

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRCHWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Martlesham Heath, Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk LEA

Unique reference number: 124681

Headteacher: Miss Joan Munns

Reporting inspector: Mr John Harris
019284

Dates of inspection: 8th May 2000 – 11th May 2000

Inspection number: 190575

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Valiant Road Martlesham Heath Ipswich Suffolk
Postcode:	IP5 3SP
Telephone number:	01493 610701
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jan Monument
Date of previous inspection:	4 th November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Harris	Registered inspector	Mathematics Physical Education Religious Education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements.
Gill Bannister	Lay inspector	No subjects	How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Carole Green	Support inspector	English Art Under Fives Special Educational Needs	How well is the school led and managed?
David Orsborne	Team inspector	Information Technology Design and Technology Music	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well are pupils taught?
Heather Tyrrell	Team inspector	Science Geography History Equal Opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birchwood Primary School caters for children between the ages of four and eleven. It occupies a modern and attractive building, set in a village-style development of mainly owner occupied housing. A high proportion of children in the school has parents with professional occupations. Their attainment on entry is above the national average. There are currently 200 pupils on roll. About four per cent of these are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is about half the national average; none currently has a statement. A small number of pupils are from ethnic minority groups.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which, despite some slowing of progress by older pupils, produces standards which are, in most respects, comparable with those of similar schools and better than those found nationally. The teaching is generally good. The school is strongly led, soundly managed, and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Children in the foundation class receive a very good start to their education.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their work are very good. They enjoy coming to school and behave very well.
- Relationships between all members of the school community are very good.
- The school is very successful at developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed very well.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is strongly promoted, particularly through art and literature.
- Standards in art are very high.
- Environmental and educational visits are used very imaginatively to stimulate learning.
- The headteacher is a dynamic and enthusiastic leader.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are not high enough, and the current arrangements for teaching ICT are ineffective.
- Standards in writing are too low for the older pupils.
- The teaching of constructional skills in design and technology (D&T) is not sufficiently systematic.
- Homework is not used consistently well to improve pupils' attainment at Key Stage 2.
- The school does too little to check on the standards of pupils' work and the quality of teaching.
- Not enough is done to inform parents about how they can support their children's learning, or involve them fully in the work of the school.

The weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. The quality of teaching for children under five, much of which was judged to be unsatisfactory, is now very good. There have also been improvements in the teaching of music at Key Stage 1. The school has made some moves to strengthen the partnership with governors, although more needs to be done. The school has improved its provision for ICT, but standards are still lower than they should be.

The overall quality of teaching has been significantly improved. Recent action has been taken to raise standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully implemented. Initial steps have been taken to analyse the pupils' test results and to make useful comparisons with other schools.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	B	B	B	C	well above A average above B average C below average D well below E average
mathematics	A	A	B	C	
science	A	B	C	D	

In English, the trend over the past three years has reflected the national rise in standards; in mathematics and science, standards have improved, but at a slower rate than in other schools. The school has set challenging targets for 2000 and 2001, based on current assessments of pupil attainment.

Inspection evidence indicates that standards for the present Year 6 pupils are average overall in English, although they are well above average for speaking and listening, and above average for reading. Standards are also above average in mathematics and science. Standards are especially high in art, but are unsatisfactory in ICT.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are confident and eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour throughout the school is very good at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils are mature and sensible. All members of the school community are considerate towards one another.
Attendance	Well above the national average, with little unauthorised absence.

Pupils take pride in their work, respect the work of others and use the school's resources with care. Even the youngest take some responsibility for managing their work and helping in the classroom or around the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	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.

Of the lessons seen, 96 per cent were satisfactory or better, and 23 per cent were very good or excellent. A small proportion of lessons (4 per cent) was unsatisfactory because of limitations in the teachers' own subject expertise.

Teaching is better for the younger pupils than for the older; however, good and very good teaching can be found throughout the school. In particular, the teaching of English is often very good, although writing is not as well taught to the older pupils as other aspects of the subject. Mathematics lessons, especially the development of pupils' mental computation skills, are mostly of good quality in all parts of the school. Art is particularly well taught, but arrangements for the teaching of ICT are unsatisfactory. Homework is not used effectively to enhance and extend the work that older pupils do in class.

The teaching successfully meets the learning needs of all pupils in the school. It enables them to make sound or good progress, although recent shortcomings have left gaps in the knowledge of some older pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a curriculum of richness and breadth. Effective links are made between different areas of pupils' experience.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils receive additional help in lessons from both teachers and classroom assistants and are given appropriate and interesting work to do.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. A high priority is given to promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Opportunities to extend aspects of pupils' personal development are identified throughout the curriculum. They are taught to value the beliefs of others and to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers know their pupils very well. They evaluate their progress and modify their planning to take account of their needs.

There are frequent opportunities for pupils to become involved in imaginative and challenging activities. There are regular visits to places of educational interest, and very good use is made of these to stimulate work in many subject areas. The school is involved in a range of curriculum enrichment projects. There is a well-planned programme for personal, social and health education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is a knowledgeable and inspiring leader, who secures strong commitment. She is well supported by subject leaders, but the senior management team needs strengthening.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They do not have enough first-hand knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses to enable them to influence its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Test results are analysed to enable comparisons to be made with other schools. Not enough is done to check on the standard of pupils' work and the quality of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The school deploys its staff, accommodation and resources well. The school library currently contains many of the school's computers and is underused for research purposes. Financial planning is sound and supports the school's educational priorities.

The school environment is vibrant and exciting, celebrating children’s achievements and inspiring them to further effort. The staff is appropriately qualified and deployed, resources are generally of high quality, and the standard of accommodation is very good. The resources are used in keeping with the government’s principles for obtaining best value.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their children like coming to school. ▪ The school expects children to work hard. ▪ Children make good progress. ▪ Behaviour is good. ▪ Children are helped to become mature and responsible. ▪ The teaching is good. ▪ The school is well led and managed. ▪ They can approach the school with problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The range of activities outside lessons. ▪ Information about their children's progress. ▪ The ways the school involves parents. ▪ The amount of homework given.

Inspection evidence generally supports the positive comments made by parents. The range of activities outside lessons is not significantly different from that provided by many similar schools. The school should do more to keep parents informed about the work their children are doing and to involve them more in the life of the school. There is no overall policy for the setting of homework; this leads to inconsistencies between classes, and expectations which are sometimes unclear to pupils and parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards for seven year-olds in the 1999 national assessments were well above average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were still well above average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. The results in writing, while good, were lower than in reading and mathematics because a smaller proportion of pupils did better than the standard expected for their age.
2. Standards for seven year-olds in the school have been consistently high over the past four years. There has been no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
3. National test results for eleven year-olds over the past four years have been less consistent. In the latest reporting year (1999), standards were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards were average in English and mathematics and below average in science. The below average results in science were due to a smaller proportion of pupils attaining a higher level than in similar schools.
4. Over the past four years, the school's results for all three subjects together have broadly followed the national trend of gradual improvement. However, there have not been consistent year-on-year improvements in mathematics and science. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, the difference in 1999 between the high attainment by seven year-olds and average attainment by eleven year-olds, suggests that pupils do not make enough progress during their time at Key Stage 2. Direct comparisons between the results attained by seven year-olds in 1995 and the results attained by the same group of pupils when they were eleven in 1999 indicates that for this cohort this was certainly so.
5. There is no significant pattern in the difference between girls' and boys' attainment in the past four years. However, proportionally more girls than boys have done well in the English tests than is the case nationally.
6. Inspection evidence confirms that teaching is currently better for the younger pupils than for the older, although nowhere is it unsatisfactory. There have been changes in staffing since the time of the last inspection which go some way towards explaining why pupils have not done so well at the end of Key Stage 2 recently as they did then. A further contributory factor is that the school does not have strong enough systems to identify areas where improvements are needed. It has not, therefore, acted as quickly as it should to effect them.
7. The school is now beginning to find ways of checking how well it is doing. It has set

targets for pupils who will reach the end of Key Stage 2 in 2001 (the current Year 5 pupils). These are based on an analysis of pupils' current attainment, and indicate that the progress being made by the older pupils in the school is better than it has been in recent years. Targets for the current Year 6 pupils also forecast an improvement over last year's results. However, it is predicted that pupils will do better in mathematics and science than in English.

