the quality of teaching, in order to raise standards in the reception class, which are below those expected of most five year olds.
- The quality of teaching, especially in teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement and the management of pupils to help them to learn at a more constant rate as they move through the school.
- The quality of curriculum planning both for children under five and for pupils of the same age in different classes in Key Stage 2.
- The systems for assessing how well pupils have achieved; for tracking their progress through the school, and for ensuring that planning for pupils' future learning builds on their prior attainment.
- Communication between home and school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996. Staffing at the school has changed significantly since that time, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. Improvement has been satisfactory overall, although there is still some work to do. Standards attained at the time of the last inspection were broadly average and these have been sustained with some improvement in mathematics standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Some subjects required improvement, and this has been successfully achieved, both in design and technology at each key stage, where standards are now above average, and in information technology, where standards are as expected of seven and eleven year olds. The school has established some sound procedures to deal with key issues in the last report related to monitoring and empowering staff to take a lead role in curriculum management. This has helped to improve to the quality of some provision, for example in curriculum planning as a result of improved schemes of work. However, other weaknesses in curriculum planning have emerged as a result of changes to the way classes are organised, changes in staffing and a different age of entry. This means that the issue associated with matching tasks to pupils' needs has not been fully addressed. A consequence of this is standards in the under fives are currently unsatisfactory. Through careful financial planning and rigorous monitoring of income and expenditure, the school has improved its financial situation and the level of learning resources in history, geography, art and religious education. It has plans to improve further the facilities and equipment for information technology.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	D	D	C	E
Mathematics	A*	B	A	C
Science	E	A	C	E

Key	
<i>excellent</i>	A*
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

At the end of Key Stage 2, the school's results have been variable over the last three years, partly due to the small number in the cohort. High standards in mathematics compared with all schools nationally have generally been sustained and compare satisfactorily with standards achieved in similar schools. These high standards are reflected in the current work of pupils. In English and science, the school's performance was in line with national averages, but well below those of most schools in contexts similar to that of Seal. This is partly as a result of fewer pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in these subjects. Inspection evidence shows that a higher proportion of current pupils are on line to achieve targets for Level 4 this year. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 were above average compared with the national average in mathematics, reflecting pupils' good number skills among current pupils in Year 2. However, results are below those of similar schools because of the lower proportion attaining the expectation. Results in reading have been low over the last three years and do not compare well with those of similar schools. The school has worked hard to reverse the downward trend with some success and current pupils' standards in reading are in line with those expected of most seven year olds. Average points scored in writing results have also been below average over the last three years. Standards seen during the inspection remain below average. Standards in science are in line with national averages, but are lower than those in similar schools. Standards in design and technology exceed the national expectations for seven and eleven year olds. Standards in all other subjects are in line with those of pupils of similar ages in each key stage. Children under five achieve lower standards than those expected of pupils of similar ages in literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Their creative and physical skills and their personal development are satisfactory. Pupils' achievement does not consistently build on their prior attainment as they move through the school. In the early years and early part of Key Stage 2, the rate of learning is slower and, although it increases rapidly towards the end of each key stage and learning in these classes is often good, it does not always make up for the slower progress earlier in the key stage. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, could achieve even more if higher levels of demand were made of their work. However, pupils with special educational needs across the school are helped to make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils are enthusiastic about school and are keen to be involved in activities outside the classroom. They are sometimes not fully involved in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well around the school. Some pockets of misbehaviour in lessons lead to wasted time and this reduces the rate of learning.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils show initiative in lessons in taking an active part in planning their own work, for example in science and design and technology. They carry out their duties outside of lessons conscientiously. This makes a strong contribution to learning.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Lessons start punctually, creating a smooth start to the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. About 40 per cent of these are good, of which 6 per cent are very good and this helped pupils to make good gains in their learning. However, 10 per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory. All of this is in the under fives and early parts of each key stage, and these pupils do not acquire new learning as effectively as they could. The main strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' good use of support assistants to aid learning, and in some effective methods which engage pupils' interest and sustain it. For example, lively expositions and investigative activities extend pupils' learning. Teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is broadly satisfactory. The main shortcomings of teaching include low expectations of pupils' achievement, especially for the higher attainers, which result in a lack of challenge in some of the work provided. In addition, management of pupils in some classes is not effective in curbing pupils' inattention and time is wasted. In the under fives, work is not well planned and organised to ensure children make the best progress in their learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Good links with community and very good links with other schools. Good range of extra-curricular activities. Good use of 'setting' arrangements in maths in Key Stage 2 matches work well to needs of pupils. Planning needs to be tailored more effectively to the current organisation of pupils in Key Stage 2 to ensure that it takes full account of the needs of pupils of the same age in different mixed age classes. Provision for the under fives needs to be improved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Good provision for these pupils with a good level of well organised support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Pupils are helped to acquire English at a sound rate.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Good provision for social development helps pupils to take more significant responsibility as they move through the school, and to develop their social skills effectively.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall. The school has good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare, and provides sound support and guidance. Weaknesses in evaluating the performance of pupils on an ongoing basis to ensure their learning builds effectively on their prior attainment.
How well the school works in partnership with its parents	Satisfactory overall. The school receives support from the majority of parents, but needs to improve communication to ensure that all parents are kept fully informed and aware of what it is doing to address their concerns.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear sense of purpose to the school's work. Staff have a good level of delegated responsibility and make a positive contribution to work in the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Sound. Good structure of committees to carry out duties. Very supportive, but need more information on performance to acquire better understanding of school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have identified weaknesses which have been acted on, but lack sufficient rigour to ensure greater consistency in practice across school.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Considered decisions about use of funds mean that previous shortfalls in funding have been overcome. Good use is made of funds to support pupils with special needs. Principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.
Adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	Satisfactory overall. There are sufficient teaching staff and a good level of support staff who are used well. More resources are needed in information technology and this is planned for. School grounds are spacious and well equipped, but best use is not made of internal space and conditions for working in some classrooms are cramped as a result.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most children like school. • They feel comfortable about approaching school with questions or a problem. • They feel the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information they receive about how their children are getting on. • The range of activities outside lessons. • For the school to work more closely with them. • Giving their children the right amount of homework. • The way the school is led and managed. • The behaviour of pupils. • Teaching.

Parents' positive views were supported to some extent by the inspection findings, but inconsistencies in the quality of provision mean that not all pupils achieve their best. The inspection substantiated parents' more critical views in some respects. Pockets of misbehaviour in some classes were noted, and there is inconsistency in setting and feeding back on homework and in the quality of teaching. The concern about the range of extra curricular activities is not supported by the inspection evidence, which also indicates that leadership and management are satisfactory. However, the school has recognised the need to improve communication with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children enter the school, their attainment is broadly average compared with children of similar age nationally, although baseline assessments show that the attainment of current reception class pupils was slightly below average in basic skills. However, children have not made enough gains in their learning overall in the reception class towards the desirable outcomes for young children's learning, which are the government's recommendations of achievement at five years old. A satisfactory proportion are on course to at least achieve these expected goals by the age of five in physical and creative skills and in their personal and social development. However, not enough pupils are on line to achieve expected standards in language and literacy, mathematics, or knowledge and understanding of the world. No judgements on the attainment of five year olds were made in the last inspection, so no judgement on improvement since that time can be given. However, current inspection evidence shows that the under fives do not achieve as well as they should and progress from the time they enter the school is unsatisfactory. The main constraints to learning arise from weaknesses in teaching, and in how work is planned and organised for these children. Children are not engaged sufficiently or given enough opportunity to develop their learning further through more demanding tasks, especially to record what they learn. They do not make the most of their attainment on entry.

2. Inspection evidence shows that standards overall in the core subject of English, mathematics and science are in line with those expected of seven year olds nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. Results of the 1999 National Curriculum statutory assessments showed well below average standards in reading, where results were in the lowest 5 per cent of schools whose pupils are from similar backgrounds. This was mainly because few pupils attained higher standards than expected. A larger proportion of current pupils are on line to achieve the nationally expected standard of Level 2 or the higher Level 3 standards in reading as a result of focused improvements in provision, and good teaching in Year 2. However, in spite of more rapid progress in writing in Year 2, writing skills are below expected standards, as was the average points scored in last year's results, and well below the average of similar schools. Not enough progress is made in the early years of the key stage to enable more pupils to achieve expected standards by the time they are seven. The good standards observed in number work during the inspection, match the above average 1999 test results. However, these results were still below those of similar schools, mainly because the lower proportion attaining expected standards reduced the overall average points scored. Evidence from inspection suggests that more pupils are on course to achieve Level 2 this year. According to teacher assessments in science, an average proportion attain the expected standard and above, and this is reflected in current Year 2 pupils' work. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in information technology are in line with those expected of most seven year olds. In religious education, standards meet those specified for Year 2 pupils in the locally Agreed Syllabus.

3. Standards seen during the inspection at the end of Key Stage 2 are above those expected of eleven year olds in mathematics, and in line with those expected of eleven year olds in English and science. Standards in religious education meet those specified in the locally Agreed Syllabus for pupils of this age. In information technology, pupils are working at the level expected of most eleven year olds. The results of statutory assessment tests in mathematics for eleven year olds in 1999 were well above the national average and were in line with those of similar schools. This corresponds closely to attainment in the current Year 6, where a large proportion attain above average standards, because the setting arrangements in Key Stage 2 help higher attaining pupils to achieve well. In English and science, results in the 1999 tests were broadly average compared with all schools nationally, but well below average in comparison with the results of similar schools. This was mainly because slightly smaller proportions of pupils attained the expected Level 4. Inspection evidence suggests that more pupils in Year 6 are on course to achieve the expected Level 4 in English and science, although fewer are attaining high standards in these subjects than in mathematics.

4. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was broadly average in English at the end of both key stages, with some good achievement noted in speaking and listening. Standards have been maintained in reading in both key stages, and in writing in Key Stage 2, but are not so good in writing in Key Stage 1, or in speaking and listening across the school. Trends in test results over the last three years show standards have improved at the end of Key Stage 2, but have declined in Key Stage 1 compared with national figures. Some improvement to provision has resulted in the more promising attainment observed during the inspection, but pupils' achievement is variable, depending very much on the quality of the teaching. Across the school, pupils make satisfactory use of their literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are satisfactory overall, but pupils could achieve better standards. In Key Stage 1, pupils talk confidently, but younger pupils are not always prepared to listen well in introductions and class discussions. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils ask and answer questions coherently, but do not demonstrate high levels of skill in argument and debate. Pupils throughout the school develop their accuracy and fluency in reading, and they understand an increasing range of texts. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to extract information readily from books they are provided with to extend their knowledge of topics studied in other subjects, such as history and geography. Pupils' development of more independent reference and research skills is unsatisfactory, however, constrained by their lack of access to the library facilities, which are under-used. Pupils write with increasing independence and coherence, although the accuracy and legibility of their writing in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory as a result of fewer opportunities to practise their writing skills in the early years. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils incorporate a sound vocabulary in their writing, which makes it more interesting. They use their literacy skills appropriately in other subjects, for example, writing accounts of historical events and recording observations in science.

5. Since the last inspection, standards in mathematics have been sustained at the end of Key Stage 1, and there has been improvement at the end of Key Stage 2. Trends in results of national tests are variable, although more variable at Key Stage 1, where the average points scored dipped below average in 1998. This was improved on the following year to above average. Current achievement is satisfactory with some good attainment in number skills. However, achievement of higher attainers is sometimes constrained as they are not always provided with enough demanding work in each year as they move through Key Stage 1.

Pupils make a slow start to learning in Year 3, but make good gains in later years, notably as a result of the effective 'setting' arrangements, which match work more closely to pupils' prior attainment and help the higher attainers in particular to achieve well. Most pupils make satisfactory gains in learning in shape, measures and data handling as they move through the school, although progress is noticeably more rapid towards the end of each key stage. However, less progress is made in developing pupils' learning in the use and application of mathematical skills. Where pupils use their numeracy skills in other subjects, they do so satisfactorily; for example, to measure and to represent data in science, and in spreadsheet work in information technology.

6. Standards in science at the end of both key stages are broadly similar to those noted in the last inspection, although they have improved in pupils' investigative skills. In Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining above expected standards improved in 1999 compared with the 1998 cohort, although the potential of more pupils to achieve high standards is constrained by the slow start which pupils have in the early years. In Key Stage 2, a small dip occurred in last year's average points scored in national test results due to the smaller proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard. Inspection evidence suggests that the proportion is likely to be higher this year and more in line with similar schools. Pupils make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding of key scientific concepts, underpinned by a sound range of practical investigative and experimental work. In this work, pupils bring their own ideas to learning effectively and this helps to develop their enquiry skills well.

