

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH DOWN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Portishead

LEA area: North Somerset

Unique reference number: 109084

Acting Headteacher: Mrs S Marsh

Reporting inspector: John Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 27 - 31 March 2000

Inspection number: 190658
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	mixed
School address:	Down Road Portishead Bristol
Postcode:	BS20 6DY
Telephone number:	01275 848501
Fax number:	01275 817246
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Royden
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr J Bald	Registered inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
		Information and communications technology (ICT)	The school's results and achievements.
		English as an additional language	How well are pupils taught?
		Special educational needs	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Mr T Page	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mrs C Slade	Enrolled inspector	Science	
		History	
		Physical education	
Mrs W Burke	Enrolled inspector	Design and technology	
		Art	
		Geography	
Mrs N Myers	Enrolled inspector	Mathematics	
		Music	
		Religious education	

The inspection contractor was:

Open Book Inspections

6 East Point
High Street, Seal
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN15 0EG

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Inspection Quality Division
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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

High Down Junior School is a large school, with 330 pupils, including slightly more boys than girls. The social and economic context of the school is favourable, and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. Standards among pupils joining the school are high, though lower in writing than in other subjects. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is low, and includes a very small number who arrived at the school speaking no English. At the time of the inspection, the school was recovering from the death, shortly before Christmas, of its much-respected headteacher, Mr Frank Case.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

High Down Junior School is an effective school. It enables pupils to reach the standards they should be reaching, and makes very good provision for learning outside the classroom and for personal and social development. Teaching is good, and the school is well led and managed. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- There is a very good climate for learning, that prepares pupils very well for secondary school.
- The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and governors lead and manage the school well.
- Teaching is good, with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching in some classes.
- Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, and in most other subjects.
- Relationships and attitudes to school are very good, and pupils behave well.
- Pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language make good progress.
- There is very good provision for the arts and for learning outside the classroom.
- There are very good links with schools in Holland and Germany.

What could be improved

- The use of information from assessment to raise standards and set targets.
- The consistency of challenge to higher attaining pupils.
- The teaching and learning of writing.
- The total teaching time during the week.
- The level of support for pupils with serious behavioural difficulties.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in November 1996, standards were above average, the quality of education was good, the climate for learning was very good and the school was well managed. These significant strengths have been maintained. Performance remains above national average levels, though only in science is test performance clearly better than that of similar schools. Standards in German have improved, but there has been some decline in standards in geography and religious education, due to shortage of lesson time. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased significantly. The school has made very good improvements in its appraisal of teachers, and the curriculum is more effectively co-ordinated than during the last inspection, though this work has focused on consistency in teaching rather than on raising standards. While there are some gaps in this area due to limited teaching of

religious education, opportunities for spiritual development and reflection have been improved.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A	B	C
mathematics	A	C	B	C
science	A	B	A	B

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards in national tests are almost always above national average levels, and are better than those achieved in similar schools in science. Standards during the inspection were above average in science, English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, though there was considerable variation between classes in the standards reached by higher attaining pupils in English and mathematics. In some classes, they were reaching standards expected of much older high-attaining pupils, but in others they were not working consistently to the best standards of which they are capable. Standards are very good in art, and good in design and technology, history, physical education, music and German. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in other subjects are in line with those achieved in most schools, but with good features in work in information and communications technology (ICT) and geography. There are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls, and improvements in test results over time are in line with those achieved in most schools. Recent targets for improvement have been easily exceeded, and revised procedures for setting targets still do not demand enough of higher-attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils with English as an additional language have good levels of achievement in relation to their capabilities and previous skills. Standards in ICT are improving rapidly through very good use of the new computer suite. Standards in the school are high enough, overall, in the light of the standards reached by pupils joining the school at seven.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are eager to do their best, to work hard and to succeed. These attitudes make a consistently good contribution to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall, and very good in most lessons, with excellent behaviour in response to the best teaching. A small number of pupils behave roughly in the playground. Most pupils with special educational needs behave very well, but there was some disruption in one class due to insufficient adult support for a pupil with serious behavioural difficulties.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work together very well, and help each other whenever they can. Older pupils give very effective help to younger ones.
Attendance	Good.