8. The school's forecasts for improvements in standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have been supported by a number of recent initiatives. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Evidence shows that effective teaching is helping to raise attainment in mathematics, both within class lessons and particularly in the weekly 'enrichment' sessions for higher attaining pupils. 'Booster' classes in English and science have also contributed to higher standards. Pupils have recently been set their own individual literacy targets, and this has helped them concentrate more clearly on what they need to do to improve.
9. Nevertheless, the school has not put the raising of standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the centre of its development planning. Although systems for analysing current performance are now being put into place, those for identifying what action should be taken remain weak.
10. Evidence gathered during the inspection largely confirms the picture which the national assessment data presents. Where there are differences, they can be explained by the recent improvements resulting from staffing adjustments and changes in teaching approaches. Current Year 6 pupils are generally achieving well in comparison with how they were doing in previous years.
11. In English the standards attained by pupils by the time they are seven years-old are high. They are better in reading than in writing and particularly good in speaking and listening. By the time they are eleven, pupils still attain very high standards in speaking and listening. Standards are above average in reading, although many pupils do not make even progress during their time at Key Stage 2. Standards in writing for the eleven year-olds are average. This is largely because not enough attention is given to helping pupils refine and improve their work.
12. In mathematics pupils attain high standards by the age of seven, having made good progress in their early years at school. They are particularly adept at calculating mentally and are developing a wide range of strategies for doing so accurately and efficiently. At the age of eleven this aspect of their attainment remains a strength. There are, however, weaknesses in pupils' ability to carry out mathematical investigations. This is because there has not been enough emphasis on teaching the important skills, which enable children to use and apply their knowledge to solve problems.
13. In science standards are above average for pupils by the ages of seven and eleven. Seven year-olds explore scientific ideas confidently, suggesting reasons for the findings that they observe; eleven year-olds make good use of their knowledge to help them carry out more complex scientific investigations. Standards are higher than in recent national tests as a result of the school's modification to its teaching programme.
14. In ICT pupils do not reach the expected standards. By the age of seven, they have gained many of the required skills, but not all. For example, they use a range of equipment confidently and can use the basic features of word-processing and

graphics programs; they do not, however, know how to use ICT to make simple charts and graphs, or find and explore information. By the age of eleven, pupils have fallen further behind. Some aspects of ICT are well established, for instance, the widespread and confident use of the digital camera. However, pupils do not have the necessary breadth of skills and knowledge because they have not been taught systematically. For example, there is little use of databases or of the more advanced features of word-processors or spreadsheets.

15. In religious education the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus are met. Younger pupils, for example, learn about religious festivals by relating them to their own experiences of celebration. As they grow older, they gain a more sophisticated understanding of the distinctive features of different religious traditions and of what it means to be a believer.
16. In history, geography and physical education (PE) pupils exceed the expected standards. This is not so, however, in D&T. Here, there are weaknesses in the skills which older pupils have acquired, which prevent them from making products of sufficient quality. Standards in art, on the other hand, are excellent, showing the systematic development of skills to a very high level by the time pupils leave the school. Pupils refine, polish and perfect their artwork in a way that provides a model for the way progress in other subjects might be planned.
17. Pupils with special educational needs are set appropriate targets and make good progress towards them. Class teachers and the special educational needs coordinator take care to ensure that they are given work which is appropriate for them, and they are given good support to enable them to achieve success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The level of attendance is well above the national average and pupils in all classes enjoy coming to school. They experience a rich, varied and well-balanced curriculum. They are taught in interesting and stimulating ways that are well matched to their needs. They respond to this very well and, in every class, pupils are confident and eager to learn. Overall, pupils have very positive attitudes and this is one of the strengths of the school.
19. Pupils are proud of their own achievements and genuinely pleased by the success of others. They listen carefully to adults and to one another whether working in small groups, with the whole class or in larger gatherings, such as school assemblies. Because of this, they are able to share information and ideas effectively and to reflect on their work in a way that supports and enhances their learning. Many take part enthusiastically in the activities of the 'pyramid' of local schools or in the wealth of artistic activity that occurs throughout the school.
20. The pupils behave very well. This is evident in lessons, in assemblies, in the playground and around the school building. Relationships are very good. Pupils treat adults and other pupils in a polite and considerate way. They use resources carefully and responsibly and show respect for the work of others and for items on display around the school.
21. Inside the building they move around calmly and quietly; outside they play sensibly and with due care. Many of the older pupils help the younger ones in practical ways or involve them in their games. During the inspection, there were no instances of rough play or inappropriate behaviour. Pupils respect each other, and those who

want to play quietly or be by themselves are able to do so.

22. Classrooms are well organised and even the youngest children take some responsibility for managing their work and for doing the small tasks that contribute to the smooth running of the school. There are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and they do this well. There are fewer opportunities for them to show initiative and develop their independence.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. The quality of teaching is good overall and there is some good teaching in every class. 96 per cent of the lessons observed were satisfactory or better; 62 per cent were good or very good; and 4 per cent were excellent. In a further 4 per cent teaching was unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when teaching in almost 13 per cent of lessons was judged unsatisfactory. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has also increased, from 20 per cent during the last inspection to 23 per cent this time.
24. The teaching of the under-fives is very good or excellent in four out of five lessons. Overall it is very good. The quality of the teaching for this age group has a very positive impact on their learning. The teacher and support staff have a good knowledge of the children and of the curriculum for this age group. They plan carefully and design activities that are stimulating and challenging. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills, and their use in other subjects, is very good. The teacher makes very good use of assessment. All members of staff have high expectations, make good use of time and resources and are clear about what they want the pupils to learn. They manage the pupils very well and the pupils' behaviour and attitude to their work are very good.
25. At Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching is good overall, with four out of five lessons observed reaching at least this standard. Of these, one lesson in every five was very good or excellent. At Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and nine out of every ten lessons observed reached at least this standard. There is good and very good teaching at both key stages, although the proportion is lower at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Key Stage 1 classes. Single instances of unsatisfactory teaching were seen in two different Key Stage 2 classes.
26. The teaching of literacy is very good at both key stages although the writing skills of older, higher-attaining pupils are not developed as well as they should be. The teaching of numeracy is good at both key stages and has been a major factor in helping teachers fill gaps and address a backlog of numeracy skills at Key Stage 2. In the mathematics enrichment classes at Key Stage 2 teaching is very good.
27. Good or very good teaching in all parts of the school has some common features. Teachers plan effectively and are clear about what they expect the pupils to learn. They explain this to the pupils in ways that they can understand and choose methods that are suited to the pupils and to the subject. They teach the skills of literacy and numeracy competently. They plan lessons so that they meet the needs of all the pupils, including those with special educational needs. The pace of lessons is lively and teachers teach in a way that inspires and, especially for the younger children, challenges. Teachers deploy support staff very effectively and use resources very well. They plan opportunities for pupils to review and reflect on

what they have learned and to make connections between work in different subjects. They expect pupils to behave well and to work hard, and the children respond very well to this.