7. In both key stages, pupils' achievement in information technology is satisfactory, resulting in expected standards by the end of Key Stage 2, an improvement on low standards seen in the last inspection. Achievement in religious education is satisfactory in each key stage, and reflects standards observed in the last inspection. Good standards were seen in design and technology, indicating a significant improvement on the below average standards noted in the last inspection. Pupils have a good understanding of the design process and the use of technology in society. Satisfactory standards have been maintained in art, music and physical education, and in history and geography in both key stages.

8. Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. However, the rate at which pupils learn is not consistent as they move through the school. In the early years of each key stage, weaknesses in teaching mean that some pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Progress is much more rapid towards the end of each key stage as a result of better teaching. In Key Stage 2, however, learning is constrained because too much of the work provided for all pupils is at the same level, regardless of age and ability in the mixed-age classes. As a result, higher attaining pupils do not always develop their skills to the more advanced levels, of which they are capable, for instance in English and science. In mathematics, the setting of pupils by ability helps them to achieve these higher levels of attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall towards targets in their individual education plans, particularly in small withdrawal groups and 'booster classes', as a result of the good, well focused support by learning support assistants. Where support is not available in class, pupils' needs are not always taken fully into account, and they sometimes struggle with material that is too complex. No notable variation in attainment between boys and girls was observed during the inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. The last inspection report considered pupils' personal development and relationships to be good, with pupils showing initiative and responsibility and helping each other. This high standard has been maintained and makes a good contribution to the way pupils learn. Pupils' attitudes to learning were seen to be very good and enthusiastic, and their behaviour in and around the school to be very good. The current situation has deteriorated slightly in these aspects. In their responses to the questionnaire, and in their contributions at the meeting, parents' views were mainly positive, although a small but significant minority (10 per cent) felt that the behaviour of some pupils caused concern. The inspection findings support this view. While most pupils behave well around the school, there were pockets of misbehaviour in some lessons, especially in the under fives, Year 1 and a Year 3 and 4 class. Most pupils' attitudes and behaviour make a satisfactory contribution to the quality of the learning environment, but on occasion the rate of learning is reduced by these interruptions.

10. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school, and the school's youngest children confidently choose their own activities at the start of each day. These positive attitudes, however, are not always sustained well during the day. For example, in review sessions at the end of lessons in the under fives, the children readily ask questions of each other and show their work, but are not very interested in listening to others, becoming inattentive during some of the long periods of inactivity. In Key Stages 1 and 2, most pupils concentrate well and have positive attitudes to learning, especially when the teacher has high expectations of them to work hard. This was seen in a happy, constructive art lesson in Year 2, where pupils were clearly enjoying themselves. They were interested and enthusiastic and were fully engaged in their work, making the most of the time available. On occasion, pupils are not so enthused in lessons; notably during long introductions, their attention wanders and a slow pace to learning ensues.

11. Pupils are keen to take a full part in the life of the school, and make the most of the activities provided out of lessons. For example, there is a large take-up of pupils in sports clubs, and in drama and cross-stitch clubs.

12. Behaviour round the school is satisfactory, with pupils behaving sensibly when arriving at and leaving school, and walking quietly to assembly. They behave well when queuing for and eating dinner, and play constructively at break time. Pupils are courteous to each other and friendly to staff. They react politely when addressed, and are friendly and helpful to visitors. No instances of oppressive behaviour or bullying were seen. Pupils were involved in developing codes of conduct for both classroom and playground. Respect for property is high and no litter or graffiti were seen. Last year there were neither permanent nor temporary exclusions. However, in lessons not all pupils are quick to respond to teachers' reminders for good behaviour when they are off task. As a result, time is wasted not only by these pupils but also by other pupils, as teachers have to take more time to deal with such incidents, not always as effectively as they could.

13. The school impresses on pupils and their parents the need to consider others, and most pupils react positively. Pupils co-operate well in pairs and small groups, sharing equipment and materials readily from an early age. In a design and technology lesson in Year 5, pupils helped each other to overcome problems in a mature and sensible way when creating prototype models. Their interactions with the teacher showed a high level of mutual respect. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good, especially where teachers' expectations of pupils to work cooperatively and sensibly are high. Most pupils are tolerant, relate positively to each other and work well together in lessons. Pupils' good relationships with the teacher and with each other, as exemplified in a Key Stage 2 music lesson, help promote good order. However, a small minority of pupils still have to learn to be aware of others' needs. They do not always listen attentively to each other's views and have to be reminded on too many occasions.

14. Pupils respond well to the opportunities provided to develop their personal skills. They take responsibility well for planning and organising their work, with some good examples seen in science investigations and design and technology experiments. Many pupils take an active part in school life. All carry out their minor classroom responsibilities assiduously, and older pupils, particularly those in Year 6, take up their many responsibilities round the school with enthusiasm. The 'Web Reporters', for example, are conscientious in collecting news for the school's web site, and team captains collate house points in preparation for the school's weekly achievement assembly.

15. Pupils' attendance rate, at 94.7 per cent, is broadly average. It has dropped from a high level of 96.3 per cent over the last year, mostly due to the long-term absence of a very small number of Traveller pupils. The rate of unauthorised absence at 0.1 per cent is well below the national average. Good attendance has a positive effect on the attainment and progress of pupils. Lessons start punctually in the morning and after breaks. Pupils are on time at the start of the day and display a responsible attitude to punctuality.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Overall, the quality of teaching in the whole school is satisfactory or better in 90 per cent of lessons. However, the remaining 10 per cent is unsatisfactory, all of which is in the under fives and at the start of both Key Stages. In these lessons pupils did not learn as effectively as they should. However, teaching is good in 40 per cent of all lessons, and very good in 6 per cent of all lessons. All of the very good lessons were in Year 2 and helped pupils to make very effective gains in their learning. In the last inspection, the percentage of satisfactory and better teaching was higher. Some of the shortcomings identified in the last inspection have been addressed. For example, learning objectives are now made explicit to pupils at the start of most lessons. However, other weaknesses have emerged, especially in planning and organisation for the under fives, and in management of pupils in some classes. Also, some low expectations of pupils are linked to weaknesses in assessing where pupils are in their learning and what they need to do next. The school has taken action to address specific weaknesses which had arisen in a Key Stage 2 class, about which a number of parents had expressed concerns, and new staff are in the process of being appointed.

17. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory in most subjects, with some good subject knowledge noted in science and design and technology. This helps pupils to develop their investigative skills and scientific vocabulary well, and they gain a good understanding of the design process. Teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is broadly satisfactory in helping pupils to increase their understanding as they move through the school. Most teachers follow the recommended national frameworks in planning lessons, but work is not always sufficiently adapted to cater for the wide range of age and attainment in each of the mixed age classes, for example to cater for the fact that some pupils in Year 5 are with Year 6 pupils and some are with Year 4 pupils. 'Setting' of pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 in Key Stage 2 according to their ability is helping to provide a better match of work in some of the mathematics lessons. Some good subject knowledge is displayed in explaining mathematical concepts in these sessions, and pupils learn well as a result as concepts are quickly understood and used to solve problems. In the under fives, there is an imbalance between whole class oral work directed by the teacher, and opportunities for children to work on practical tasks in a more independent yet focused way. This means that they do not make enough gains in their mathematical and literacy skills, especially writing.

18. Overall, tasks planned for the under fives do not provide an appropriate level of challenge, especially in free-choice activities, where too few demands are made of children. Consequently they do not use the time to learn effectively. Teachers and adult helpers miss opportunities to reinforce children's understanding and develop their skills through recording in written or drawn form. Planning is satisfactory overall in the rest of the school, with a large amount of information included in many plans to identify what pupils will do. On occasion the amount of detail obscures the key learning points, and learning intentions are not clearly defined in terms of expected outcomes related to national expectations for different groups of pupils. In Key Stage 1, expectations are usually pitched at an appropriate level for the majority of pupils, although higher attaining pupils are not always challenged enough by lesson activities across the key stage and consequently do not learn as well as they should. In Key Stage 2, planning does not always identify work which is sufficiently adapted to cater for the wide range of ages and levels of attainment in each class. This means that, in some lessons, older and higher attaining pupils lose interest and concentration and do not deepen or extend their learning sufficiently. In other lessons lower attaining pupils sometimes struggle with work that is too difficult and lose interest. On occasion in the early stages of Key Stage 2, a slow pace to learning results from introductions which are too long and which fail to enthuse or engage pupils sufficiently.

19. The lack of precision in planning is often linked to a lack of understanding about what different groups of pupils need to do next, which stems from weaknesses in day-to-day assessment. Teachers are not always aware precisely where pupils are in their learning and where to take them next. Teachers' comments in marking usually respond to pupils' efforts, and some good practice is evident in some marking which points out where pupils have gone wrong. In Year 5 and 6, some good ongoing diagnosis of pupils' reading ability takes place, which helps the teacher to plan their future reading experiences. However, this good practice has yet to influence sufficiently the quality of assessment practice in the rest of the school. Plans are rarely modified in the short-term as a result of assessments, and effective day-to-day evaluation of pupils' learning is not an integral feature of teaching across the school. This means that pupils do not always acquire their knowledge and skills in a systematic way.

20. Learning support assistants are well involved in planning and help pupils with special educational needs in particular to learn well. In small group situations they work with a high degree of autonomy, and support pupils well in making gains towards literacy and numeracy targets. In the under fives, classroom assistants play a key role in working with groups of pupils, and on some occasions help them to make sound gains. However, although they collect copious notes in free-choice activities to say what activities children have undertaken, they rarely evaluate what gains children have made in their learning. The time taken in note-taking means opportunities are missed for more focused input with children as they work, to help them to make the most effective use of their time in different activities.

21. Teachers' methods are good overall in aiding learning in Key Stages 1 and 2, but unsatisfactory in the under fives. The best teaching is characterised by interesting introductions and lively exposition which stimulate pupils' interest and then sustain it for the rest of the lesson. Good focused questioning targets specific pupils so as to check their understanding and help them think more deeply. Most lessons across the school begin with a useful recapitulation to consolidate pupils' learning, followed by sound instructions and clear explanations so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. Activities are well devised to enable pupils to think for themselves, to experiment and explore, especially in investigative work in science. Teachers check on pupils as they work and adult helpers are deployed well to focus on developing the skills of individuals and small groups of pupils. This was seen to good effect in a Year 2 design and technology lesson where pupils were effectively helped to consider playground equipment. Good plenaries at the end of lessons help pupils to consider their learning. In the under fives, the teacher enables children to have some choice in their learning at the start of each day. However, the choice on occasion is too wide and the precise learning intentions are not clearly defined to enable children to get the best out of the activities. On other occasions, too many large group, adult-led discussions are ineffective in engaging all children, who become disinterested and inattentive, especially in overlong review sessions. Children are given a chance to ask and answer questions, but many are inattentive and bored by these sessions.

22. Management of pupils has weaknesses in the under fives and in the early stages of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Good management is evident in the other classes, based on high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the very good relationships that are fostered. This sets a suitable tone for lessons and learning, in which pupils can concentrate well and where little time is wasted on dealing with distractions. This is not always the case, and too much time is taken in dealing with pockets of off-task behaviour as a result of ineffective strategies which fail to ensure that pupils are sufficiently involved in their learning

23. All pupils are provided with homework tasks from an early age, such as reading, learning spellings and multiplication facts, as well as some additional activities, all of which support pupils' learning. Scrutiny of pupils' home-school books, however, shows little feedback being provided for parents to help them support their children more effectively at home.

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

24. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school are satisfactory overall in Key Stage 1 and 2, but are unsatisfactory in the under fives. Shortcomings identified in the last inspection have been partly addressed. For example, development has taken place to create schemes of work that give curriculum planning some structure. However, these still do not cater fully for the current organisation in Key Stage 2 to ensure, in particular, that pupils of the same age in different mixed age classes receive a curriculum well matched to their needs so that they make the maximum gains in their learning. Other issues associated with weaknesses in the curriculum for under fives have also emerged. However, some improvements to the curriculum have taken place, for example in special needs provision, and the school's links with the community and its partner institutions.

25. Provision for children under five years old is unsatisfactory. Consequently the children are not well-prepared for the start of compulsory education. There is no Early Years' policy or guidance to outline the overall expectations for children under five, or to show clearly how the planned curriculum relates to the nationally recommended areas of learning, and how it will be organised to ensure pupils receive a balanced curriculum. Medium term planning does take account of most of the national recommendations, but does not show opportunities for regular outdoor activities to enable children to develop their physical skills to a higher level. Medium and short-term planning contains lots of information about what children will do, but too little definition of the precise skills that are being taught and too few specific references to either the recommended desirable outcomes for children at the age of five or National Curriculum levels of attainment. As a result, planning does not identify clearly enough how tasks are adapted so that children at different levels of attainment make their best progress. Not enough thought is given to the planning of free-choice activities to ensure that children make the most of these independent opportunities for learning to increase their level of knowledge and skill.

26. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education. The school offers pupils a short, weekly personal, health and social education lesson, which contributes to their personal development. This may take the form of 'circle time' discussion on sensitive subjects such as bullying. Relevant aspects of provision, such as health education, including drugs awareness and sex education, are integrated into the programme for science throughout the school, while key aspects are taught separately to older pupils and have the approval of the governing body. The school has recognised that its approach to personal development needs closer co-ordination to ensure that aspects are not omitted or duplicated, and is actively developing a new programme for introduction in the autumn term.

27. The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils in Key Stage 1. However, in Key Stage 2 there are weaknesses because of the way the curriculum is planned for the three mixed age classes. All subjects have good subject policies and detailed schemes of work, which help teachers to plan effectively for continuity and progress in pupils' learning in Key Stage 1. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when not all schemes of work were in place. A two-year cycle of topics has been created to cover work over Key Stage 2. However, some pupils of the same age in different mixed age classes cover different

parts of the two-year cycle. This does not ensure that the needs of these pupils are appropriately met, and that they have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and opportunities to succeed in them. For example, pupils miss topics, which are taught to pupils of the same age in another mixed age class, and there is no assurance that others may not repeat courses already encountered in an earlier year.

28. The school is aware of this problem within the constraint of a two-year cycle. Some action has been taken to organise ‘sets’ according to ability in three mathematics sessions each week, which helps to match work more closely to pupils’ needs, but more thought is needed in planning the rest of the curriculum. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy satisfactorily, with consequent improvements to standards in reading in Key Stage 1. It has embarked on the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and, as shown above, has made considered adaptations to the Key Stage 2 programme which benefit pupils.

29. The constraints to the curriculum identified above result in pupils in Year 5 not always having equal access to the curriculum at the appropriate level. In addition, some older, higher attaining pupils in the mixed age classes are sometimes presented with work that is insufficiently challenging to enable them to acquire skills at a higher level. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils are identified early and given access to the curriculum by means of individual educational plans, which set clear targets and programmes of study. A good programme of support is provided. Additional help is given in withdrawal groups, by individual tuition, and by support in class lessons which is well-organised and effectively supports pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language are given specialist help by individual tuition, and by support in class lessons, for the improvement of language acquisition skills.

30. A large number of parents, almost one-fifth, expressed the view that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited. However, inspection evidence shows that the curriculum is broadened by the provision of a good range of extra curricular activities, which include sporting activities, such as football, rugby, netball, cricket, short tennis, cross country and race walking. The school had notable successes this season when one girl won the County Cross Country Race, and members of the school race walking team came second in the national championships when representing the county. In addition to sports, a drama club meets regularly, as do the music club, modern dance club, choir and cross-stitch group. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to join the Christian discussion group, which is well attended and suitably supports the Christian ethos of the school.

31. The school’s extensive and varied links with the community are a strength of the school. The contribution of the community to pupils’ learning is good, and governors take a very active role in ensuring that the curriculum is enriched through links with local institutions, such as the church and the school for the blind, and in promoting the school through the local press. The school participates wholeheartedly in village activities, such as fetes, carol singing, the music festival and the planned Millennium celebration this summer. The school has set up its own Internet website and pupils learn how to access the Internet. Older pupils take an active part in updating the website with school news. Pupils’ horizons are broadened and the quality of the curriculum improved by a good range of educational and

cultural outings and field trips and by a residential trip for Year 6 pupils. The school is gathering commercial sponsors to help finance a new computer suite and has obtained useful financial support from local business for its auctions. There are occasional visits to commercial premises, so that pupils can start to learn about the world of work. Pupils benefit from visits from outside organisations and specialists, such as the fire service and theatre groups; the local clergy regularly take assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to give of themselves by collecting for charity and singing at residential homes.

32. The school has established very constructive links with partner institutions which add significantly to pupils' opportunities for learning. Close and successful links with the two main secondary schools in the area mean that older pupils have regular access to high quality facilities for information technology. More links are planned to enhance the arts curriculum. Good liaison takes place with the local playgroup, from which most new pupils come. The school is a member of an effective consortium of over 20 local primary and secondary schools, whose activities include providing competitive sporting opportunities. The school sometimes shares lessons with the school for the blind, whose older pupils also make a useful contribution to pupils' development during their work experience.

33. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, which is a similar judgement to that made by the last inspection.

34. The promotion of spiritual development is satisfactory. In this church school, pupils are given suitable opportunities to reflect on inner feelings. There is a planned programme of assemblies with regular visits by the local vicar to officiate. In addition other denominations alternate, including representatives from the Vine Evangelical Mission, and a local lay reader. The school meets requirements to hold a daily act of worship. Assemblies assert Christian values very strongly, but the element of reflection in worship is often low key. Pupils do not always have an active role in participating fully in assemblies. The exception is during the weekly celebration assembly, when pupils in each class make contributions. This enables them to reflect on the achievements of other pupils. In some lessons, teachers value pupils' ideas during informal interactions and more formal discussions, and these are used well to develop knowledge and insight into other values and beliefs. In their lesson on Hinduism, for example, Year 2 pupils reflect on which of the lesser gods they favour.

35. The school promotes pupils' moral development satisfactorily. Pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to consider the effect of their actions on others. 'Circle time' lessons provide good opportunities for discussing issues which arise in and out of school. Through discussion to resolve problems which arise in the playground, teachers and playground supervisors help pupils to see the difference between right and wrong. However, the effectiveness of each teacher's approach is not consistent across the school and the consequent impact therefore varies. In their lesson on Martin Luther King, Years 4 and 5 pupils discuss sensibly wider moral issues arising from discrimination against black people in the United States of America. In their essay writing on watching television, Years 5 and 6 pupils show understanding of moral difficulties relating to the kind of programmes which children can watch. Pupils across the school also engage in fund raising, which helps to raise their awareness of those who are less fortunate than themselves.

36. The school promotes pupils' social development well. It is promoted from the time pupils start school, when they are encouraged to choose activities for themselves. Pupils are taught to consider others when moving around the school. All pupils are provided with opportunities to take minor responsibilities within each class. In Key Stage 1, pupils are given varied responsibilities as monitors with specific tasks for the week, such as taking registers to the office. Older pupils are given more significant responsibilities, such as looking after the younger pupils at play times and lunch times to ensure that they act in a socially acceptable way. The school's house system gives older pupils opportunities to exercise leadership roles as team captains. In her self-evaluation, a Year 5 pupil recorded her aspiration to become a house captain and a 'Web Reporter', the latter being responsible for maintaining the school's web site. The good range of the school's extra-curricular activities provides opportunities for pupils to develop their teamwork skills further. On residential visits, older pupils have the opportunity to learn more about community living.

37. Promotion of cultural development is satisfactory. Through history and geography lessons in particular, pupils learn about their own culture and local environment. This is enhanced by the many visits which they make and by the number of visitors who provide various insights into aspects of pupils' own culture. Pupils also learn about other faiths through their study of world religions and are taught to respect the beliefs of others. A programme of visits by students from overseas provides the opportunity for pupils to learn about the way of life of people in Jordan, Morocco and Sweden, among others. Overall, though, there is limited evidence of a focus on the multicultural dimension through more explicitly planned opportunities in art and music. However the books and other literature used in the school do reflect minority interests.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school's procedures are satisfactory overall in helping the school care for its pupils. The last inspection noted, amongst other things, the school's family atmosphere, good liaison with agencies, high quality pastoral care, a positive attitude to behaviour and emphasis on health and safety. There has been little change in this area, apart from staff not always being consistent in their approach to behaviour. In addition, the weaknesses that were identified in the school's assessment systems still remain.

39. The school has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Class teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well and pupils confidently turn to them or other staff for help. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and help to keep pupils safe and secure at school. The school complies fully with the local education authority's child protection guidelines, and staff awareness is raised through in-service training led by the headteacher, who is the designated member of staff. The support for pupils with special educational needs is also good. Useful guidance for staff and governors is provided in a suitable policy that complies with the official Code of Practice for special needs. The register is kept up to date, and provision is suitably matched to their needs and ensures their entitlement to the curriculum. Liaison arrangements with external agencies are good.

40. The school complies with legal requirements for health and safety, which includes a good, recently revised policy, backed up by appropriate governor involvement and sensible inspection procedures. Provision for medical care and first aid are good. The school looks after sick pupils attentively, though there is no medical room. Regular safety tests are carried out on all types of equipment. The school responded rapidly when notified of a minor health and safety problem. Healthy and safe living is satisfactorily promoted. 'Circle Time' and personal, social and health education lessons, backed up by visits from the police and fire services and school nurse, help pupils to have a sound awareness of health and safety issues.

41. The school operates sound measures for monitoring and improving attendance, which keep attendance at a satisfactory level. Parents are made aware of the importance of good attendance and the school meets regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss some of the more persistent absentees. Sound measures are taken to promote discipline and good behaviour. Procedures are good and include appropriate methods for rewarding good behaviour, such as merit marks and certificates given out at celebration assemblies, and for dealing with misbehaviour. While procedures work well around the school, they are not always successfully or consistently implemented in class, a concern raised by parents. Most staff have high expectations of good behaviour at all times and promote an orderly and cheerful atmosphere throughout the school. Such high standards are not consistently set in all lessons, particularly in those with younger pupils. Procedures for eliminating bullying and oppressive behaviour work well.

42. In spite of some pockets of good practice, overall monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is unsatisfactory. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress do not help to track pupils' achievements effectively in each area of the curriculum. A useful policy has been developed to show what is expected to be done and when, but it focuses on more summative assessment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, such as the statutory tests at ages seven and eleven, and standardised tests. Few procedures exist to track pupils' progress on an ongoing basis in order to adapt their work in the short term to meet their needs more effectively. Some good practice is evident in diagnostic reading records, but this good practice has yet to permeate through the school and in some classes reading records are minimal. There is little guidance for teachers on how to assess work in other subjects. This often leads to often very descriptive notes of work covered, rather than to evaluations of what pupils have learnt and what they need to do next. The exception is in information technology, where a recently introduced checklist of skills, referenced to National Curriculum levels of attainment, helps to assess where pupils are in their learning, but the information from these assessments has yet to affect planning for individual pupils.

43. The school keeps some examples of pupils' work, but these are not organised well enough to allow individual pupils' progress to be monitored effectively over time. Work is not always dated or the level of attainment noted. There is no portfolio of moderated work to guide teachers, particularly those new to the profession, to enable them to judge attainment accurately. Some comments on pupils' personal development are made in end-of-year reports. However, this does not act as an effective way to keep track of their levels of application, cooperation and concentration on a regular basis. New procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development, introduced last September, are beginning to take effect, but not consistently across the school.

44. The use of assessment to inform planning is largely unsatisfactory. Little use is made of the baseline assessment in the reception classes to inform and adapt planning. The school analyses information from the English, mathematics and science tests at both key stages, and has used the information to set numerical targets, and identify where there are weaknesses. This had led to some improvement, for example in reading in Key Stage 1. However, throughout the school, the information gained from assessment is not used well to plan work for different groups within the same class. Assessment opportunities identified in teachers' plans are of a very broad nature and lack precision about who is to be assessed and how. Planning is informed more by the content of long-term plans than by assessment information on pupils' individual learning needs. This leads to work being provided for pupils which does not always match their needs, for example, in Year 5.

45. The support and guidance given to pupils is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to evaluate their own learning, and some good practice was seen in discussing reading needs in Years 5 and 6 and setting targets. Achievements are recognised and valued by the school, for example in weekly assemblies when pupils show their work, or receive certificates for their accomplishments, which act as incentives and encouragement to other pupils. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are recognised early through sound screening procedures. Regular reviews take place involving parents, and outside agencies where required, and programmes are suitably devised to support their needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. In the last inspection report, the school's partnership with parents was considered a strength. While current inspection evidence shows that links with parents are satisfactory, there is some work to do in terms of establishing more effective channels of communication to encourage greater satisfaction among the parent body. The school recognises that it needs to improve communication between home and school, and to ensure that all parents are kept effectively informed about their children's progress and the work of the school.