Pupils' co-operative work in pairs and groups makes a most important contribution to their personal development. Pupils in Year 6 give very good help with reading to those in Year 3.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

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.

Teaching was very good or better in 39 per cent of lessons, good or better in 73 per cent, satisfactory in 24 per cent and unsatisfactory in 3 per cent. The best teaching, based on teachers' personal commitment to excellence, is challenging to all pupils, inspiring them to do their very best and creating a dynamic learning atmosphere that leads to rapid progress within the lesson. All subjects are represented in the good and very good teaching, though it tends to be concentrated in some classes. This leads to some inconsistency in the quality of learning, both between year groups and sometimes between classes in the same year group, a problem accentuated during the inspection by the restricted teaching role of the acting headteacher, who had had to move from a Year 6 class. The quality of teaching in mathematics and numeracy is good overall, with good teaching of mental mathematics. The overall quality of teaching in English, including literacy, is satisfactory, though there is outstanding teaching in several classes, and good teaching for pupils learning English as an additional language. Overall, the quality of learning is good in mathematics though there is some inconsistency in the learning of older, higher-attaining pupils. It is satisfactory in English, with very good learning in speaking and listening, which are very well taught in all subjects. The school's flexible approach to teaching meets the needs of particular groups of pupils effectively, including most of those with special educational needs, whose learning is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is rich and varied, with very good learning opportunities outside the classroom. Standards in some subjects are limited by the short teaching week, and by schemes of work that do not direct teachers' planning clearly enough towards high standards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision overall, leading to good and at times very good learning and progress. Almost all pupils with behavioural difficulties make good progress, but the progress of a small minority is hampered by the lack of individual adult support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils are fully included in all aspects of the school's life and work. They make good progress overall, and very good progress in the early stages of learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, based on key values in the ethos of the school. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong, and of personal responsibility. The range of cultural activities is very good, although opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own are inconsistent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good personal support for pupils. Guidance on their work is limited by inconsistencies in the use of assessment.

The arts are particularly well-represented in the curriculum and pupils have many opportunities to

perform. The curriculum and teaching methods throughout the school helps pupils develop independent learning skills. The school makes excellent use of educational visits. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The school's close co-operation with parents and the impact their involvement has on the work of the school is a particular strength.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership and management generate a strong sense of teamwork among the staff. There are strengths in the school's ethos, in its relationship with the community, in the management of ICT and in arrangements for the appraisal and professional development of teachers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors sustain the ethos of the school very well and manage finances effectively to promote educational priorities. Their monitoring of standards is less effective, but overall they fulfil their responsibilities to a good standard.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory, in view of the school's commitment to a broad range of achievement among its pupils, particularly in the arts. Evaluation of standards is insufficiently focused in some subjects, including English and mathematics.
The strategic use of resources	The school deploys teachers flexibly and effectively, and makes good use of resources for learning, particularly in art, science and ICT. The use of resources outside the school is a major strength.