28. While the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is low, there are some common weaknesses in the teaching. Where teachers lack detailed subject knowledge, they cannot teach pupils the skills needed to reach higher levels of attainment. This holds back their learning. This occurs, for example, in the constructional aspect of D&T, particularly at Key Stage 2, and in some aspects of ICT at both key stages. In addition, pupils are not systematically taught the information skills they need to make effective and independent use of the books in the classroom and in the school library.
29. The school does not have a consistent approach to the use of homework and few teachers set homework regularly. In those cases where it is set it is not always relevant to the work in progress. The school misses this important opportunity to develop the skills and strategies of independent learning, particularly with the older pupils. Parents commented on this at the pre-inspection meeting and in the questionnaires. The team's findings support their view that this aspect of teaching requires further development.

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

30. The school provides a curriculum of richness and breadth, offering pupils frequent opportunities to become involved in imaginative and stimulating activities. Subject leaders prepare outline plans for their colleagues to follow so that individual expertise is shared throughout the school. Good use is made of both national and local guidance to ensure that curriculum planning is wide ranging and of high quality. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been implemented effectively. The school readily seeks involvement in both local and national initiatives to enrich the curriculum it is able to offer. For example, pupils recently participated in a major dance festival.
31. The quality of pupils' learning is further enhanced by the way in which teachers plan meaningful links between subjects such as literature and art, or history and geography. This enables pupils to apply knowledge and skills to new situations and thus deepen their understanding. Pupils pay regular visits to places of educational interest such as Bressingham Steam Museum or West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village. In addition, there are frequent visitors to the school who share their expertise in poetry, history or sport.
32. Art is an area of real excellence: its influence pervades the whole curriculum, making a particularly strong contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. On the other hand, ICT and D&T are weaknesses; in both subjects, plans do not enable pupils to develop their skills systematically. In ICT this is in part because the present arrangements for teaching are unsatisfactory. Older pupils are withdrawn

from lessons for instruction. This is of good quality but occurs too infrequently to ensure adequate progress.

33. There are a few clubs for pupils to attend after school, such as football, netball and rounders. In addition, teachers and volunteers organise entries to competitions and other events. For example, pupils have participated in a business sponsored mathematics day and the school was recently awarded a national prize for art.
34. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils receive additional help in lessons from both teachers and classroom assistants and are given a range of interesting and appropriate work to do. Particular attention is given to pupils requiring additional literacy and numeracy support.
35. Since the last inspection the school has maintained the quality of its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; it was very good then and remains so now. The school is highly successful at meeting its aim to structure pupils' learning so that they will become 'competent, confident learners, develop an understanding and respect for themselves and others, and have respect and care for the environment'.
36. Children are often encouraged to work together in pairs or small groups and this successfully promotes cooperation and tolerance. Equally, pupils respect the need for personal calmness and concentration when asked to sit and listen quietly, for example, to music or poetry. They are able to distinguish right from wrong at an early age and, towards the end of Key Stage 2, are taught to think about the qualities they would value in a friend, or what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable in school and in the wider community.
37. Many opportunities are created to promote pupils' awareness of different cultures and beliefs. Displays in classrooms and around the school show many examples of this. For instance, pupils in the foundation class were looking at toys from around the world; pupils in Year 4 had discussed the religious beliefs of ancient Romans. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are likewise recognised in assemblies and classroom activities, for example, in the 'celebration of talents', which was the assembly theme in the week of the inspection.
38. Links with the community and with other schools are effective in bringing opportunities for sporting fixtures, sponsorship and staff development. Recently, for example, teachers spent a day with colleagues from other local schools to look at ways to identify personal improvement targets for individual children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school takes good care of its pupils. Their welfare, health and safety and general well being are of paramount importance to all adults working in the school. A high priority is given to developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem and to monitoring their personal development.
40. Pupils have a weekly lesson of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Important personal and social skills are addressed as part of a thoughtful and

coherent programme. Pupils learn, for example, how to work together successfully or about the necessity of taking responsibility for their own actions.

41. Pupils' attainments in literacy and numeracy are regularly assessed. This information is used to set school targets for improving pupil attainment in English and mathematics. A system for setting individual pupils their own personal targets for literacy has also been introduced; many pupils find this helpful as a way of focusing their attention on what they need to do to improve. Attention is paid to specific groups of pupils, for example, how well boys achieve in comparison with girls.
42. Teachers assess pupils' achievements during lessons and ensure that classroom assistants are involved in the process of gathering evidence of what pupils have learned or found difficult. Achievements in literacy and numeracy are noted and teachers generally use this information well to modify their planning. Teachers complete an annual progress record for English and mathematics at the end of each year. There is no clear school policy about how pupils' progress should be recorded in subjects other than in English, mathematics and art. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in how this is done and in what information is passed on to successive teachers. This is a weakness which has hindered pupils' progress in ICT and in D&T, for example.
43. Teachers are aware of the special educational needs of some children and they set them specific targets within individual education plans. They carefully monitor progress against these targets in consultation with the special needs coordinator. Pupils, parents and external agencies are involved in deciding about the best course of action to take.
44. Teachers monitor attendance patterns and contact is made with parents where necessary. When children are reluctant to attend they are given appropriate support and guidance. Children are reminded about the behaviour policy in lessons and at lunchtimes and breaktimes. They know what to do if they experience intimidating behaviour. Rewards are given to pupils for both academic and personal achievements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The majority of parents are content with most aspects of the school's provision. They feel that their children are happy and well behaved at school and receive appropriate support and guidance. They find that teachers are approachable and will readily make appointments to talk with them if they have any concerns or queries.
46. Annual reports, which include pupils' own assessments of how well they are doing, are well written and informative. They give parents a good insight into their children's progress. However, many parents feel that they are not kept in touch with their children's current and future work and that they cannot, therefore, help their children as much as they would like. Such information is not regularly provided in a form that most parents find useful.
47. Many parents also feel that the school does not work sufficiently closely with them. There are instances when communication is not as effective as it should be.

Procedures for consulting with parents about the recent home-school agreement, for example, did not give them sufficient opportunity to contribute their views. Some parents help in the school and provide effective support in classrooms, but there is scope for greater parental contribution to pupils' learning. The school recognises that it needs to take a more positive approach to involving parents in the life of the school. Some promising initiatives have been taken recently, for example, in the formation of a group of parents to consider how diversity in the community can be better reflected in the school. However, more needs to be done.

48. Some parents expressed concerns about homework - both the amount given and the nature of the tasks. Inspection evidence confirms that there is a need for a more consistent and systematic approach to the setting and marking of homework. Dissatisfaction was expressed too with the range of activities outside lessons. However, this is not significantly different from that provided by many similar schools. While the lunchtime and after-school clubs are mainly aimed at the older pupils, the curriculum is very effectively enriched by a wide range of visits and other events. For example, a recent visit to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts has been used as a powerful stimulus for pupils' work, as well as heightening their cultural awareness.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The leadership and management of the school are sound.
50. The headteacher has a very clear vision of how children's learning should be supported and developed. Her dynamic and enthusiastic leadership is a major strength. She inspires her staff to work very hard to create a stimulating and exciting learning environment. This is a central feature of the school which is evident in all classrooms and in the work pupils are asked to do. Consequently, the school is highly successful at meeting its aim of 'developing competent learners who are proud of their achievements'. It ensures that all pupils have access to a rich curriculum which is broad and balanced. It is also a strong factor in pupils' very good spiritual and cultural development. Relationships among all members of the school community are very positive. They are built on respect, tolerance and care. The headteacher gives good personal support to her staff and knows the pupils well.
51. However, there are shortcomings. There is a good understanding of where the school's areas of weakness lie, but there is not always enough clarity about what needs to be done to improve them. The school has made a useful start in analysing its performance data, and has used this information to set targets for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics. But, having set targets at the beginning of the academic year, not enough has been done to check progress towards them. Equally, there are insufficient checks on the quality of the teaching; teachers, therefore, do not receive enough guidance to enable them to adapt what they do.
52. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have made good use of national initiatives to guide their work. They have been influential in raising standards because they have been able to advise colleagues on specific aspects of the

national strategies. The role of other subject leaders is less well developed. They work conscientiously to support their colleagues, but not all have been able to gain a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and how well their subject is taught. In particular, the school has not successfully addressed the issue of raising standards in ICT, a weakness identified at the last inspection, and, consequently, standards in this subject are still unsatisfactory.