47. Most parents support the view that pupils enjoy coming to school and think that their children make good progress. They feel comfortable about approaching the school, and recognise that the school expects their children to achieve their best and that it is good at helping them to mature. These generally positive views were supported to some extent by the inspection findings, although inconsistencies in the quality of provision mean that pupils' progress and their achievement are not good across the school. While most parents consider: that behaviour and teaching are good; that pupils get the right amount of homework; that parents are kept informed of their children's progress; and that the school works closely with parents, a significant minority of respondents to the questionnaire took a negative view of the school's work in these areas. The inspection confirmed the general view that matters are broadly satisfactory, but found that there are areas which need improvement, for example dealing with the pockets of misbehaviour in class, and the lack of consistency in setting and feeding back on homework. The concerns of a number of parents that the school is not well led, and that it does not provide an interesting range of extra curricular activities, were not supported by the inspection findings.

48. The quality of written information provided for parents is satisfactory. Parents greatly appreciate the school's arrangements for the induction of the under fives, who look forward with enthusiasm to joining the school. The effective and detailed arrangements for transfer to main secondary schools ensure that pupils move on with confidence. The tone of the school's documentation is welcoming and provides basic information about the school and its routines, but does not provide enough detail about the curriculum and what is taught. The governors' annual report to parents contains the required information, but is rather thin and does not tell parents enough about achievements during the year, especially in relation to the curriculum. Fortnightly newsletters contain a rolling diary and cover emergent issues, such as headlice, but not all parents felt that they received sufficient notification of events and activities. The school does, however, organise workshops to tell parents about additions to the curriculum, such as the introduction of the numeracy hour, but these are not well supported. It holds regular termly parents' meetings, and actively encourages informal daily staff contact with parents. Annual written reports, with some exceptions, are rather bland and tend to focus on coverage and effort, rather than setting out what pupils know, can do and understand, or explicitly evaluating performance. Some targets are set, mainly for literacy. The good quality reports show careful evaluation of progress and give illustrative examples in each subject. Pupils' reports make provision for parents and pupils to comment and are discussed with parents. Parents of pupils with individual education plans or statements of special educational need are fully involved in the reviews of their children's progress.

49. The contribution of parents to children's learning at home and at school is satisfactory. Home-school agreements were introduced in September 1999, but have not had an appreciable effect. Parents have some opportunity to keep themselves informed of their children's homework and to support day-to-day progress through the yellow reading book, but this is not set out formally in such a way as to encourage dialogue between parents and teachers. Currently there are a good number of parent volunteers working effectively to broaden pupils' experience in school. They help in class, run clubs and support swimming and outings. There is some consultation with parents on new initiatives that may affect them, such as the new home-school contract, but parents' views are not widely sought on most issues. The school also recognises that they need to be consulted more frequently on school issues. Parents are invited to a wide range of musical and dramatic productions, sporting events, presentation assemblies and other activities. The very strong and active Parent Teacher Association holds a range of well-supported social and fund-raising activities, such as the quiz night and the two annual fairs, which raise substantial sums for their children's benefit. It also organises very useful weekend working parties to provide the school with non-technical maintenance and operates a helpful suggestions book.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. The leadership and management of the school make a sound contribution to pupils' achievements. In the last inspection, it was considered very good although a number of key areas required attention, including implementing monitoring procedures and involvement of staff in the process.

51. The current leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are satisfactory in providing a clear steer to the work of the school. They have taken appropriate action to address issues identified in the last report with some success, for example in establishing procedures for monitoring the work of the school and increased responsibility for co-ordinators. Some issues still need work, for example to ensure that curriculum planning meets the needs of all pupils and to remove inconsistencies in practice. The headteacher is effective in promoting many of the school's aims and in providing a sense of purpose to the school's work. This is evident, for example in weekly achievement assemblies, which are effective in promoting the school's values. Although the headteacher sets a good role model for promoting good behaviour through his regular teaching time, the commitment to high standards of behaviour is inconsistently applied across the school. Some weaknesses also exist in ensuring that communication with parents is as effective as it could be, and the headteacher realises that more work is needed in this area. All staff have clearly defined roles for their management responsibility for co-ordinating subjects and areas of the school's work. They make a good contribution to pupils' achievement through their good oversight of their areas of responsibility and their planning of developments, for example in improving investigative skills in science. However, the recent unexpected departure of one member of staff has left the headteacher with responsibility for five subjects, pending a new member of staff taking up appointment in September, and this has delayed development in some subjects, such as history and geography.

52. The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory in fulfilling its responsibilities. It has an appropriate committee structure, with clearly defined roles, which enables it to perform its statutory duties and gives it a sound oversight of the school's activities. There have been a number of new governors recently appointed and they are being inducted into the governing body appropriately. Good relationships exist between the governing body and the staff, and governors are keen to be involved in school life and find out about the work of the school. The headteacher and chair of the governing body meet every two weeks to discuss issues. Governors are linked to literacy and numeracy and the development of links with other subjects is under consideration. A curriculum committee oversees subject areas, and members of staff report issues to it for consideration. The chair of finance has effective oversight of current expenditure under various budget headings. The headteacher provides written reports to each full governing body meeting. These give a clear overview of activities, but do not always give sufficient information on strengths and weaknesses in the school's work, particularly in terms of performance and the action taken to improve standards. This means that governors are not always provided with enough information to be effective in their role of 'critical friend' or to enable them to take a more active role in shaping the direction of the school, for example in school improvement planning.

53. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are satisfactory. The school is well placed for the introduction of performance management in September. Teaching is regularly monitored by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. These observations have helped to identify weaknesses, to set up structures to support colleagues' teaching, and to provide information for staff development purposes. For example, the mentoring process is well established, and constructive support is provided for teachers new to the school. The process is aided by a good staff handbook, which is explicit about expectations of staff and acts as a good reference for procedural matters. However, monitoring and support systems have not been entirely successful in removing all weaknesses in, for example, teaching in the under fives class and weak behaviour management in some classes. The school's systems for improving professional abilities are developing, but have yet to create sufficient consistency in teaching between classes. School test results are carefully analysed, and this has led to 'setting' arrangements in mathematics, which are having a positive effect on standards and which may be extended to younger pupils. Computer programs are increasingly being used to analyse assessment information from baseline assessment on entry to statutory tests at the end of both key stages. This is helpful for central record keeping, but its value is reduced because not all staff are yet fully confident in using the information. The collection of information about pupils' performance in most subjects is impeded by the lack of effective systems for assessing pupils' achievements.

54. The school development plan is a satisfactory document for identifying the school's priorities and the action needed to improve. A number of clear and appropriate priorities covering three years are included within the plan. These priorities are well linked to national priorities for raising standards in areas such as literacy and numeracy. Other priorities, such as developing information technology facilities, are appropriate, although most other points tend to be on-going and maintenance issues, rather than specific areas for development. All action points are time-bound, have cost implications noted and responsible personnel. Some broad targets are set using performance data, for example end of key stage targets in literacy and numeracy. Overall, the intended outcomes of proposed actions lack precise and measurable criteria by which to judge success.

55. Educational priorities are suitably supported by the school's sound systems for financial planning. The most recent audit was carried out in 1991, but inspection evidence shows current financial systems are satisfactory. A financial secretary oversees the administrative systems, using a computer to keep accounts. Regular meetings of the finance committee of the governing body take place to check on income and expenditure. When the headteacher was appointed, the school had a serious shortage of funds. Through careful budgeting and close monitoring of spending, the situation is much improved and the school has an acceptable contingency amount. Staff bid for funding for resources, which the headteacher and deputy headteacher prioritise and finance is allocated through appropriate assessment of need. Grants are well targeted; for example, funds for supporting pupils with special educational needs are used well. Good use is currently made of information technology for electronic mail, for financial purposes, and for enabling pupils to access the

Internet. It has begun to be used by senior staff for analysing performance information. The school is looking forward to utilising funding made available from the National Grid for Learning. This will improve provision for information and communications technology, in line with school improvement planning. However, the lack of measurable criteria in outcomes in the plan makes it difficult to assess how effective the school has been in the use of its funds and to help it make a careful evaluation of spending decisions.

56. Principles of 'best value' have been applied in several areas of school life, but are not yet a routine way of working. Competitive tenders are usually required for areas of significant spending on resources. Spending decisions are scrutinised and challenged by a finance sub-committee and spending is monitored monthly. The school improvement plan is costed appropriately and linked to its highest priorities. The school consults internally about proposals for change, but there are few formal methods for consulting with parents before changes are implemented. The school can account for its spending, but does not consistently compare its information with that of similar schools to assess its level of expenditure more accurately.

57. The school has sufficient teachers to cover its age range of pupils, although one member of staff during the inspection was a temporary appointment to cover the recent unexpected departure of a Key Stage 2 teacher. All teachers are suitably qualified and have a reasonable match of either original qualification or acquired expertise to their areas of responsibility. A good level of well-trained classroom assistants meets the requirements of pupils in their charge and provides pupils with good support, particularly those with special educational needs. A satisfactory level of experienced administrative and premises staff helps the work of the school to run smoothly.

58. There are sufficient learning resources overall to meet curricular demands. The shortages in geography, history, art and religious education that were identified in the last inspection have been overcome. Some subjects are now supported by a good level of resources, for example: physical education, religious education and special educational needs. English work is supported well by a high quality stock of literacy books well organised and easily accessed in a small central room. The library has sufficient books, although the quality of some is unsatisfactory. Although the library is well positioned, it is under used for regular study times. The level of equipment for information technology is inadequate, in spite of improvements since the last inspection. This means that pupils are not assured of regular access to support their learning, although plans are underway to improve this situation. In the meantime, effective links with a local secondary school give older pupils access to better facilities off-site.

59. Accommodation is adequate for the number of pupils on roll overall. However, the way the space is used in some classes means that learning is impeded as pupils, notably in the under fives and Year 1, have insufficient room to work. The housing of two classes in wooden 'mobile' units on the field is especially inconvenient in wet weather. These classrooms quickly become stuffy, as do others in the main school where ventilation is a problem in summer time. Good ventilation is difficult to achieve in many classes due to the nature of the building, and pupils make slower progress on some occasions because of the excessive heat. Internally, the school is well maintained by good caretaking arrangements and recent decorating by parental help. There are displays of pupils' work, those in the entrance hall being of good quality. However, there is an imbalance towards displaying

published material rather than pupils' efforts. Consequently, few classrooms display a good range of high quality work to engage and set standards for pupils. A good-sized hall provides accommodation for a variety of school purposes, such as physical education lessons, assemblies and after school classes. The external appearance of the school is pleasant. Outdoor facilities are good on the whole with a large playing field and hard areas for play. The school benefits from having an external swimming pool, which is secure and is used effectively during the summer term. However, there are no designated outdoor facilities for pupils under five.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

(References to the most relevant paragraphs in the report are identified after each issue.)

60. In order to improve standards further, especially in the under fives where standards are below those expected of five year olds, the governing body, headteacher and staff need to:

- improve the quality of teaching by:
 - * improving teaching methods in the under fives so that children are fully involved, and activities are provided which extend and deepen their learning more effectively;
(*Paragraphs: 1, 16, 17, 21, 25, 62*)
 - * raising teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement in order to improve the rate at which they work, particularly for higher attaining pupils;
(*Paragraphs: 1, 16, 27, 69, 75, 98, 114, 121, 126*)
 - * ensuring the school's good approach to behaviour management is implemented consistently across the school so that pupils are fully engaged in their work and pockets of misbehaviour are eliminated.
(*Paragraphs: 12, 16, 22, 68, 78, 86, 93, 98, 102, 105, 119, 121*)
- improve curriculum planning so that:
 - * an appropriately balanced under fives curriculum is provided, which includes opportunities for regular outdoor activities;
(*Paragraphs: 25, 62, 69*)
 - * intentions for pupils' learning are precisely defined in each level of planning to ensure that work is well-matched to the needs of pupils of different ages and levels of attainment in each of the mixed-age classes, and that there are no omissions or unnecessary repetitions in pupils' learning.
(*Paragraphs: 27, 29, 69, 78, 94, 98, 102, 105, 111, 115, 116*)
- improve assessment by:
 - * developing effective systems for gathering more evaluative information on pupils' attainment, and use the information from these assessments to track pupils as they move through the school to find out how well they have progressed, and to adapt future plans as necessary.
(*Paragraphs: 19, 20, 42, 43, 44, 78, 86, 93, 94, 98, 102*)

MINOR ISSUES

61. Improve communication between home and school by ensuring parents are kept effectively informed about their children's progress and the work of the school, and also that they are consulted more frequently on school issues.