The school is well staffed with teachers, who have a broad range of professional skills and interests. There are clearly developed management roles for the acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Curriculum co-ordination is more systematic than during the last inspection, but does not focus sufficiently on standards, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. Action was taken to increase the numbers of teaching assistants to support pupils with behavioural difficulties following feedback during the inspection. The school obtains good value for money in purchases, but does not apply the principles of best value consistently elsewhere.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching is good. • The school has high expectations of pupils. • Pupils like school and make good progress. • The school is approachable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of information, including reports. • The consistency of homework. • The level of co-operation with parents. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Positive views far outweighed critical comments, particularly among parents who had had longer experience of the school. Inspectors broadly agree with parents on the strengths of the school, though they believe that more can be expected of higher-attaining pupils on a consistent basis. The inspection team found some inconsistencies in the quality of homework between classes, and some shortcomings in reports to parents. However, they believe that the overall level of co-operation with parents is good, and that the overall range of activities outside lessons is very good, with some outstanding features.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards in English and mathematics, including literacy and numeracy, are better than national average levels and in line with those achieved by similar schools. Inspection evidence is very similar to the pattern in the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds, and to the overall pattern over the past three years, which shows these results improving at a similar rate to those in most schools. Pupils are particularly confident in speaking and listening, and use these skills very well to promote learning in all subjects. Standards in reading are generally good throughout the school, and older pupils develop good skills in using reading as a basis for research work, though higher-attaining pupils are not consistently reading fully demanding texts. Pupils, including some whose reading is relatively weak as well as the highest-attaining pupils, are beginning to use the Internet well to extend their reading. Standards in writing are rather lower than those in reading throughout the school, though they are also lower among pupils on entry. Pupils write for a good range of purposes and audiences, but inaccuracies persist longer than they should, even in the work of some higher-attaining pupils, and some writing tasks for these pupils lack challenge.
2. Standards in science are good, both in comparison with similar schools and with national average standards. While an above-average proportion of pupils exceed the nationally expected standard in national tests for English and mathematics, the proportion achieving this in science is significantly higher, comprising just over half of the pupils in 1999. Pupils do particularly well in their investigative work and in problem-solving in science, and their learning benefits from the school's emphasis on co-operative working and discussion, as well as from very systematic revision.
3. Results in national tests are in line with those the school should be achieving once the skills of its pupils and its social context are taken into account in English and mathematics, but better than this in science. The school easily out-performed its targets in both subjects in 1999, when pupils also clearly exceeded the target for 2000. The school is currently revising its procedures for setting targets to make more effective use of information from assessment. However, targets still do not pay sufficient attention to the needs of higher-attaining pupils. There are no significant differences in the longer term between standards reached by boys and girls. The standards reached by pupils with special educational needs are good in relation to their capabilities. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language knew no English when they joined the school and had not previously attended school. They reach a good overall standard in relation to this starting point.
4. The overall standard of art in the school is very good, with a broad range of inventive work in response to very well-planned and imaginative teaching. Good standards are reached in music, history, physical education, design and technology and German. These subjects also benefit from good, and often outstanding, professional knowledge and understanding on the part of teachers. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are rising, and are in line with those expected in the National Curriculum. Overall standards among older pupils in religious education and geography are in line with those expected. Limited teaching time has led to some reduction in standards in these two subjects since the last inspection, despite good work in individual lessons. The same issue limits achievement in German, despite the good overall quality of the work.