53. The headteacher's strong guiding hand is evident in all aspects of the school's work. However, systems of communication do not always work as well as they should. Not all parents feel well informed about what is happening in the school, nor about the work their children are doing. This reduces the amount of help that they can give. There are times when the teachers are not sure of what is expected of them, for example, with regard to the setting of homework or the recording of children's achievements.
54. The chair of governors is very supportive of the headteacher and staff and knows the school well. Many members of the governing body are new to the role. They are committed and interested in the work of the school and use their committee structure to ask questions and seek clarification. They fulfil their statutory duties and produce a detailed annual report for parents. Many governors, however, do not have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This prevents them from taking a sufficiently active role in determining priorities for development. A key issue identified at the last inspection was to strengthen the partnership and teamwork of the governing body and staff. A number of initiatives have been taken but more remains to be done.
55. Financial planning is sound and is relevant to the school's educational priorities. Specific grants are used effectively, and the headteacher and governors apply the principles of best value when setting priorities and in their use of learning resources. The money carried over from the last financial year has been allocated appropriately. The school provides satisfactory value for money.
56. The school is staffed with teachers with appropriate qualifications and expertise. There have been considerable changes in staffing since the last inspection, mostly through promotion to other schools. New teachers are well supported by the headteacher and their colleagues. Support staff make a valuable contribution to children's learning, especially those with special educational needs.
57. The school's standard of accommodation is very good. There is a lack of space in some classrooms for the older pupils, but teachers use the shared learning areas outside classrooms very effectively. The very attractive and stimulating displays throughout the school contribute significantly to the high standards that pupils achieve, especially in their artwork and poetry writing. The school library currently contains many of the school's computers and this hinders its use for research purposes. Consequently, pupils' skills in retrieving information from books are not as good as it should be.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. In order to improve the quality of education provided, the staff and governors should now –
 - (1) Raise standards in ICT by:

- providing training for the teachers (paragraphs 121, 122);
 - ensuring that all areas of the programme of study are systematically taught (paragraphs 14, 118, 119, 120, 124);
 - giving pupils more opportunities to develop and use their ICT capability (paragraphs 92, 98, 106, 115, 120, 121).
- (2) Raise standards in writing and in D&T at Key Stage 2 by:
- providing training for teachers who lack sufficient expertise (paragraphs 78, 107);
 - giving more attention in Key Stage 2 to the redrafting of pupils' initial writing (paragraphs 11, 78);
 - ensuring that there is more systematic teaching of constructional skills in D&T (paragraph 107).
- (3) Make better use of homework to improve attainment at Key Stage 2 by:
- introducing a homework policy to be followed throughout the school (paragraphs 29, 48);
 - planning tasks related more closely to classwork, especially at Key Stage 2 (paragraphs 29, 48);
 - ensuring that expectations are clear to both pupils and parents (paragraphs 29, 48).
- (4) Improve procedures for evaluating how well the school is doing by:
- checking the standards of children's work more rigorously (paragraphs 6, 9, 51);
 - ensuring that teaching is regularly observed and feedback given (paragraphs 6, 9, 51, 93);
 - recording pupils' progress in all subjects (paragraphs 42, 99, 108).
- (5) Strengthen the school's partnership with parents by:
- keeping parents better informed about how they can support their children's learning (paragraph 46);
 - improving opportunities for parents to become involved in the life of the school (paragraph 47).
59. Two other, less important, issues also need to be addressed. First, steps should be taken to improve pupils' information retrieval skills, especially through making better use of the library (paragraphs 28, 73, 74, 82). Second, governors need to improve their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses so that they can play a bigger part in setting priorities for development (paragraph 54).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	19	43	28	4	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	198
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	16

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
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Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.21
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.04
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	10	24

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	9	10	10
	Total	23	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (89)	100 (93)	100 (93)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	14
	Girls	10	10	10
	Total	24	24	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (93)	100 (97)	100 (92)
	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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	17	16	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	13	13
	Girls	14	15	16
	Total	25	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (73)	85 (77)	88 (86)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	14
	Girls	16	16	16
	Total	27	28	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (100)	85 (89)	91 (91)
	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	1
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	169
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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)	8.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.3 : 1
Average class size	28.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	3.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

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	1999
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	£
Total income	387607
Total expenditure	311641
Expenditure per pupil	1567
Balance brought forward from previous year	47186
Balance carried forward to next year	75966

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	285
Number of questionnaires returned	123

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	39	7	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	45	7	2	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	60	4	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	39	26	4	9
The teaching is good.	37	47	4	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	41	28	11	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	34	15	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	42	4	1	7
The school works closely with parents.	19	38	28	13	2
The school is well led and managed.	33	47	7	7	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	51	4	2	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	17	36	21	15

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

60. Provision for children in the foundation class is very good and is a strength of the school.
61. A key issue from the school's last inspection was to 'improve the quality of teaching for under-fives by increasing the scope for children's active learning and to express their ideas in imaginative context'. The school has been extremely successful in meeting this requirement.
62. All children are admitted into the foundation class in September and attend full-time in the term in which they are five. The class teacher and the full-time classroom assistant have created a welcoming, well organised and stimulating environment, where learning is fun. This ensures that all children experience a very positive start to their education. Daily routines help children to gain self-confidence and to work independently. The accommodation is adequate and is well organised for different areas of learning. Although the space available for outdoor provision is satisfactory, there is no immediate access from the classroom to the outdoor area and this restricts its use. The further development of the outdoor area is a priority in the current school development plan.
63. Assessment on entry to the school shows that children are attaining above the expected level in English and mathematics and are in line with the expected level in their personal and social development. Children make very good progress in all areas of learning and, consequently, by the time they are five, many pupils are working beyond the expected levels of attainment.
64. The quality of teaching is very good because the teacher has a good understanding of how young children learn. Both the teacher and the classroom assistant know the children well. This knowledge is used very effectively to plan appropriate activities that build on children's previous experience and to identify what they need to learn next. There is an appropriate balance between tasks that are directed by the teacher and self-chosen activities that allow children to explore and experiment for themselves. The teacher is especially skilful in developing children's speaking and listening skills. The combination of imaginative teaching and well-planned practical activities ensures that children are fully engaged in their learning and make good progress.

Personal and social development

65. High priority is given to children's personal and social development. Children make very good progress in this area of learning. Both the class teacher and classroom assistant act as good role models. Relationships in the class are very positive. Children behave well and are sensitive to the needs of others. Frequent opportunities are provided for children to work together and, therefore, they are very good at taking turns and sharing equipment fairly. The teacher's ability to capture children's interest and imagination means they remain attentive even when working in a large group. Children's skills at working independently are also well developed.

Language and literacy

66. Children make very good progress in all aspects of this area of learning. Their speaking and listening skills are especially well developed. They talk confidently and are eager to engage in conversation. They are able to express their ideas articulately and they listen to one another patiently. They also listen with enjoyment to stories and rhymes and handle books with care. They securely build their knowledge of initial letter sounds and letter blends. At the same time, they are effectively taught letter formation and early reading and writing skills. Many children write their own name accurately, write labels and captions, and record the things they find out. Children regularly take their reading books home and parents support them well.