(*Paragraphs: 46, 47, 48, 49, 51*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	6	34	50	10	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	173
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	32

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	9	15	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	7	8	7
	Girls	12	14	14
	Total	19	22	21
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	79 (73)	92 (87)	88 (95)
	National	82 (77)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	8	8	8
	Girls	14	13	14
	Total	22	21	22
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	92 (95)	88 (96)	92 (96)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	12	5	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	9	8
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	11	14	13
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	65 (68)	82 (72)	76 (84)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	6	9	9
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	11	14	14
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	65 (68)	82 (80)	82 (80)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	147
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	28.8

Education support staff:

YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145

Qualified teachers and support staff:

Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	283386.00
Total expenditure	274717.00
Expenditure per pupil	1606.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	-227.00
Balance carried forward to next year	8442.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	173
Number of questionnaires returned	150

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	47	8	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	67	7	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	54	12	2	2
The teaching is good.	43	45	7	3	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	51	14	5	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	53	3	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	25	56	15	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	48	6	7	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	54	7	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	48	15	4	7

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

62. The results of baseline assessment undertaken soon after they entered the school show that the attainment of children now in the reception class was slightly below that expected of children of this age. However, most children, especially the higher attainers, are not learning as well as they should. By the time they reach statutory school age, they broadly achieve the officially recommended desirable learning outcomes in the physical and creative areas of learning, and in their personal and social skills. However, they do not meet expectations in language and literacy, mathematics and in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In the last inspection, no specific reference was made to learning of children under five, so a judgement on improvement since that time cannot be made. The main constraints to learning arise from weaknesses in teaching and curricular provision. Both areas are unsatisfactory because they do not provide a sufficiently balanced and well-organised range of activities to help the children to make the most effective gains in their learning.

Language and literacy

63. Most children show sound speaking skills when they ask and answer questions of each other in regular review sessions at the end of activities. However, they do not listen well at these times, or in other small group and whole class situations, either to the teacher or each other. During role play, children show satisfactory skills in making up their own stories and taking part in imagined situations, but the rather cramped and uninspiring 'home corner' and the minimal sustained interventions by adults do little to extend their vocabulary to a higher level. Standards in reading are satisfactory. Most children know how books work and understand that print carries meaning. They tell a plausible story related to a picture in a book. They read aloud with the teacher to follow a story in a 'Big Book' and make sound guesses at rhyming words. Most recognise their first names in print. Higher attaining children recognise simple and familiar words and make use of their knowledge of letter sounds to support their reading. Few children were seen sharing books with adults on a one-to-one basis for a sustained period during the inspection to develop their skills further. Writing skills are not well developed, as children have too few opportunities to practise their skills. Many attempt to copy the teacher's writing but with mixed success, and most do not form their letters well. A few higher attaining children write a few recognisable simple words and make some use of initial sounds in their writing, but they have not made enough progress to build successfully on what they were able to do on entry.

Mathematics

64. Standards in mathematics are unsatisfactory. Most children count aloud together to 20 and are able to count up to five objects accurately. A small number of higher attainers are confident with numbers to 20 and recognise number symbols, but most children are not. Few are able to record numbers accurately. Most recognise simple mathematical language such as over and under, using these concepts well in a physical education session on large apparatus. Children have only a limited understanding of money. They carry out simple shopping activities but with little understanding of the coins they are using. Many children recognise simple two-dimensional shapes such as squares and circles, and the three-dimensional shape of a cuboid which they use regularly in construction. However, limited opportunities for structured practical activity to reinforce language and understanding in mathematics and to apply skills to solve practical problems, mean that children do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

65. Children have only a very basic understanding of the world around them. They know about some simple physical phenomena, such as the wind as a force which moves things, but skills are not developed well in the whole class situation. Children lack opportunities to develop skills further through more independent first hand enquiry, or to consolidate their understanding through recording, in pictures or print, what they have found out. The range of work in this area of learning is limited. Children have regular opportunities to use construction materials and build simple, recognisable models, but the space they work in is cramped and pupils are not particularly enthused by the same materials being provided for them. Children use the computer, but not effectively to select and move items on the screen in order to match letters with pictures.

Physical development

66. Many children are working at the expected level in physical education sessions. They have good control and co-ordination of their actions when moving on different parts of their bodies, both forwards and backwards, under and over the apparatus. They have some awareness of space when moving around on the floor and when using the large apparatus. They move confidently and with increasing control on a range of equipment. However, there is no designated outdoor area for the under fives to ensure regular, planned activity to extend skills further, and to satisfy children's need for frequent physical activity. Children do not have opportunities to explore large equipment outdoors independently or to use wheeled vehicles to develop physical skills on a regular basis. Their manipulative skills are sound in that they handle construction materials with increasing control and co-ordination, and cut out spirals with reasonable accuracy. However, pencil control is not so good and children too infrequently practise their skills in making marks.

Creative development

67. Creative skills are satisfactory overall. Children play instruments appropriately to simulate wind and rain and join in enthusiastically at relevant points in a story. They sing well-known songs but not with a great deal of enthusiasm or confidence. They try to move as though being blown by the wind but the area they are expected to use in the classroom is cramped, and children jostle for space rather than focusing on creating more expressive movements. Children work with a range of media such as paint, malleable material and collage to produce satisfactory patterns and recognisable shapes and pictures, such as sound representations of different flowers.

Personal and social development

68. Most children have established satisfactory relationships with their teachers and each other. However, their behaviour is not always so good. They are not all willing to take turns to speak to each other or the teacher in whole class sessions. This leads to inattention and a small number regularly misbehave, which is distracting for others. They are not quick to respond to the teacher's reminders for expected behaviour. The situation is aggravated by the fact that they sometimes sit for much longer than is appropriate. Children are given a high level of autonomy in selecting their own activities at the start of the day, which helps to develop skills in initiating ideas. They often work co-operatively in small groups, sharing resources fairly and treating them with care. On occasion, the resources in the 'home corner' are not so well used and minor squabbles break out. The majority of children willingly tidy away at the end of each session.

69. Teaching is unsatisfactory in over one third of lessons seen in the under fives, the remainder being satisfactory. This is a cause for concern, as children's learning is significantly constrained by both the teaching, and the curriculum which is planned and provided for children under five. Planning contains lots of information about overall intentions, but is not always specific enough in identifying precisely what children are learning in the short term. The teacher provides good opportunities for children to choose activities for themselves, which promote their initiative and involvement in decision-making. However, the range of activities planned does not provide a satisfactory balance of teacher-directed work and free-choice activities. The teacher does not provide enough structured opportunities for children to explore and find out about the world around them in sufficient depth with children often sitting for too long a period listening to the teacher. Planning does not clearly identify the learning intentions for each activity in free choice time. Expectations, particularly of higher attaining pupils, are not high enough, and the lack of challenge slows their rate of learning and interest in their work. This is especially notable in terms of gains in their mathematical and literacy skills, especially writing. Lessons are not always sufficiently

well managed or resourced to engage pupils' interest for sustained periods and to deal with minor incidents of misbehaviour effectively. An exception is in physical education, where the teacher's firm but fair management creates a productive and safe learning environment. Adults work closely with the teacher and are well informed of intentions for different sessions. They make copious notes about children as they work, but this means that their interaction with pupils is sometimes minimal. The usefulness of the notes is limited in that they lack evaluation about what the children have learnt, especially in relation to early learning goals.

ENGLISH

70. In the 1999 National Curriculum reading tests for pupils aged seven, results were well below average because a below average proportion of pupils reached the expected Level 2 and a well below average proportion attained above the expected level. Results were in the lowest five per cent compared to similar schools. In writing, results were below average and very low compared with similar schools. The proportion achieving the expected Level 2 was higher than the national average and in line with similar schools, but the proportion reaching the higher Level 2B was very low compared to both the national average and similar schools. Results over the last three years show that reading and writing standards have not kept pace with national trends, resulting in lower standards than average. Inspection evidence indicates that the downward trend is being reversed in reading, and that the attainment of the present Year 2 is in line with nationally expected standards of seven year olds, a finding similar to the judgement of the last inspection. Standards of reading have improved, due in part to more efficient use of the reading schemes and newly introduced strategies for more effective delivery of the National Literacy Strategy. In writing, however, standards are still below average and are lower than at the time of the previous inspection. Although good teaching at the end of the key stage enables pupils to make some effective gains, this is not enough to make up for the slow start in writing early in the key stage.

71. In the 1999 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, results were average overall compared with those nationally, mainly as a result of an above average proportion attaining the higher than expected level for eleven year olds. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 or above in English was below the national average. This reduced the overall average points scored so that, in comparison with similar schools, results were well below average. Trends over the past three years show that some improvement has been made in English results. This trend is continuing and inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of pupils presently in Year 6 is broadly average in English, a similar finding to that of the last inspection, and that the proportion of pupils on line to achieve Level 4 is similar to the national average.

72. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with those expected of most seven year olds. Pupils in Year 2 make satisfactory contributions to discussions, showing a willingness to ask as well as answer questions. They listen with good attention to the classteacher and other adults with whom they work in small group situations, and listen with reasonable attention to each other, usually taking turns to share their views. However, where class management strategies are weak in the early years of the key stage, pupils tend to be less controlled in their contributions and often call out, therefore making fewer gains in confident and coherent delivery. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils develop their speaking skills satisfactorily and speak with reasonable confidence and

clarity. Sometimes, however, too much input by the teacher means that opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their speaking skills to a more advanced level. Most pupils listen to their teacher and follow instructions, though the attention of a significant minority wanders if they are not firmly managed. Some opportunities are provided through the drama club for more expressive language work, but this does not appear to have a significant impact on speaking and listening standards in lesson time. In assemblies, while older pupils speak clearly and confidently, opportunities are missed to develop these skills among younger pupils. Speaking and listening skills are used satisfactorily in discussion with others in small groups without teacher guidance, in the plenary sessions. Little evidence was seen of pupils developing higher levels of skill in argument and debate of issues.

73. Standards in reading are satisfactory at the end of both key stages. In Key Stage 1, pupils are systematically taught the relationship between letters and sounds, so that the majority make steady progress in using these strategies to read unfamiliar words. By age seven, most pupils are independent in reading texts suitably graded to match their level of attainment. Most are able to use a range of approaches to read a story accurately, for example using pictures and the context of a story to gain meaning and correct mistakes. Pupils generally have sound understanding of themes in a story, and relate their favourite parts well. Many parents give good support by hearing their child read at home and regularly sign the home reading record, although there is little response from teachers to identify what is needed to be done next. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils read longer texts silently with good concentration. They read aloud fluently and accurately, with good understanding. Many have a range and depth of reading experience, naming favourite authors with enthusiasm and explaining their preferences in full. They make comparisons with other books, and use technical terms confidently. Some with higher attainment extend their range to include more difficult classics, such as stories by Robert Louis Stevenson. The pupils' library knowledge and research skills are more variable. They are sound in extracting information from books provided for them, but their knowledge is limited in terms of how the library is organised and how to find information on a more independent basis by choosing their own books through regular access to the library.

74. Standards in writing at age seven are not high enough. Pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities in the early years of school to develop their skills in writing to a satisfactory standard. By Year 2, pupils make more rapid progress in their skills and have begun to write in different styles and for varied purposes, including stories, letters and poetry, and they do so with confidence. Some good examples on display in the classroom as well as elsewhere in the school show effective use of vocabulary to gain the interest of the reader. However, work in pupils' books shows that their skills are still underdeveloped in spelling and punctuation, with too many inaccuracies that pupils rely on adults to correct for them. Handwriting is generally unsatisfactory. Writing is not always legible; neither are letters well formed or consistent in size. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in writing are satisfactory but pupils have a slow start at the beginning of the key stage in developing coherence, accuracy and experience of a range of writing opportunities. Older pupils write for a wide range of purposes and audiences, including letters of complaint, factual reports, analysis of opinions on the value of watching television programmes, and newspaper reporting. However little evidence of poetry writing was seen in previous work or on display. Key pieces of work intended for display are improved through the process of planning, drafting and proof-reading. Written work is generally well presented. Many pupils have a satisfactory range of vocabulary, both technical and imaginative. There are good examples of lively

writing in all years, such as the use of personification in Year 5/6. By age eleven, pupils with higher attainment organise extended writing in paragraphs and use a good range of sentence structures. Not all pupils transfer to their everyday writing the good standards they achieve in handwriting exercises. Standards of accuracy in spelling and punctuation are sound. Pupils regularly learn new spellings for homework and this supports achievement in writing.

75. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress, especially in small withdrawal groups where pupils are well taught such basic skills as spelling, reading and grammar. Booster classes have been established to provide pupils who are close to achieving the expected level a better chance in the national tests. They achieve well, for example when they are helped to consider the key features of story writing and characterisation. Expectations for higher attaining pupils are not consistently high. As a result, these pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable, especially in speaking and listening and research skills.