5. The overall quality of pupils' achievement is good in science and art, and they reach high standards in all activities where teaching is supported by learning outside the classroom, for example in musical performance and sport. The quality of achievement in ICT is improving rapidly. Achievement in all other areas is in line with the standards that parents are entitled to expect, and the good habits of work that are built up during the school prepare pupils well for secondary school. The inconsistencies between classes and between year groups in the standards reached by pupils of comparable prior attainment limit the achievement of pupils, despite the high quality of much of the school's teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes to school. They are eager to learn and to succeed. When discussing a topic such as the Romans, in Year 3, or drawing comparisons between Islam and Christianity in Year 6, they demonstrate a maturity in discussion which allows all opinions to be heard. In a small but significant minority of lessons this is particularly effective in extending the depth of their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils are involved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities which the school provides. Inter-school sports competitions, arts events such as the Colston Hall concert, and the Year 6 residential visit to Saundersfoot, are all taken up enthusiastically.
7. Behaviour is good overall, and very good in most lessons. Pupils are courteous and considerate, and act responsibly when working in pairs or small groups. They use resources carefully, and treat property with respect. Pupils in Year 6 set younger pupils an excellent example of mutual co-operation and support in the school's paired reading scheme. There is some rough behaviour in the playground, and some individual parents expressed concern about bullying. None was observed during the inspection, but older pupils said that there had been instances of bullying, which the school had dealt with effectively. In a minority of lessons, pupils with serious behavioural difficulties were not receiving sufficient support during the inspection. This led to some interference with the learning of other pupils and, on one occasion, to a threat to health and safety. No exclusions, either temporary or permanent, have been recorded since the last inspection.
8. Pupils' personal development is very good. Their confidence grows as they pass through the school. Pupils in each class are allocated responsibilities, which they readily accept and carry out conscientiously. They elect representatives to the school council, and in Year 6 vote for house captains and vice-captains. The house system fosters friendly competition and promotes loyalty. Self esteem and pupils' own expectations are high, and pupils often take the initiative in learning, particularly in ICT. These attitudes contribute to the very good relationships which develop amongst themselves, and with adults. Pupils have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and they are tolerant, demonstrating a very good level of respect for the feelings, values, and beliefs of others. They are aware of children who are less fortunate than themselves and have collected for many charities. The school's membership of the Comenius project has added a further dimension by encouraging pupils to become familiar with the lives of children in Germany, and these links have been strengthened by exchanging E-mails with their new friends on the Internet.
9. Attendance is good compared with junior schools nationally. A significant proportion of holiday absence is recorded; on the few occasions when this exceeds ten school days for any pupil, it is properly recorded as unauthorised. Punctuality is good. Many pupils arrive early in the morning and participate in the before-school breakfast club.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is good in almost three quarters of lessons, and very good or better in two fifths. This includes a small proportion of excellent teaching, which has an impact on learning much greater than the number of lessons in which it takes place. Almost all of the remaining teaching is satisfactory, although there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching – roughly half the proportion of excellent teaching – that the school is addressing effectively through its appraisal systems. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher, whose very good teaching skills had been noted during the last inspection, had had to move from the classroom to serve as acting headteacher. There are no significant differences between the quality of learning of boys and that of girls. Where there are variations in the quality of teaching, these have some effect on the learning of pupils of all levels of capability. However, higher attaining pupils are more consistently challenged to produce their best work in Year 5 than in Year 6, and this has some limiting effect on standards in English and mathematics.
11. While good or better teaching takes place in all subjects and with pupils of all abilities, this teaching is most consistent in science, art, music, design and technology, physical education, history, information technology and German. These strengths reflect the breadth and richness of the school's curriculum, and create a purposeful learning atmosphere within the school, with particular benefits to artistically gifted and talented pupils through the high quality of teaching of music and art, both in and out of the classroom. In some subjects, such as geography and religious education, good teaching is helping to compensate for a shortage of time in the taught week, though it is not fully successful in this. Where the teaching is good or better, there is a high level of thoughtful discussion in the class, both among pupils and between them and their teacher. Learning is presented and seen as an enjoyable activity, and teaching techniques are varied well to sustain pupils' interest – for example, through re-creating ancient crafts. Teachers use the school's good range of resources, including its very good new computer suite, very effectively, and take every opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom, for example through visits such as the highly successful trip to Roman Bath, which took place during the inspection. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to teaching whenever they are available, and students from an initial teacher training course made an outstanding contribution to the visit to Bath, teaching groups of pupils to a very good standard.
12. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is more variable, with outstanding teaching in some classes and satisfactory teaching in others, sometimes in the same year group. While the overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good, that in English is satisfactory. The best teaching in both subjects, including the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, is closely matched to pupils' existing knowledge and understanding, and tightly focused on taking it forward through purposeful and dynamic co-operation between teacher and pupils. The teachers sustain the pace, using perceptive and demanding questions to bring out pupils' reasoning, and supplying clear explanations of difficult points based on their own outstanding knowledge of their subjects. Some excellent learning takes place as a result, particularly in Year 5, where some pupils study scientific language to a standard well above that expected for their age. Where teaching is satisfactory only, it does not provide this strong personal lead, and is more slowly paced. It provides pupils with suitable opportunities for learning, often with good scope for discussion and co-operation, but learning tasks are less tightly planned, and teachers' questions are often less closely focused on the detail of pupils' thinking. In some English lessons, written work in the National Literacy Strategy is not closely enough linked with other writing. This limits their contribution to pupils' learning. In the small number of lessons in which teaching is unsatisfactory, learning goals are not sufficiently clear, and the pace of work is too slow, partly because of weak management of the class.