Mathematical development

67. Children make good progress in developing their mathematical understanding. There are regular opportunities to practise basic counting skills through songs and rhymes, and this means that they can count and recognise numbers to 20 and beyond. They can write the numbers they use, checking that they are correct by referring to a number line. The teacher recognises the importance of developing children's mathematical language and encourages them to explain their ideas. Children increase their knowledge of capacity through working with sand and water, and produce repeating patterns in art activities. They are able to work with precision when, for instance, using mirrors to find the line of symmetry.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

68. Children make good progress through the wide range of opportunities to explore the environment. During the inspection they were investigating different materials. Children used phrases such as "stretchy like elastic" to describe their different properties. Later they confidently selected and sorted them according to different criteria. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to select tools to shape and join materials together and to use and build with construction toys. Although no ICT was seen being taught during the inspection, there is good provision of equipment in this area and there is evidence of pupils having used computers to generate their own art work.

Physical development

69. Pupils' physical development is good and provision for this area of learning is satisfactory. The teacher plans suitable activities for children in the outdoor area and there are adequate resources to support their learning. Children are skilful at manoeuvring the wheeled toys safely, showing good coordination and awareness of space. Some of the children worked hard at practising and refining their skills with hoops. Although activities are well planned and organised, adult time is not used well and opportunities are missed to encourage the children to do more.

Creative Development

70. At the last inspection this area of learning was judged to be unsatisfactory. The range of opportunities to promote pupils' creative and imaginative development has improved significantly and is now very good. The role-play area is well organised and there is a good range of resources. The teacher successfully encourages children to express their own ideas in both art and musical activities, and suitable opportunities are provided for them to learn and practice new skills. For example, children practise painting with brushes, sponges and their fingers to create different effects. Artwork is linked to other subject areas; children mixed different shades of green, for example, when constructing the leaves for Jack's beanstalk. Children make good progress in their observational drawing skills and have experimented with different media using pastel and pencil. Children make equally good progress in developing their musical skills. For example, children listened intently to an extract from the *Nutcracker Suite* several times. They discussed their feelings about the music, interpreted its mood in dance, and recorded their own informal notation by making patterns and shapes on rolls of wallpaper.

ENGLISH

71. Standards in English at the time of the last inspection (1996) were judged to be above average at the end of both key stages. In 1999 Key Stage 1 assessment results show standards in reading and writing to be above average when compared with similar schools, although more pupils attain above average standards in reading than they do in writing. End of Key Stage 2 test results for 1999 show that pupils' attainment in English was average when compared with similar schools. Standards observed during the inspection show a similar picture to the 1999 results for both key stages.
72. Speaking and listening skills are a strength of the school's English curriculum. Teachers plan tasks carefully to ensure that there are frequent opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas and to talk about their work. Pupils in Key Stage 1 respond confidently to questions about the texts they are studying and they listen very carefully to one another. They can explain their ideas clearly and enjoy talking about the books they have read. They work together very productively on collaborative tasks. In Key Stage 2 pupils are increasingly confident at expressing their own views about a wide range of topics, such as, in Year 4, the merits of school uniform. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to argue their case while at the same time respecting the views of others.
73. Standards in reading at Key Stage 1 are above average. The youngest pupils have very good attitudes to reading. They have acquired a bank of familiar words and use their phonic skills and picture clues to read words they are not sure of. Most pupils are well supported by parents who regularly listen to them read at home. By the time they are seven most pupils read accurately and with enthusiasm. The more able pupils talk confidently about the characters in the books they are reading and are able to predict what might happen next in the story. Although pupils have opportunities to read non-fiction texts, many do not know how to find books in the school library, nor are they confident in using the index or contents pages of books.

74. At the beginning of Key Stage 2 standards in reading remain above average. Pupils read with accuracy, fluency and expression from a range of texts. The introduction of regular written book reviews develops critical awareness and helps their understanding of character and plot. As pupils progress through Key Stage 2, these skills are not sufficiently built upon. For example, less able readers do not always use phonic skills confidently and, consequently, their progress is slow. At the end of the key stage standards improve as teachers ensure that pupils have access in class lessons to a wide range of interesting reading material and they challenge pupils to examine texts more closely. Pupils' attitudes to reading remain positive and many talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. The most able readers in Year 6, for example, can select key points from a poem to illustrate their views. Information retrieval skills remain unsatisfactory in Years 4 and 5 because pupils have insufficient opportunities to use the school library for research purposes. This improves in Year 6 because these pupils have been introduced to the school's new library bar coding system and they are confident in selecting appropriate books for their project work. Standards in reading by the end of Key Stage 2 are above average in all respects.
75. Although standards in writing are above average at Key Stage 1, they are only average at Key Stage 2. The school has recognised the need to raise standards in writing and is beginning to take appropriate action. For example, all pupils have recently been given individual targets for improving their writing. Poetry writing is well developed throughout the school and is often linked to the very good artwork that pupils produce.
76. In Key Stage 1 pupils write for a wide range of purposes. Writing is often related to texts that have been studied during literacy lessons, reinforcing the link between reading and writing. By the time they are seven, pupils spell simple words accurately and use key word cards confidently to help them spell words they are not sure about. They are beginning to use capital letters and simple punctuation appropriately. Teachers give frequent praise and design interesting tasks, so that pupils have very positive attitudes to writing. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils greatly enjoyed finding alliterative phrases to describe animals, using dictionaries to select appropriate words and check spellings.
77. Throughout Key Stage 2 teachers continue to provide good opportunities for pupils to write for a wide range of purposes and increasingly from different points of view. They are particularly aware of the part writing can play in promoting pupils' spiritual development. This results in some particularly sensitive writing, for example, in Year 5, poems on the theme of loneliness and, in Year 6, responses to a creation myth.
78. In Year 3 pupils build successfully on the progress they have made earlier. They have opportunities to plan, draft and refine their work and, consequently, their writing becomes more complex and thoughtful. In subsequent years, progress is slower; pupils' extended writing lacks form and they do not extend their knowledge of spelling and punctuation sufficiently. This is because not enough attention is given to redrafting skills as pupils grow older. They, therefore, lack confidence in planning their work and are frequently unsure about how they can make improvements. Consequently, by the time pupils leave the school at the age of

eleven, standards are average. The subject leader is aware of the issues arising from teachers' lack of expertise and has plans for training which should bring about to the necessary changes.

79. Teachers generally plan lessons well. They have successfully introduced all aspects of the daily literacy hour and this has helped them identify what they want pupils to learn in each lesson. This is often shared with pupils at the beginning of lessons and, in many classes, reviewed again at the end. This increases pupils' own understanding of the progress they are making.
80. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 is good. Teachers make use of stimulating resources, set challenging tasks and encourage pupils to concentrate and persevere. Pupils are keen to succeed and are proud of their accomplishments.
81. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory overall and in some lessons is very good. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilful at posing questions that encourage pupils to articulate their views and opinions. There is some very imaginative and inventive teaching. For example, a fictional news story immediately captured the attention of Year 5 pupils and encouraged them to work very hard to produce a persuasive piece of writing. On other occasions, the pace of lessons is too slow; pupils are not given opportunities to consolidate their learning or are not given enough guidance to help them extend their powers of expression. Sometimes activities are not challenging enough for all pupils to make sufficient gains in their learning.
82. The subject leader has undertaken some useful monitoring of both teaching and of pupils' work and has identified appropriate priorities for improvement. An analysis of task and test results has been undertaken and challenging targets have been set to maintain the high standards at Key Stage 1 and improve standards at Key Stage 2, especially in writing. The introduction of a new spelling scheme linked closely to the National Literacy Strategy is already having a beneficial impact on raising standards. Resources for the teaching of English are adequate, although some of the reading scheme books are beginning to look a bit tired and well worn. The school library is currently underused and this is having an adverse effect on the development of pupils' information retrieval skills.