76. Examples are seen across the school where pupils make sound use of their literacy skills to support learning in other subjects. In science and mathematics lessons, there are examples of pupils using technical terms effectively and showing a sound level of subject specific vocabulary. Pupils read books and worksheets accurately to follow instructions, although sometimes these are not sufficiently adapted and pupils rely on adults to help them understand. Pupils are able to use their research skills to find out information, for example in history. Good use is made of the internet to acquire information for factual reports, for example in science and design and technology. Some use is made of information technology to improve the accuracy and quality of some pieces of writing, occasionally combining graphics to make writing more interesting.

77. Teaching is good, and in one instance very good, in just over two thirds of lessons seen, the remainder being satisfactory overall. The most effective teaching, found mainly at the end of each key stage, has a positive impact on the rate at which pupils learn. This is helping to raise standards, in reading in particular, at the end of Key Stage 1. However, weaknesses in teaching in the early part of each key stage mean that pupils have a slow start and much ground to make up later. Generally, time is used appropriately because teachers follow the recommended structure of the literacy hour. On some occasions, however, the rate is slow and pupils have to sit too long at the start before moving on to more independent work, which creates some restlessness and inattention. In both key stages, teachers make good use of time at the end of lessons to review pupils' learning. This is used well to develop pupils' speaking skills and reinforce their learning of the lesson's target. Basic skills are well taught and this helps pupils to make good gains in their reading skills. Teachers give clear explanations using appropriate vocabulary and offer good models of speech. Most read dramatically to capture pupils' interest. The choice of texts for close study includes classic children's stories and poetry, which make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, fewer opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their writing skills in the early stages of Key Stage 1 which slows their rate of progress overall.

78. Effective behaviour management and very good relationships in most classes ensure that pupils learn effectively in a calm purposeful environment. However in the early part of each key stage, where management strategies are less effective, some pupils tend to call out and be disruptive, and this hinders the progress of others in the class. Learning is less productive in classes when the work given to different groups does not match their levels of attainment closely enough. Plans are detailed, and the most effective are very clear about what pupils are expected to know by the end of a lesson. However, this is not always the case and, particularly where classes have mixed ages, there is not always clear definition of expectations for different ages and the different needs across the broad spread of attainment. Pupils' work is marked regularly and most teachers give encouragement, responding appreciatively to the content. Some good practice is emerging in identifying weakness and setting individual targets for development, but most marking loses its effect because teachers do not require pupils to do corrections or follow up work. Assessment and recording of pupils' reading, as seen in the Year 5/6 class, help pupils to perform self-evaluation and set personal targets for improvement. In some classes, reading records are minimal and little diagnosis of pupils' learning takes place.

79. The reading scheme resource area is well organised and the range of good quality material has a positive impact on the development of reading skills. However, the main library resources, although adequate, are in need of review to remove out-of-date and tatty books. Little use was made of the library, particularly the non-fiction area at the time of inspection.

80. Management of the subject is good in providing a strong steer to development in the subject and its subsequent improvement. Teaching and learning have been monitored and some weaknesses identified and addressed, for example in delivery of the literacy hour to help to raise standards in reading. The framework of the National Literacy Strategy has been adopted, and its procedures followed with greater consistency across the school. However, this is not always sufficiently adapted to take account of pupils of the same age in different classes to ensure that they receive work which is suitably matched to their age and aptitudes. A more rigorous scrutiny of teaching and learning practice is needed to ensure that areas of weakness still outstanding are addressed fully, for example in relation to the development of writing skills in the early years. Results of statutory assessments are carefully analysed, but procedures for ongoing and more formative assessment of pupils' work are inconsistently adopted across the school and tracking of pupils' individual progress contains some gaps as a result.

MATHEMATICS

81. Last year's statutory test results at the end of the Key Stage 1 were above average when compared to pupils' results in all schools. When compared to pupils' results in similar schools, however, they do not compare as well and are below average. Pupils attaining the higher levels compare more favourably, both to national expectations and to results in similar schools. It is the lower proportion attaining the expected level which reduces the overall points scored. Recent results have varied from year to year, but inspection evidence suggests that a higher proportion of pupils is on line to achieve the expected level this year, especially in number work, and that attainment is broadly average, a finding similar to that of the last inspection. However, there are indications that pupils' progress is slow during the early part of the key stage and increases rapidly in Year 2. This means that not all pupils achieve as well as they could over the key stage.

82. In Key Stage 2, the average points score was well above the national average and was in line with results of similar schools. This shows an improvement on the previous year's results, which dipped slightly after a significant improvement the year before that. Inspection judgements confirm that pupils' attainment is above the national expectation by the end of the key stage, with a particularly good proportion attaining good standards in number work, as in last year's results. This represents an improvement at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection, when attainment was judged to be average. The 'setting' arrangements in Key Stage 2 are having a significantly positive impact on the standards attained by pupils, particularly the higher attainers, who are helped to achieve well in relation to their capabilities.

83. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and the small number of pupils with English as an additional language make sound progress in both key stages. In Key Stage 1, these pupils benefit from close supervision of their activities and are helped particularly well during the mental maths sessions. In Key Stage 2, they are often helped by effective adult support in lessons, although sometimes material is not sufficiently adapted for them to make the best gains in their learning and it is sometimes too difficult for them to complete. In 'booster' groups, organised for Year 6 pupils who are on the borderline of achieving the expectation in mathematics, pupils are helped to make good progress in tackling mathematical problems.

84. In Key Stage 1, Year 1 pupils add small numbers quickly and accurately both in single digits and in twos. They consolidate this skill in their small group work, but do not really extend their skills with more difficult numbers. Year 2 pupils respond enthusiastically to 'mental maths' sessions led at a brisk pace by teachers. In one class they count quickly and accurately both forwards and backwards, when given starting and stopping points below 100. They can also find differences between numbers such as 82-79 and can think of different ways of doing so. In small groups, pupils recognise number words quickly and extend their knowledge of subtraction using number squares. Higher attaining pupils apply their understanding of subtraction by breaking the number down further and checking their

answers. Pupils of average attainment work with partners and record their answers quite quickly, sometimes aided by mental calculation. Past work indicates that pupils measure with increasing accuracy and investigate different shapes and angles, although the latter is not to great depth. Pupils' problem-solving skills are satisfactorily developed in number work, but few examples were seen pupils applying a range of mathematical skills beyond occasional use in science work, for example to measure time taken for objects to travel.

85. In Key Stage 2, after a slow start at the beginning of the key stage, pupils generally make better progress and attain good standards in number work, shape and space activities and in understanding data from graphs. Past work and lessons seen indicate that pupils do use mathematical skills to solve problems, although this is not a strong feature of their work and is not of the same high standard as other work in mathematics. In Year 3, work involving addition of two digit numbers was completed accurately. Pupils also have satisfactory knowledge of their two, five and ten times table and can recall them as a class. In a Year 4 /5 lesson, pupils show sound skills for working out the length of materials needed for table legs and shelving. Many are able to work out accurately the most economical way of cutting the shelves, using their good number skills. In the same lesson, pupils' learning is good when using their mental addition and subtraction skills to play a game on a hundred number square. In a 'set' group, Year 5 pupils develop good skills in long multiplication and are secure in the methods they can use. The same pupils can work out double numbers quickly to play 'doubles bingo'. By the time pupils are eleven, they have good knowledge of three-dimensional shapes, can make open and closed cubes, and work out the nets needed for different shapes. In a higher attaining 'set' group, pupils achieve good standards in interpreting a graph to secure information about matters such as temperatures, currency conversion and the numbers of books within a library. Their knowledge of prime numbers is also very well developed and they are able to answer questions about them quickly. Pupils' progress is generally good through the key stage, although their learning increases through the use of 'set groups' and the increased pace set to activities as they near the end of the key stage. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make sound use of mathematics in other subjects, for example to draw up line graphs to record temperature in science, and to add precise measures to plans in design and technology work.

86. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons, and good in about half of these. In the most effective lessons, teachers ask appropriate questions and set tasks which are well matched to pupils' different levels of capability. This is more noticeable at Key Stage 2, where pupils are 'set' three days a week. However, progress is slower for some when they return to their class groups for the other two days a week, because teachers do not then plan so precisely for the very wide range of ages and ability in each mixed-age class. Although pupils' work is marked regularly, teachers do not consistently indicate what has been done well and how it can be improved so that pupils can always build as effectively as possible on their prior attainment. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1 and in the older classes at Key Stage 2. This was particularly noticeable when breaking down a long multiplication sum into easier steps for pupils in a Year 5 'set' group, and pupils are helped to gain a good level of mathematical understanding as a result. Teachers generally plan to use interesting activities to motivate pupils and sustain their

interest in their work. The use of simple game activities, such as ‘doubles bingo’, during the introduction to lessons helps to improve pupils’ learning. Pupils are motivated to learn more and suggest alternative activities. In a Year 2 class for example, pupils wanted to do more activities to a higher level. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are generally used well, although in Key Stage 2 these tend to extend pupils’ knowledge a little further and are more effective. On occasion, management in the early parts of each key stage is not effective in dealing with minor incidents of inattention and misbehaviour, and time is lost by some pupils, so that they do not learn as much as they should in lessons.

87. During the inspection, lessons concentrated on number work, suitably following guidelines from the National Numeracy Strategy. However, the scrutiny of work completed, alongside teachers’ planning, indicates that sufficient attention is paid to all aspects of the mathematics curriculum. The co-ordination of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has good knowledge and understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the subject through the variety of monitoring activities undertaken. Teaching is monitored effectively and the information gained is used to help raise standards. As a result, the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has strengthened whole-school approaches to teaching and learning. It has also increased some teachers’ subject knowledge and confidence in improving strategies to quicken pupils’ speed of response in ‘mental maths’ and their skill in problem-solving. More monitoring and support are planned to aid further improvement where inconsistencies in the quality of practice still exist. Resources throughout the school are satisfactory.

SCIENCE

88. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 meets the expected standards for seven year olds, a finding similar to that made by the last inspection. Standards achieved by pupils presently in Year 2 are also similar to those of last year, as is indicated by the results of the end of Key Stage 1 national assessments in 1999. Those results were average compared with all schools nationally, but below those of schools whose pupils are from similar backgrounds. Results are improving, and the proportion of pupils who attained high standards in 1999 was much better than the previous year. However, there is still not enough high attainment among current pupils in Year 2 due to the limited progress which pupils make in the early years of their schooling. The rate of learning is much more rapid in Year 2 as a result of good teaching, but not enough to make up for the slower progress earlier in the Key Stage.

89. The 1999 national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 show an average attainment in line with that expected of eleven year old pupils nationally, but well below average in comparison with schools whose pupils are from similar backgrounds. The proportion attaining the nationally expected level is in the lower quartile range, although the proportion attaining above expectations is average. Results were not as good last year as in the previous two years, but have generally kept pace with national trends. Inspection findings show that, for the majority of the current pupils in Year 6, attainment is average overall and a larger proportion is on target to gain the expected level for eleven year olds in this year’s tests. This inspection finding is similar to that of the last inspection. Again, pupils have a slow start at the beginning of the key stage and this limits their rate of progress over the key stage.

90. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can consider carefully the conditions needed for growth in plants. They begin to think about how they would plan an investigation to test out

their views, making sensible suggestions for variables such as the need for light and water. Experimental and investigative work in science was a weakness in the last inspection, but current Year 2 pupils are developing sound skills in this area. Pupils' work shows sound progress in key scientific concepts such as forces and living things, and some good attainment in their understanding of materials, aided by effective experimentation with waterproofing, fireproofing and windproofing. However, the effectiveness of pupils' recording of their findings is constrained by weaknesses in their writing skills. In Year 1, pupils start to sort animals into different groups by spotting simple similarities and differences between them, but they do not have enough chance to record their findings. There is limited evidence of recorded work since the start of the year to show a depth of study and understanding among pupils.

91. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a broader understanding of scientific concepts, although there is some variation in the quality of work across the key stage and pupils get off to a slow start in Year 3. The work of these pupils since September shows only limited study of science and does not build effectively on their attainment in Year 2. The school has taken action to redress the situation, and during the inspection work in lessons was of a satisfactory quality. Pupils were making sensible predictions in their study of forces during a demonstration in class. By Year 6, pupils have a sound understanding of the way their heart and circulatory system function and their purpose. Their work shows sound progress in developing their understanding of the solar system, and observations carried out at home support their understanding. Experimental skills are developed satisfactorily, which marks an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have a sound understanding of the principles of prediction and fair testing, as is demonstrated in their work on materials. A concern in Key Stage 2 is that pupils in Year 5 follow different programmes of work. Those in a mixed age class with Year 4 pupils show sound attainment in their study of forces, materials and of their bodies, but it is not to the same higher standard shown by those in the mixed age classes with Year 6.

92. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are helped to achieve well in science, with the support of special needs staff who keep them well-focused in experimental work. This was seen to good effect in Year 2 when pupils talked sensibly with staff about their ideas for where to put their plants to watch them grow. Pupils use their mathematical skills suitably to support science work, for example to measure, weigh and time what they see and to gather and record data in tables and graphs. Some use is made of information technology, for example in Year 6 for research purposes, but overall the work of most pupils shows it is not used enough to support learning in science. Most pupils use their literacy skills successfully in explanations employing a sound scientific vocabulary.

93. Teaching is satisfactory in four out of the five lessons, and good in half of these, but it is unsatisfactory in one lesson in Key Stage 1. Good features which help the pupils to make the best gains in their learning include good subject knowledge, which is expressed and reinforced in explanations and discussions with pupils. This reinforces their understanding and encourages them to use an accurate vocabulary themselves. Explanations in the best lessons are lively and interesting and engage the pupils' interest and sustain it. Objectives for learning are usually shared with pupils so they are clear about what they are expected to learn and settle to work quickly. Teachers, at times, use effective questioning to probe pupils' understanding of the material and this helps to deepen their understanding. Pupils respond particularly well when given appropriately demanding work. When given opportunities to

work by themselves or in groups, most pupils tackle their practical enquiries enthusiastically. This was seen in Year 2, when pupils were devising their own experiments. Good use is made of classroom assistants to work alongside pupils, particularly lower attainers, and they are effective in guiding rather than doing the work of these pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are usually good, and most teachers manage pupils well to make the most effective use of time and keep pupils on task. However, this is a key weakness in Year 1, where much time is wasted in dealing with minor incidents of misbehaviour, and this disrupts pupils' learning. Pupils become distracted and do not readily follow the teacher's reminders for good behaviour. Some common weaknesses that affect the learning which takes place include planning, which, although it is detailed, is not always sufficiently precise to cater for the wide range of age and attainment in each of the mixed-age classes. Most pupils have good attitudes to science and are attentive in introductions, even when they sometimes have to sit inactive for long periods. Pupils' work is regularly marked, and some good practice exists in identifying strengths and weaknesses related to science skills and knowledge, especially in a Year 5/6 class. However, this good practice is not evident across the school and the insights gained from assessment are not used effectively to guide teachers in adapting future plans or work so that pupils' learning builds effectively on what they have learnt before.

94. A satisfactory level of resources is available to support learning. However, accommodation is not always well used to ensure pupils have sufficient space in which to work. Displays are weak in terms of representing pupils' work in science and in encouraging their curiosity. A scheme of work has been developed in response to the weaknesses identified in the last inspection to show coverage in each key stage. However, it does not show how work will be organised to cater for pupils of different ages in each of the mixed-age classes, and those of the same age in different mixed age classes, to ensure there are no omissions in their learning or unnecessary repetition. This is particularly crucial for pupils in Year 5, who currently follow different programmes of work. Some good practice exists in medium term plans to show how work is organised over each half term, but the practice is not evident across the school. Curriculum planning weaknesses do not help teachers to plan their work carefully enough to help pupils learn to best effect. Some systems are in place for monitoring pupils' achievements and progress over time, for example national assessment results, and these have been analysed carefully by the co-ordinator to set end of key stage targets. Some effective monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place to identify weaknesses in science work, for example in investigative work and assessment, and action has been taken to overcome them. The school is currently trialling methods for more ongoing forms of assessment, but realises that closer referencing to levels of attainment would be helpful in identifying exactly where pupils are in their learning and what they need to do next. Further rigorous monitoring is needed to remove weaknesses and inconsistencies which still exist in practice.

ART

95. In both key stages, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in art which match the attainment of most pupils of similar ages nationally. Similar standards were observed in the last inspection and have been maintained.

96. Across the school, evidence shows that pupils work with a range of media, materials and techniques, with satisfactory outcomes. In Key Stage 1, pupils work with clay. For example in Year 1, they make sound clay pots, painted using colours shown in Aboriginal work. In Year 2, they use paper sculptured to represent faces. They are developing sound techniques in sewing, weaving and printing. Pupils in Year 2 make sound attempts to create texture in their pictures, in the style of a well-known children's illustrator, using different media. In Year 1, pupils gain some understanding of the effects produced by different grades of pencil, although some inattention and misbehaviour in the lesson reduces the quality of the outcomes overall.

97. In Key Stage 2, most pupils use sketchbooks competently for experimentation with different media, such as pastels, paint and collage, and for illustrating different techniques. In a mixed-age Year 4 and Year 5 class, pupils show a good understanding of printing techniques and explain the process clearly in an assembly. They have also produced some sound observational drawings of Indian artefacts, using tone to produce depth to their pictures. In the mixed age Year 5 and Year 6 class, experimentation was put to good effect to produce work in the style of Monet. Pupils also made sound evaluations of his work. However, discussion with pupils across the school and scrutiny of previous work, as well as that on display, provide little evidence of the regular study of different artists' work and of how their techniques could be used to develop pupils' own skills. There is also little evidence of pupils developing a good awareness of art in other cultures and in different historical periods. Neither are sketch books used in a consistent way, with none evident in Year 3, for example. During the inspection, however, these pupils were seen to produce symmetrical prints showing satisfactory skills in this work.

98. Teaching and learning were at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, and very good in one of these. Very effective use was made of time in the very good lesson. Explanations were crisp, but provided pupils with the opportunity to ask as well as answer questions so that they were very clear about what they were expected to do and for how long. Good questioning at the outset helped pupils to look more closely at detail in an illustrator's work, which they then attempted to emulate. Good opportunities for pupils to share their work at the end of the lesson aided evaluation of their own learning. Management of pupils and adult helpers was effective in creating a positive and productive working environment in which pupils are deeply engaged and involved in their work. A weakness in one lesson was in management of pupils, which led to loss of focus by pupils and a slow pace to learning. Most teachers' planning is supported by a brief policy and scheme of work that shows how work is

organised in each key stage, but expectations of pupils of different ages in mixed age classes are not clearly defined, which means that expectations are sometimes too low. A weakness in art provision is the lack of procedures for assessing pupils' work so that learning builds effectively on their prior achievement. Resources to support learning were inadequate in the last inspection, but these have been improved to a satisfactory level. There are few resources to promote the study of art in other cultures successfully, but the school makes good use of visits to national art galleries.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

99. Standards in design and technology have improved significantly since the last inspection, when they were below average. They are now above those expected of seven and eleven year olds. Pupils have a good understanding of the design and make process.

100. In Key Stage 1, pupils use a range of materials to make different products. For example, pupils in Year 1 use textiles to make sound quality bags for 'Mothers' Day', and in Year 2 to make puppets. There is evidence of good evaluation and resulting modification. In food technology, they create products with different 'customers' in mind. They consider different materials and their suitability for different purposes. In Year 1, they experiment with different mouldable materials to assess which they will use to make their own jewellery, although some silliness prevents some pupils making effective gains. In Year 2, pupils have visited a playground to assess the types of materials used and how they are joined. They sort pictures of different play equipment into groups according their suitability for different aged children, based on their previously gained knowledge. They experiment with construction material to help them develop their understanding of stability in structures. Some basic drawings of designs were seen in some work, but overall this aspect was not so well developed in Key Stage 1.

101. In Key Stage 2, little design and technology work was evident in Year 3, but learning is much more effective in the other two classes. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of the use of technology in the real world, for example how modern-day dams and Tudor buildings are constructed. Some effective research is carried out to evaluate the materials which are used and the distinctive features of their design, which deepens their understanding. Diagrams show precision in terms of different perspectives, measures and the particular parts of models to aid the making process. They make good use of pupils' mathematical skills. Pupils demonstrate good skills in making prototypes of Tudor houses, with precision in their small, scaled models, which are translated well into their final pieces. In Years 4 and 5, pupils have created some effective books for younger children, incorporating simple mechanisms to make them more interesting. However, standards among Year 5 pupils vary to a significant degree, depending on whether they carry out the Year 6 programme of work or the Year 4 programme of work. Few examples of work with construction kits were seen in Key Stage 2, and pupils have little opportunity to develop their skills in controlling models using the computer.

102. Teaching is good in two thirds of lessons seen and satisfactory in the remainder. Good subject knowledge is displayed by staff, which helps pupils to understand the design process well. Good use is made of technology in the real world so that the pupils have a good understanding of the importance of technology now and in the past. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to experiment for themselves with different materials. This helps them to make choices about what they will use and to assess any problems they may encounter. Adults are well deployed to support small groups and interact with sound questioning to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. In two classes, very good management means that much is achieved in a short time. However, this is not the case in the other lesson and time is wasted in dealing with inattention. A scrutiny of plans across the school shows that, although these usually identify what pupils will do, too many objectives for learning are identified and they do not always have a clear or precise enough focus on the specific skills and techniques being developed. The lack of effective assessment of pupils' work means that appropriately challenging work is not always provided, particularly to extend Year 5 pupils in the younger mixed-age class. The school has a satisfactory level of resources to support learning. This area of concern in the previous inspection has been addressed.

GEOGRAPHY

103. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards attained by pupils are in line with those expected of most seven year olds. No lessons were observed at Key Stage 2. Evidence from past work and from discussion with pupils indicates that, by the end of the key stage, pupils attain standards which are expected for eleven year old pupils. This is broadly the same finding as in the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be in line with the national expectation.

104. In Year 1, pupils are able to describe the features of their locality, such as busy roads, shops, and quiet and noisy areas. They can use photographic evidence effectively to bring out the similarities and differences in these areas, and recognise particular local features. In Year 2, pupils have compared a location from a book to their own locality. They have made effective and colourful maps and have highlighted important features effectively. Past work indicates that pupils generally attain sound standards in gaining knowledge about localities, although their use of map conventions is not as secure. In Key Stage 2, past work indicates that pupils know features of desert landscapes, the formation of rivers and oxbow lakes. In Year 3, pupils study the local village and add road names and features accurately. In Year 4, pupils study areas such as India, although the depth of study is generally insufficient. In Year 5, the learning of some pupils is of good quality as they follow the same programme as Year 6 pupils, but this contrasts significantly with the learning of those pupils working with Year 4 pupils, which is not as good. In Year 6 pupils', work demonstrates sound knowledge and skills. Maps and diagrams are well annotated and illustrate features effectively.

105. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but only one lesson was seen. Pupils enjoy their activities and get excited about recognising local landmarks. However, this enthusiasm is not managed well by the teacher. The expectations set by the teacher are sound in terms of skills to be taught, but less effective in giving pupils clear boundaries about behaviour and attitudes. This means that time is wasted in dealing with silly behaviour and slows the rate of learning. Scrutiny of teachers' planning shows pupils are given first-hand opportunities to find out about

their locality and this helps to make learning relevant to them. Scrutiny of work with older Key Stage 1 pupils sometimes shows a lack of depth when studying a new area or feature. No direct teaching was seen at Key Stage 2, but there are good examples of pupils' work, which indicates that suitable activities are set to make learning interesting for pupils. However, in catering for mixed age classes, more thought needs to be given to ensuring that pupils of the same age in different classes are given the same quality of learning experiences.

106. The co-ordinator for the subject has recently left the school and the headteacher is temporarily providing an oversight with resources, ensuring that new stock and equipment is ordered until a new member of staff is appointed. However, more rigorous monitoring is needed to remove inconsistencies in provision for pupils.

HISTORY

107. Standards in history at the end of both key stages match those expected of pupils of similar age. Since the time of the last inspection, standards have been sustained and older pupils make some sound use is now made of information technology as a source of reference.

108. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sound sense of chronology by comparing old and new. They compare toys which their parents used as children with their own, and note similarities and differences. Through their study of history, they recognise changes in home life between then and now. They become familiar with time lines, and sequence some events in order of occurrence. They know about the lives of famous people from the past who have contributed to the present, such as Stevenson and the invention of the railway. They learn about the 'Rocket' and its importance in history and the Wright brothers and the development of air transport, and they establish links and investigate the differences between then and now. By the end of the key stage, pupils are aware of how to use sources to interpret the past in a satisfactory way. They study the Great Fire of London and discuss the value of Pepys' diary as a source of history. They imagine themselves in that situation and express the feelings of the families at the time. They compare the fire service of the 17th Century with that of the present day.