13. Work is regularly marked, and homework is regularly set. The overall quality of homework is good, despite some inconsistencies between classes, and there is some very good promotion of reading through the home-school reading scheme. However, in only a minority of classes are pupils encouraged to use information from marking to improve their work. In most classes, there is very limited use of other information from assessment to set learning goals when planning work, and this limits the effects on learning of other strengths in the school's teaching.
14. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well, both through support in class and in small groups, and there is good teaching in booster classes for pupils working to reach the nationally expected standard in mathematics and English at eleven. Pupils with English as an additional language are very effectively taught in the early stages, enabling them to make rapid progress in speaking and listening and to take part in lessons on an equal footing with others. Once this is achieved, they continue to learn at a satisfactory rate, but the teaching they receive is less closely focused on individual needs.
15. During the last inspection, teaching was good in half of the lessons seen, and satisfactory in almost all of the remainder. There was some outstanding teaching. Since then, the proportion of good and better teaching has improved significantly, and inconsistencies in teaching have been reduced, partly through improved arrangements for the appraisal of teaching and for co-ordination of work in subjects. Unsatisfactory teaching remains at a very low level. Overall, the improvement in teaching since the last inspection has been good, but more remains to be done.

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

16. The school curriculum offers pupils a broad and rich range of learning opportunities, with good emphasis on personal choice and responsibility that prepares them well for secondary school. Its organisational framework allows individual teachers to develop their strengths – for example in art, music, science and history – and enables pupils to reach the standards they should expect to reach, given the range of starting points with which they begin school. During the last inspection, there were inconsistencies in the curriculum between classes, and the school has made good progress in tackling these through improved co-ordination. This is particularly effective in the approach to ICT, which ensures that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are progressively developed through co-ordinated planning. Elsewhere, the strengths of co-ordination are not matched by sufficient emphasis on raising standards, and this contributes to inconsistencies in the learning of higher-attaining pupils.
17. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are used throughout the school, though in some lessons the central structures of both strategies are altered in a way that slows down the pace of work and limits the standards reached by higher-attaining pupils. The curriculum for pupils who have special educational needs provides good opportunities for learning, and the curriculum is effectively modified to support the learning of pupils who have English as an additional language. Both groups are effectively included in all aspects of the life and work of the school.

18. The teaching week is shorter than that in most junior schools. Teaching time is particularly short for geography and religious education, and this limits the standards pupils reach in these subjects despite good teaching. Standards in German, though good, are also limited by interruptions to the continuity of teaching in the subject. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, though it does so in religious education by a very narrow margin. The school makes suitable provision for personal and social education, including health education, sex education, and education on the misuse of drugs.
19. Learning opportunities outside the classroom are very good, including a broad range of sports clubs, several music groups and a choir, country dancing, chess and an environmental group. The computer suite is very well used at lunchtime, and there is a book club. There is an extensive programme of educational visits for all pupils, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 6.
20. Provision for pupils' personal, social and cultural development is a strength of the school, both in its work in the classroom and in these additional learning opportunities. Pupils are given good opportunities for reflection in many subjects, and there is a spiritual dimension to much of the school's most effective teaching, for example through experience of joy in physical education and music, and a sense of wonder at nature in the best science lessons. Pupils respect spiritual belief in others, and their contributions to a 'Tree of Hope' in the foyer contain very good reflections on life and the world, alongside more mundane personal wishes. While some pupils' spiritual development is restricted to a degree by the limited time for religious education in their class, there has been a satisfactory overall improvement in provision for spiritual development since the last inspection.
21. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong which guides their conduct, both within school and in their attitudes to the world. They are happy to accept responsibility, both for helping to run the school and for helping others, for example through the reading scheme in which pupils in Year 6 work with those in Year 3. There is a strong sense of friendship and tolerance in the school, and a very co-operative attitude to work, which is fostered by the school's emphasis on providing opportunities for discussion in lessons and by frequent work in groups and pairs, for example in the computer suite. Several examples occurred during the inspection of practices which contributed to the good social and moral development of pupils with special educational needs, including improved concentration and consideration for others.
22. The range of art and craft work in the curriculum, together with the school's very good provision for learning outside the classroom, particularly in music, make a strong contribution to cultural development. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in concerts, including professional performances, and their practical experiences of a broad range of artistic and craft techniques extend their cultural awareness and make artistic activity an essential part of everyday life. They are introduced to different cultures, in particular through geography, German and religious education, but their awareness of different cultures and ways of life is not developed consistently because of uneven timetabling arrangements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