MATHEMATICS

83. In the most recent national assessments for seven year-olds (1999), the percentage of pupils attaining the expected standard was well above average and compared very favourably with other schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who exceeded the expected standard was similarly high. These high standards have been sustained over the past few years.
84. In the 1999 national tests for eleven year-olds, standards were above the national average and matched those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. However, given the levels of attainment at the age of seven, this represents a slowing of progress during pupils' time at Key Stage 2. Results over the past few years have not matched the gradual rise in standards seen nationally, showing a decline in 1998 followed by some improvement the following year.
85. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirms that standards in mathematics are

- high for the younger pupils in the school. For example, by the age of seven, pupils rapidly add and subtract simple numbers in their heads and read and write numbers greater than one hundred. They know about odd and even numbers. More able pupils can work out the sum of two items costing 24p and 15p and can find the least number of coins to pay for them exactly. They know a wide range of multiplication facts, such as 5×6 , and understand about negative numbers.
86. Inspection evidence also confirms that this rate of progress has not been sustained in the older classes. For example, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge which affect the speed at which many are able to work. Important mathematical skills, such as estimating, predicting, hypothesising and generalising, have been insufficiently developed. Therefore, when pupils are given a problem which requires them to estimate accurately or to find a suitable strategy for tackling a task, they are often not able to solve it efficiently.
87. The school is now working hard to remedy these deficiencies and there are signs that it is beginning to do so successfully. There have been recent improvements, for example, in pupils' ability to use a range of mental calculation strategies effectively. For instance, pupils in Year 6 can find several ways of multiplying 74 by 8 in their heads and can select the best method to use. More able pupils can calculate mentally different percentages of items costing various sums. They can describe how the method they choose works and why, and can use number relationships to do it more quickly (noting, for instance, that 30 per cent will be half of 60 per cent). Pupils' ability to explain their reasoning is not yet so evident in their recorded work. There remains a weakness in enabling pupils to discern patterns and to apply what they know to new situations.
88. The teaching of mathematics is good overall. It is better for the younger pupils, where it is often very good, than for the older; nowhere, however, is it unsatisfactory. This is largely because the school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. Staff and pupils are enthusiastic about the daily mathematics lesson and the pace and variety of teaching styles and activities that it brings. Teachers themselves feel that the strategy has helped them improve their teaching and there is clear evidence from the work that pupils are doing that this is so.
89. The teaching of mathematics has a number of good features. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. They have a clear idea of what they intend pupils to learn and mostly they share this with pupils at the beginning of each lesson. They pay good attention to the needs of individual pupils and generally provide work of the right level of difficulty for them all. Pupils are managed very expertly. Lessons ensure that pupils sustain a good rate of work and very little time is wasted. There is the right emphasis on the importance of being able to calculate mentally. Pupils are taught a range of methods to enable them to do so reliably and efficiently.
90. Some of the teaching observed during the inspection was very good or excellent. Such lessons provide pupils with a high level of challenge. Teachers ask perceptive and probing questions to help pupils organise and extend their thinking. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, the encouragement to look for patterns helped a pupil to spot that addition is the reverse of subtraction and that this can be used to help speed up calculations.
91. Where there are weaknesses in the teaching they are largely a result of limitations in teachers' own expertise. This means that they do not always identify pupils'

misunderstandings or ask the right kind of questions to move pupils' learning forward. They do not have a clear enough idea of the standards they should expect or how they should help pupils to reach them. This is particularly so in the older classes in relation to how pupils should be taught skills of investigation and problem solving and how they should be encouraged to record their work.

92. Throughout the school pupils enjoy their mathematics and approach their work with confidence and a strong sense of commitment. They are willing to persevere because they know that they can learn through their mistakes. In some lessons they show real enthusiasm for the work they are doing. This is particularly so when they were able to work on interesting tasks which gave them an opportunity to make use of their reasoning skills. Their ability to use ICT to support their mathematical learning, for example, in their use of databases, is, however, a weakness.
93. The development of mathematics in the school, including the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, has been very ably coordinated by the knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader. Although relatively new to the post, significant changes have been made within a short period of time and a strong personal example has been set. However, although the school is broadly aware of the current strengths and weaknesses in the subject, teaching has not yet been examined closely enough to identify the specific areas where improvements are needed. The school has been slow to tackle the root causes of the unsatisfactory progress which pupils have made at the upper end of the school. It is now doing so, but needs to focus more precisely on showing how teachers can develop pupils' skills more systematically.

SCIENCE

94. Data for comparing the performance of eleven year-olds with all schools nationally show that standards in science over the last four years are better than the national average. However, in comparison with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, standards in the 1999 tests were below average. The school predicts from its own assessment of pupils' work in Year 6 that there will be an improvement in their performance in this year's national tests. This is largely as a result of identifying gaps in pupils' subject knowledge and understanding and taking action to fill them. Some pupils have also been given additional teaching to help them develop more advanced skills of scientific enquiry.
95. Inspection evidence, including the observation of a sample of lessons throughout the school and a detailed consideration of pupils' completed work, indicates that pupils achieve standards in science which are above average. By the age of seven, pupils have a wide knowledge and are working above the level expected for their age. Year 2 pupils explained, for instance, the reasons for a car not travelling the same distance once the angle of the slope has been reduced and suggested that changing the surface of the slope may help a car to travel further. By the time they leave the school, pupils' knowledge of science is at the expected level, with a high proportion knowing more than would be expected for their age. For example, in conducting an investigation into an effective burglar alarm system, Year 6 pupils knew that there were factors crucial to its successful working, such as the sensitivity of the buzzer to noise and movement and the positioning of an alarm trigger within a

house. They had repeated their tests on several occasions, recording slight variations in observations and measurements.

96. Pupils approach scientific investigations confidently and work together well in pairs and small groups. They listen very carefully to instructions and to new information before setting eagerly about their tasks. They have a good understanding that there might be more than one way of solving a problem. They give thought to how they should tackle it before selecting and organising equipment and materials. In this they are helped by teachers who skilfully guide them, asking questions sometimes to the whole class and sometimes to specific pupils. This deepens their understanding and enables them to speculate with confidence. The quality of teaching is generally good. There has been an improvement in the teaching of scientific enquiry skills at Key Stage 1, where a weakness was reported in the last inspection.
97. Curriculum guidance for science provides a good foundation for teachers' lesson plans and ensures that there is continuity in pupils' scientific achievements throughout their time at the school. Some teachers modify their plans in order to challenge and extend the abler pupils, but others do not. This means that occasionally these abler pupils complete the work too quickly and in inadequate depth, for example, in Year 6 work on researching the effects of certain foods on the body.
98. Pupils generally make effective use of their literacy and numeracy skills in their scientific work. By the end of Key Stage 1 they record their findings clearly and use their mathematical knowledge to measure such things as distance and weight in metric units. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils take due care when recording their observations and measurements and when drawing charts and tables, but their written explanations do not always reflect the same attention to scientific detail. Their use of ICT is also a weakness.
99. Teachers are aware of the needs of all their pupils and record information in order to help them to write detailed annual reports to parents. However, the school does not keep track of individual pupils' progress in science over a longer period.

ART

100. Attainment in art is very good at Key Stage 1 and excellent at Key Stage 2. It is a notable strength of the school and has a significant impact on pupils' good spiritual and cultural development. In the last inspection standards in art were judged to be above national expectations at both key stages and the school has improved this position further.
101. Standards are high because pupils are systematically taught how to refine and develop their skills in different media and are given frequent opportunities to make use of what they have learnt. For example, in Year 1 pupils learn to use different

painting techniques, including sponging and finger painting, to create pictures of trees in blossom. They experiment with different shades of colour by mixing their own varieties of green. They refine their drawing skills through close observations of flowers, natural objects, buildings or machines. As pupils grow older they practise and improve their skills further while learning new techniques, such as printing and batik. They make extensive use of sketchbooks to record and develop their ideas. They experiment on the effects which can be created in different media. For example, pupils have carefully crafted their own three-dimensional (3D) models from clay to portray the Madonna and Child and have also drawn sketches using pastel and charcoal. Pupils' work in 3D is particularly striking. Year 5 pupils, for instance, have worked collaboratively to design and make spirals of stone and other natural materials for display in the school's atrium. This is linked with their study of the work of the artist Andy Goldsworthy.