109. In Key Stage 2, pupils know how the Romans invaded of Britain, and understand their contribution to the present day landscape, resulting from the building of towns and the roads linking their settlements. They study the history of the local area with particular reference to evidence from the church and Hever Castle. This helps to consolidate and extend the knowledge previously gained about the Romans in Britain. They acquire knowledge of the Tudors with particular reference to Henry VIII and his influence on English social life, especially on religion. They take particular interest in the family tree of the Tudors and pay attention to the fate of the wives of Henry VIII. Pupils in Year 5/6 take special pride in working independently, finding out information on topics of their choice within the Tudor period. They use the Internet effectively to obtain material on topics such as ships and shipping, clothes, the Spanish Armada and the War of the Roses. They study the history of Ancient Greece and relate their learning to religious beliefs and customs. By the end of the key stage, they have developed an understanding of time and events in the past, the element of continuity and change, the use of historical sources to reconstruct conditions in the past, and of how to work independently on topics of interest.

110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with no lessons of unsatisfactory quality. Half the lessons were satisfactory and half were of good quality. Where teaching is good, the teacher has a good grasp of the subject, which enables clear explanations of historical concepts and aids pupils' learning. Knowledgeable responses to pupils' searching questions help to extend pupils' understanding. Good pace keeps pupils interested, and the enthusiasm of the teacher maintains this, so that they gain knowledge in a happy learning environment. On occasion the pace is slow when pupils sit too long listening to the teacher and become distracted easily by off task behaviour.

111. Planning is thorough, but the curriculum is not well planned in Key Stage 2 to ensure that pupils of the same age in different classes have access to a curriculum which is best suited to their needs. At present, the subject is managed by the headteacher in a caretaker role, pending the appointment of a co-ordinator in the coming academic year. Action to address the weaknesses in provision has yet to take effect. Visits and visitors extend the provision for historical study well. Year 4/5 pupils visit the British Museum in connection with their study of Greeks; Year 5/6 visit Hever Castle, and Year 3 /4 the church of St Peter and St Paul for the study of Roman Britain.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

112. The findings of the last inspection identified standards in information technology that were below those expected of primary age pupils. The school has made improvements to provision which have helped to improve standards so that, at the end of both key stages, pupils' attainment is in line with that expected of most seven and eleven year olds.

113. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to use the mouse and keyboard competently to word process and create pictures using simple edit features. They know how to enter data onto the computer and produce a bar chart to represent results of a survey on playground equipment. In Year 1, pupils select appropriate keys to produce sounds and move to the next page of an interactive story. Little evidence was seen of control work in Key Stage 1 to show that enough progress is being made in this aspect of the subject. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils know how to log on, open and close down software packages and print out their work. However, progress is much more rapid towards the end of the key stage, where pupils in Year 6 and Year 5 take it in turns on a weekly basis to gain a range information technology skills at a local secondary school. Most show sound skills in the use of databases and spreadsheets, for example to help with their mental maths skills. They are able to combine text and graphics to present their work. They know how to build simple procedures using a 'logo' program to draw shapes. There is some evidence of research to support learning in history and science using the internet facility, although little evidence of pupils having the opportunity to monitor external events, for example using sensors to support science work. A small number of older pupils have the responsibility for collecting news stories to put on the school's web site. These 'Web Reporters' fulfil their roles conscientiously.

114. Pupils do not develop their skills systematically from year to year by regular access to the computer, so many do not have the practice they need to achieve better standards. Many have skills that are developed through use of computers at home, but the school does not build effectively on these experiences. Learning does not take place at such an effective rate at the start of Key Stage 2 as it does towards the end. There was almost no evidence of work in information technology in Year 3 work samples and displays. In a demonstration lesson given by the headteacher during the inspection, pupils were able to gain some understanding of the use of computers to present words and pictures, but pupils said that they had infrequent access to computers prior to this. A few examples were seen of information technology being used to support learning in other subjects, for example in literacy in Year 1. However, there is little evidence of the majority of pupils having regular and independent opportunities to use and apply their information technology skills at a challenging and meaningful level in most lessons.

115. Teaching in demonstration lessons was satisfactory in all lessons seen and good in one of these in Year 2, which helped pupils to make good gains in their learning. In this lesson, the teacher made effective links with pupils' work in design and technology to make learning relevant and interesting. Pupils were effectively involved and good questioning sustained a high level of interest. Good use is made of a large screen in some demonstrations so that pupils can see clearly, although in one lesson in Key Stage 2, a small laptop was inadequate for the whole class and not all pupils were attentive as a result. A weakness in teaching is that opportunities are missed to plan and organise the use of information technology to support learning in other subjects on a more regular basis. Lessons are not always well organised to give pupils a regular time at the computer. Pupils were observed working independently with information technology in only a small minority of lessons. For example, in Year 1, pupils regularly work with an adult at the computer in literacy and numeracy lessons. When provided with opportunities, pupils are confident and concentrate well. They are good at helping one another, and handle equipment with care.

116. Planning does not define well the specific skills being taught to pupils of different ages in the mixed-age classes. The school is in the process of incorporating national guidelines into a scheme of work. However, this does not provide teachers with enough guidance as to how pupils in the mixed age classes in Key Stage 2 will be catered for so that they learn in a systematic way from year to year. Some sound procedures have recently been established to track pupils' acquisition of skills, but such assessments have yet to be used to plan future work. The co-ordinator, who is also the headteacher, has had a positive impact on raising standards in the subject, but has recognised that the current equipment and facilities for information technology in school, although much improved since the last inspection, are inadequate. Good plans have been developed to make further improvements which, combined with more rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, will help to address some of the weaknesses which currently exist and help to raise standards further.

MUSIC

117. Standards of attainment by the end of both key stages are in line with those expected for pupils at the ages of seven and eleven. This is broadly the same finding as the last inspection, when standards of attainment were in line with national expectations at both key stages.

118. At Key Stage 1, pupils listen appropriately to the music of Tchaikovsky's 'Sleeping Beauty', and make both verbal and written responses effectively to what they hear. They can recognise slower more emotive parts and the more exciting sections of the music. Pupils' drawings reflect these differences appropriately. During the inspection, no lessons involving performing with instruments were observed in Key Stage 1, but pupils sing with appropriate pitch and harmony during assemblies. At Key Stage 2, pupils can sing tunefully and can use simple instruments to accompany their singing. Pupils clap a rhythm well and keep in time to a beat. In a Year 4 and 5 class, pupils recognise the different sounds of Tudor instruments, such as a lute and virginals, and can name them accurately. Pupils sing appropriately and vary their pitch and expression when singing in assembly. Discussion with pupils indicates that they have appropriate opportunities to improve their learning and to use their skills in end of term productions, although these were not observed in use during the inspection.

119. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons, and good in one of the three lessons observed. Teachers plan appropriately for the active involvement of pupils and give suitable direction and guidance. Instrumental work is planned so that as many pupils can be involved as possible and positive praise is given well so that pupils are keen to do better. On occasion in Key Stage 1, some inattention is not dealt with quickly enough and leads to inattention by other pupils. Activities involving listening are generally appropriate, but are not as inspiring with older Key Stage 2 pupils so that they are not as attentive as they could be. Public performances and visiting musicians to the school are included appropriately in yearly planning and enhance the curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

120. Standards of attainment by the end of both key stages are as expected for pupils who are seven and eleven. This indicates that standards are similar to those reached and assessed at the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to move quickly and use appropriate skills of fielding skills in small-sided games. Batting skills are also developing appropriately and throwing skills are usually accurate. Pupils are also learning the conventions of games playing and simple tactics, although these are not as advanced as the skills to play the game. By the time pupils are eleven they have well developed skills in dance, running, skipping and jumping. No gymnastics or team-game activities were observed during the inspection period. By Year 6, pupils perform different sequences of movements representing workers on a building site. These are largely original, and are well matched to the beat of the music from a pop group. Pupils improve their movements effectively by developing paired sequences with others. In outside athletics activities pupils can run in differing ways such as jogging and sprinting, although these are not well developed by some pupils in a Year 3 and 4 class. Progress improves by Year 4 and 5, where pupils have a higher level of skill and can run, skip and hop in a variety of ways.

121. Teaching is satisfactory in three out of four lessons seen, but unsatisfactory in the remainder. Two out of three lessons were of good quality and helped pupils to make good gains in their learning. In Key Stage 1, activities are appropriately planned and activities are chosen which interest and motivate pupils, who generally enjoy their activities. Skills are well taught and pupils encouraged well to try their hardest, which helps to develop their skills appropriately. There is a weakness in the expectations of the teacher and the way pupils are managed in the beginning of Key Stage 2. Not enough is asked of these pupils and they are less willing to listen to the class teachers instructions. This means that they are not as clear about what they are doing or why. The activities chosen do not enable pupils to have enough time to experiment with their skills and improve them. In the older age classes in Key Stage 2, activities are better planned and organised; are more motivating for pupils, and enable them to practise their skills more effectively. Pupils are encouraged to work together well and share their equipment well, which they do.

122. The co-ordination of the subject has just been taken over and a good start has been made in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the subject. There is a good range of sporting extra-curricular clubs, such as netball, football, touch rugby and cricket. The school has an impressive record of achievement against other schools in both cross-country running and race-walking. In race-walking, the school has pupils who have represented the school nationally. These opportunities, together with the good quality facilities which include extensive grassed areas and the school's own swimming pool, significantly increase the quality of learning opportunities for pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

123. The standards achieved in religious education at the end of both key stages are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Since the last inspection the standards have been maintained. Additional artefacts have been acquired to enhance the teaching of the subject, which is very well resourced. Cross-curricular links have been established with the acquisition of big books on religion for use in literacy lessons.

124. In Key Stage 1 pupils understand the importance of the main Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter and the significance of worship on Sundays. They know some of the stories in the life of Christ and understand that he is a very special person to Christians. They understand that His teachings and His way of life are used as guides to human actions and reactions. They identify relationships, such as caring for young persons and things, having friends and neighbours and sharing with others. Pupils are made aware of moral codes embracing forgiveness, love and caring for the world. They represent their views of what heaven is like through discussion and drawings. They recognise sequence of events as part of the wonders of nature. They learn about Judaism and its connection to Christianity, the stories of Abraham and of Moses and religious practices in Jewish homes. By the end of the key stage, pupils are familiar with some of the stories, customs and festivals of Hinduism and begin to relate the characteristics of the lesser gods to their own experiences. They apply aspects of this religion to the way of life of its followers as, for example, in the closeness of the extended family.

125. In Key Stage 2, pupils extend their knowledge of Judaism, and understand the importance of the ten commandments, the Torah as a holy book and a selection of Jewish

festivals. They develop greater understanding of the differences as well as the similarities between people of different faiths. They are familiar with customs and practices of Judaism, including the celebration of the Sabbath and the use of particular food items. They know the links between Christianity and Judaism and that Christ, the founder of Christianity, was a Jew and that the Jews do not accept Christ as the Messiah. By the end of the key stage pupils are beginning to apply their knowledge of religious beliefs to the moral issues in the world. In studying the lives of Christians such as Martin Luther King they appreciate how people model their lives on the teachings of Christ and analyse the impact on situations encountered in daily life. They begin to apply these principles in analysing their own reaction to events. They study the beliefs and practices of Buddhism and examine how the Buddha's teachings affect the life of his followers. Little discernible difference was evident among work of different groups of pupils in the same class, and sometimes this meant that older and higher attaining pupils in the mixed age classes were not challenged enough to achieve higher standards.

126. Teaching in the one lesson seen in Key Stage 1 was very good. In Key Stage 2, teaching was satisfactory in all lessons seen. The most effective teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge so that pupils' understanding is deepened. Pupils are asked searching questions which make them think carefully and challenge them to ask questions of their own. The enthusiasm of the teacher is transmitted to the pupils, who gain a great deal of satisfaction from the warm interactions. Class management is good and pupils respond with good behaviour and hard work, remaining focused and on task to achieve the objectives of the lesson. High expectations of the teachers result in the pupils concentrating throughout the lesson, and the good pace of delivery holds the pupils' interest for the duration of the lesson. On occasion, the pace to learning is slow and pupils lose interest with some consequent misbehaviour. Planning by teachers, although very detailed in terms of what pupils will do, does not always take account of the range of age and attainment in each class. This means that, on occasions higher attainers do not always learn as much as they could by being given more demanding work, and on other occasions material is too complex for younger, lower attaining pupils.

127. The subject is efficiently managed by a very enthusiastic co-ordinator who takes an active part in courses to improve the subject. She is in the process of creating information packs for her colleagues, and is involved in planning as well as in some monitoring of students by examining pupils' work. There is a clear policy and scheme of work based on the Kent Agreed Syllabus 2000. This has been adapted in Key Stage 2 to take account of the school's current organisation of pupils in mixed age classes, but the modifications have yet to be fully implemented to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. The curriculum is enhanced by the visits made to places of religious significance, and also by the number of visitors to the school, who include representatives from the Vine Evangelical Centre, the local lay reader and the parish vicar. The weekly club to discuss Christian beliefs is well attended and adds benefit to the curriculum for pupils.