23. The school provides good personal support and guidance for pupils and has effective child protection procedures. Monitoring of academic performance to promote pupils' progress is satisfactory, but less well developed. The overall position is similar to that found during the last inspection.
24. The school has appointed a health and safety officer, and governors have formed a premises committee, which monitors the premises regularly. Governors acknowledge the poor state of parts of the school, and have made the local authority aware of defects such as rotting window frames and uneven paving stones. They have taken action to secure basic safety, for example by preventing pupils from using steps that have been declared unsafe. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the inspection of electrical, fire, and physical education equipment, and fire practices are held regularly. Sufficient numbers of staff are trained in first aid, and accidents and illness are recorded methodically. Notes on individual pupils' special medical conditions are kept by teachers.
25. Links with specialist agencies are secure, and offer effective support. The educational welfare officer supports the school well by following up attendance issues, and by giving advice and training in respect of child protection. Teachers monitor pupils' attendance daily. Good attendance is promoted in school documents, by securing the support of parents, and by providing a community which appeals to the pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported to ensure good academic progress, and in almost all lessons receive good guidance and support on behaviour. Pupils with English as a second language receive effective personal and academic support, though this is more effective in the earlier than in the later stages of learning English.
26. The school promotes good behaviour effectively through its ethos of mutual respect, and by involving pupils in formulating the school rules. Incentives for good behaviour include house points and merit awards which provide for easy monitoring, and the prospect of having names recorded in the school incident book which ultimately leads to lunchtime detention and a report to parents. Bullying was a concern of some parents. Older pupils acknowledged that there was some bullying in the school, but said that incidents were effectively dealt with. Teachers monitor pupils' personal development carefully and comment on it in annual reports.
27. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. The school uses a good range of tests and assessments to track pupils' progress. Results are analysed and used effectively to group pupils according to their learning needs. In some classes, notably the 'booster' classes for pupils working towards the nationally expected standard for eleven-year-olds, teachers use the results of assessment to target work precisely to the needs of groups and individuals and to set targets. However, this active use of assessment to guide pupils is not consistent, and lacks overall co-ordination. Pupils evaluate their achievements termly and targets are set, but not all are easily measured or consistently followed up. Assessment in ICT is very effectively built into all of the planning for the subject, and provides a very clear picture of each pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessment in mathematics is also effective and well-organised. Assessment in other subjects is inconsistent, at best giving pupils a clear idea of their progress and informal targets for improving it, but often offering too little guidance for pupils on why they succeed or meet problems, and on what they need to learn next. There is relatively little use across the school of the descriptions of levels of attainment set out in the National Curriculum to assess pupils' work and to set targets for improvement.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are quickly identified, and have good individual education plans with clear targets. Parents are appropriately involved in these pupils' assessment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29. A large majority of parents have positive views of the school and support its work. This support was particularly strong from parents with longer experience of the school, who appreciated the preparation it gave their children for secondary education. Parents think that the teaching is good, that teachers expect their children to do well, and that progress is good and that their children like school. These positive views were generally confirmed during the inspection, though the inspection team felt that standards could be raised further if the school applied the strengths of its best work more consistently. Some parents were concerned at inconsistencies in homework and in the quality of annual reports, and there were individual concerns over disruptive behaviour and bullying. Some parents of younger children were concerned about opportunities for them to learn outside the classroom and at the quality of the school's co-operation with parents. The first three of these concerns were confirmed in part during the inspection, although pupils told the inspection team that instances of bullying were effectively dealt with. The school's provision of opportunities to learn outside the classroom, however, is an important strength, and was being extended during the inspection to pupils in Year 3. The overall quality of the school's partnership with parents, and the impact of parents' contributions to the work of the school, were also important strengths.
30. Annual reports to parents give clear information about standards in English and mathematics, and about pupils' attitudes and the efforts they are making. Comments on other subjects, however, are based on a bank of statements from a computer, and do little to inform parents about individual progress. Pupils evaluate their own work each term, and most of these evaluations contribute to learning. However, those of the youngest pupils in Year 3, which are often seen by parents as their child's first report from the school, do not provide parents with a sufficiently clear picture of their child's progress. Parents are kept well informed through regular newsletters, which include a diary giving dates for parents' meetings and school trips. Two parents' meetings are arranged each year, the first in the autumn term to meet new class teachers, and the second in the spring term to discuss progress. Teachers are also readily available to discuss issues with parents at any time, a point noted appreciatively during the parents' meeting.
31. The school's close co-operation with parents and the impact their involvement has on the work of the school is a particular strength. On any day there are likely to be a dozen or so parents in school helping with reading or activities afternoons. In most classes, these parents are well briefed by teachers, and effectively support the education being provided by the school. More volunteer parents help with school trips and contribute to the safety and well-being of pupils. Parents of children who have special educational needs are appropriately involved with their individual education plans. Almost all parents have confirmed their support for the school by signing the home/school agreements. The Parents' Association is successful in raising large amounts of money which is used to supplement the school's resources and raise the quality of the curriculum.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