102. There are a number of reasons why the subject is so successfully taught throughout the school. Teachers are themselves knowledgeable about the subject and convey their own enthusiasm. They are able to build carefully on pupils' previous knowledge and teach the skills they need to improve further. They give pupils detailed background information to help them empathise with the work of other artists and to put their work in a geographical or historical context. There is a strong emphasis on the joy of creativity and the power of visual communication. Teachers exhort pupils to talk about the effects they are trying to create and to evaluate their success in doing so. They encourage them to try out new techniques and to be adventurous in the work they produce. Art assignments are linked to pupils' work in other subjects, including poetry, history, geography and dance, to give added point to the work that pupils do.
103. Pupils at both key stages are very enthusiastic about their work and are rightly proud of their achievements. They draw inspiration from their extensive knowledge of the work of different artists from their own and other cultures. They concentrate well and persevere with tasks in order to improve further. They strive for excellence, seeking qualities of imagination and individuality in all that they do. The headteacher has recently taken over the role of subject leader and her energy and influence permeates the subject throughout the school. The subject is well resourced and benefits from sponsorship from local industry and good links with national and local initiatives. Very good use is made of museums and galleries to improve pupils' knowledge and to expand their horizons.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

104. Only two D&T lessons were observed during the inspection, one in each key stage. Judgements are based on these and on evidence from samples of work, displays, plans and school documents, and from discussions with the subject leader and with some pupils in Year 6.
105. The previous inspection report indicated that standards in D&T were 'in line with national expectations'. These standards have been maintained at Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2 pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of materials and techniques and lack the necessary practical skills. Consequently, standards in this aspect of the subject are too low.
106. In Key Stage 1 pupils use simple tools to cut, shape and join a range of materials. They learn about a variety of mechanisms, examine them and investigate how they

work. In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to work with a range of materials. They achieve average standards in designing, but their construction skills are not as good as they should be. For example, they investigated the mechanisms found in pop-up books and developed some interesting ideas for using these in books of their own. They made samples of the mechanisms in their folders and wrote annotated storyboards, but the standard of the finished books was lower than one might have expected. The main reason for this is that pupils do not pay enough attention to accurate measuring and cutting or to the overall assembly and presentation. Other pupils investigating ideas for making better use of the space in the atrium have constructed small models showing the changes they would make. The proposals are imaginative, but the construction techniques used are unsophisticated and the standards of finishing are not of the expected quality. Pupils' evaluations of towers constructed earlier in the year reveal similar shortcomings. The development of control technology is at an early stage; for example, a few pupils have used the control box linked to a computer.

107. The quality of teaching was good in the two lessons observed. However, the pupils' work, which was examined, suggests that teachers do not have the necessary skills themselves to show pupils the various ways in which a product might be made. Consequently, although pupils are familiar with the design process (which the art curriculum also promotes effectively), they lack knowledge about appropriate constructional techniques. This hampers the realisation of their plans.
108. The school does not currently have a firm grasp of how well pupils are doing or of strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning of the subject. These are areas for development; to raise standards, the school needs to address them. The new subject leader has begun to revise the school's planning for D&T, making use of recent national guidelines. Pupils will cover more in a year and different aspects of the subject will be revisited more regularly. More guidance will be given about the teaching of skills and techniques. This should ensure that skills - and their practical application - are taught more systematically than at present. The subject leader is inexperienced and will need support and further training in order to guide her colleagues effectively.
109. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and this makes a significant contribution to the quality of their learning. They offer suggestions and explore ideas confidently. Pupils work together very well, cooperating over the use of resources and using them with care.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

110. Standards in both geography and history are high.
111. By the age of seven pupils have a growing knowledge of how people used to live and make comparisons between the present and the past. For example, they know about key figures and events in the history of the early railways and used their visit to a steam railway to draw and write about travel by steam. They are beginning to make deductions from historical sources. They understand about different features to be seen in the landscape, such as mountains, boggy areas and rivers, and they show accuracy in placing their local town on a map and labelling the name of the county in which to find it.

112. By the age of eleven pupils have a good sense of the past. This has been fostered by the wide range of visits they make to places of historical interest each year. They also have a secure knowledge about a range of places. They draw upon their historical knowledge as well as their geographical understanding to talk, for instance, about the reasons for the Victorians migrating to towns and the causes of migration in the United Kingdom today.
113. Pupils are generally keen and enthusiastic about history and geography and listen carefully. They confidently use a range of resources, such as maps, old newspapers and library books, to research for information. Older pupils recognise the importance of distinguishing facts from opinions, and have some lively debates about how one tells the difference and whose opinion to accept. They organise their work well, clearly labelling maps, pictures and diagrams, and frequently adding very precise details, for instance, to a drawing of the Crystal Palace taken from a book or to a first hand sketch of a building in the local environment.
114. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was good in both subjects. Teachers convey to their pupils their own enthusiasm. They plan lessons well. Pupils are required to think carefully about the questions they wish to answer and how they might find sources of information to help them, for example, from reference books, first hand observation or artefacts. Pupils are often organised into groups or pairs to encourage them to talk about their findings and learn from one another. There are interesting displays of pictures and maps on most classroom walls, together with questions to prompt pupils' thinking and engage them in informal discussion. Teachers are clear about what they expect pupils to achieve and this ensures that pupils learn something new in every lesson. For instance, in Year 4, pupils were expected to find facts about the life of a Viking family and check the authenticity of the source of evidence.
115. At Key Stage 2 there are shortcomings in the long-term planning which leads to unnecessary repetition of work on invaders and settlers. This is being remedied in readiness for the start of the next academic year. There is good liaison between the subject leaders for history and geography, and they work together well to ensure that the limited amount of time available for teaching history and geography is used to the best effect. The use of ICT is recognised as an area to improve.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

116. Only one full ICT lesson was observed in Key Stage 1 during the inspection. Judgements are based on this and on evidence from samples of work, displays, plans and school documents, from informal observations, and from discussions with the subject leader, support staff, teachers and pupils.
117. Standards in ICT are below average at both key stages. The previous inspection report noted a similar situation. Raising standards in ICT was a Key Issue and the school has not made satisfactory progress with this since the last inspection.
118. By the age of seven most pupils achieve average standards in some aspects of their work in ICT. They use a range of equipment confidently: tape recorder and compact disc player, keyboard and mouse, the printer and a programmable toy. They use a CD-ROM to listen to talking stories and can use the basic features of word-processing and graphics programs. In Year 2 the pupils devise and test 'Roamer Routes', make pictures in the style of Mondrian and write captions for their work. Other aspects of the ICT curriculum are less well developed and standards

do not meet expectations. Pupils do not use ICT to make simple charts and graphs, find and explore information, model real and imaginary situations or present what they know in a variety of ways.

119. By the age of eleven standards are still below average. In word-processing some pupils reach the expected standard, but other aspects of their work are significantly less well developed. Pupils in Year 6 do not have the necessary skills and knowledge because they have not been taught systematically. The teaching of word-processing, simple programming and spreadsheets is established, and this is leading to some improvement in standards in these areas. The digital camera is widely used and staff and pupils use it confidently. Most do not yet have enough experience of importing the pictures into other applications. There is little use of databases, of the more advanced features of the word-processor and spreadsheet or of software to operate small devices through the control box.
120. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 learn aspects of word-processing (such as altering the appearance and layout of the text) and spreadsheets (such as creating simple graphs), but have limited experience, knowledge and skills in other areas. Some Year 6 pupils use the ICT area during lunchtimes and have developed a wider range of skills by working independently. Many pupils throughout the school have access to ICT equipment at home and do the same. Overall, however, there are too few opportunities to use ICT to create and investigate patterns, explore simulations, create and interpret information, communicate electronically, capture data and present work in the most effective way. Standards in all these areas are lower than they should be.
121. The quality of teaching was good in the one lesson observed, but the evidence taken overall shows that there are two main weaknesses. First, teachers do not have the necessary subject knowledge to teach pupils the ICT skills that they need, and this is an acknowledged area for development. Second, the current arrangements for teaching ICT are ineffective because they rely too heavily on withdrawing small groups to work with a learning support assistant in the ICT area. The teaching and support available to them during these sessions is good, but pupils make slow progress because of the length of time between sessions. Moreover, the arrangements do not allow strong links to be made between ICT and work in other subjects. In order to raise standards, the school should consider alternative arrangements which could include timetabling ICT weekly as a separate subject for each class and ensuring that all subject leaders plan opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT capability.
122. Resources for ICT have improved since the last inspection. Foundation and Year 1 pupils have computers and printers in their classrooms. Other classes use the computers, printers and scanners in the ICT area. These have a range of suitable software installed and are an appropriate resource for the pupils. There are some drawbacks to this arrangement, however, and the school is planning to use part of its allocation from the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) Standards Fund in September 2000 to renew the computers in the ICT area. The existing computers will be relocated so that each class has access to at least one machine at all times. The use of this money has been carefully considered and the development plan is an accurate statement of the current needs and priorities of the school in this area. The school intends to complement the improved facilities by using its grant from the New Opportunities Fund to provide appropriate training for all staff.

123. Pupils use ICT logbooks to record what they have done. At present these do not record the development of ICT capability. There is also no recording of progress towards National Curriculum targets as pupils move from year to year. This means that the school does not have a firm grasp of how well pupils are doing.
124. Long-term staff absence has necessitated the headteacher acting as subject leader. She has begun to revise the school's planning for the teaching of ICT to include aspects of national guidance. This is a positive development; full coverage of the ICT curriculum is an essential first step towards raising standards. Another important development will be to identify those elements of current good practice in the school and ensure that it is shared more widely.

MUSIC

125. By the age of seven pupils distinguish between rhythm and pulse, listen carefully to music played to them and respond to changes in tempo and dynamics. Their listening skills are very good and they make simple but appropriate comments about the music. They understand that instruments and voices can be used in different ways to vary the quality of sound produced. They sing and play percussion instruments confidently and competently.
126. By the age of eleven pupils understand enough about the elements of music to identify changes in the character and mood of music played to them. Their listening skills are very good and they respond sensitively, both to the music and to one another's comments. When they play instruments, they perform confidently, accurately and expressively. In these respects, their attainment is satisfactory, but there is insufficient evidence to make judgements on other aspects of the music curriculum.
127. From the limited evidence available, the quality of teaching is generally satisfactory, although some teachers' lack of expertise can be restricting. The absence of the subject leader has taken away an important source of advice and support for non-specialist teachers. However, lessons are planned carefully and make good use of a published scheme of work. There are appropriate plans for developing the subject.
128. The resources provided by the published scheme are appropriate and of good quality. The hall has very good equipment for playing tapes and compact discs. The stock of instruments is quite small but adequate, and they are mostly in good condition. There is a central store that is easily accessible. Some classrooms have working displays of musical instruments. The computers in the ICT area have simple music software installed.
129. The quality of extra-curricular music activities is good but the range is limited, especially for the younger pupils. A small group of older pupils is learning the violin with a peripatetic teacher. Other pupils are learning to play the recorder. Those learning an instrument enjoy playing. They perform confidently and tunefully and achieve a good musical standard. The recorder group plays a good selection of

music, including two and three-part pieces.

130. Music was identified as a Key Issue in the previous inspection report. The matters identified there have now been addressed. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

131. Two PE lessons were observed during the inspection, one in each key stage. Both were games lessons and indicate that, by the time pupils leave the school at the age of eleven, standards in physical education are higher than those which are normally found. This is a similar picture to that reported at the time of the last inspection. The oldest pupils take part in a programme of swimming lessons at a nearby pool and are able to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave the school.
132. Pupils throughout the school have access to a broad variety of physical activities. These include gymnastics, dance and games for the younger pupils; for older pupils athletics, swimming and outdoor adventurous activities are added. These are carefully planned to ensure that, as they grow older, pupils progressively acquire a range of skills in all areas.
133. The limited evidence indicates that the teaching of physical education is often good. In the lessons observed, for example, there was a clear structure which involved the teaching of specific skills, and then an opportunity for pupils to practise them, first in pairs and then in a larger group or as part of a game. Teachers drew pupils' attention to key points, such as how to face the bowler when striking. They gave feedback to help pupils perform better, perhaps demonstrating themselves, or using pupils to model good practice. This enabled all pupils to improve their performance in the focus skill.
134. Pupils are taught about the important contribution which physical activity makes to a healthy lifestyle and about the effects of exercise on their bodies. They demonstrate a good understanding of these issues. There is also a strong emphasis on safety awareness. Pupils' attention is regularly drawn to this and they are very conscious of how to ensure that they cause no risk to themselves or to others. They are also taught about the value of teamwork: how to encourage others, for instance, and the importance of playing fairly.
135. Pupils enjoy their PE lessons. They sustain high levels of activity, showing great willingness and determination to improve their level of skill. Behaviour is very good. Pupils listen carefully to instructions, organise themselves effectively and clear away equipment promptly.
136. The subject leader is very enthusiastic and energetic and plays a key role in the development of the subject. This includes some teaching of classes other than her own, running a variety of games clubs and organising the school's participation in sports events and fixtures.

137. A number of parents registered a concern that the school does not give enough opportunity for pupils to take part in sporting activities outside the school day. However, the range of activities on offer is similar to that found in many schools of this type, although most are aimed at the older pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

138. Pupils throughout the school meet the standards set out in the locally agreed syllabus for RE. They show good knowledge of what Christians believe and an increasing understanding of how religious faith influences the lives of believers. Younger pupils reflect on what they themselves feel about matters which are important to them. They understand the concept of celebration and can relate this to some of their own experiences. They discuss their viewpoints and consider, for example, what it means to care about others. Older pupils know about the meaning of some religious objects and symbols and about the importance for believers of sacred writings. They can describe some of the distinctive features of other religious traditions, for example, in the Jewish or Sikh faiths. They learn to understand the significance of religious festivals and special occasions. They begin to reflect on how religious stories relate to their own lives.
139. Teachers make good use of the guidance provided by the local education authority. Lessons are well prepared and organised. Activities planned for lessons are carefully chosen, although some only require pupils to consolidate their knowledge and do not necessarily develop their religious understanding. There are good links between RE lessons and the school's programme for PSHE. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to think and talk about things which affect them and to reflect, for example, on why a community needs to have rules. There is also an appropriate emphasis on the development of skills, such as listening to one another and collaborating as a member of a group. Effective use is made of stories to illustrate key themes or to provide starting points for discussion. School assemblies are also used well to further pupils' knowledge and understanding of the religious practice of different faith communities. During the inspection week, for example, pupils learned about how the Jews observe the Sabbath.
140. The teaching is of good quality. The teachers are enthusiastic, asking questions with sensitivity and helping pupils think about issues to do with values and beliefs. In a Year 2 lesson about 'causes and consequences', for example, pupils were invited to complete a number of statements written on cards. They undertook this task with great commitment, discussing in groups alternative endings and agreeing which ones were best. In a Year 3 lesson the teacher told pupils about the part that the Bible plays in the lives of Christians, skilfully involving them in discussion by drawing on what they already knew. Pupils were fascinated by the impressive old Bibles from the teacher's own family, and extended their knowledge and understanding by asking many questions of their own.
141. The school's subject leader for RE is capable and conscientious. She has worked hard to develop her own expertise and lends effective support to colleagues. However, she has not had sufficient opportunity to find out where the main strengths and weaknesses lie throughout the school or how improvements can be made.