32. The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have led the school very well through the difficult period following the death of the headteacher, who was described in the last inspection report as 'well-respected by staff, governors, parents and children'. Staffing changes in the middle of the school year have been effectively managed, and the ethos of the school has been maintained.
33. The quality of management during the last inspection was good, with strengths in the care of pupils, links with the community and financial management. There were, however, weaknesses in the school's arrangements for the appraisal of teachers and in co-ordinating the curriculum. The first of these issues has been very successfully addressed, and more limited progress has been made in the second. The overall quality of management remains good, and has shown the improvement that would be expected since the last inspection.
34. The school offers a very positive climate for learning to all of its pupils. There are very good opportunities for the artistically gifted and talented through the emphasis on the performing and visual arts, and there is good scope for pupils with particular talents in other areas, for example through the activity afternoons and through the school's wide range of sports clubs. Pupils with English as an additional language and with special educational needs have good learning opportunities and are effectively integrated into all aspects of the school's life and work. However, there was not always sufficient adult support for pupils with serious behavioural difficulties; action was taken to increase the level of support from teaching assistants for these pupils following feedback during the inspection. New opportunities, particularly in ICT, are enthusiastically developed, and pupils receive close personal support and encouragement from teachers that makes them want to do well. The school is committed to high standards – for example, through a post of responsibility for higher-attaining pupils – but is more successful, overall, in ensuring consistently good learning for those of lower attainment, for example through 'booster' classes. Targets for eleven-year-olds over the past two years have been set at relatively low levels in relation to the school's intake, and have been comfortably surpassed, even though results in English and mathematics are not better than those of comparable schools. Improvements in curriculum co-ordination have focused on consistency, range and continuity in provision rather than on raising standards. They have contributed to the broader aims of the school, not least by building pupils' confidence and independence to prepare them very well for secondary school, but have not ensured that the demands made of pupils in the best teaching are consistently reflected in work throughout the school. This limits the benefits to the school of some of its most important strengths.
35. The governors are well-organised, with a clear and effective commitment to the educational aims of the school and to its ethos. They identify and support new developments well, and are properly involved in the school's arrangements for setting targets and in development planning. However, the systems used by governors and senior management to monitor progress, set targets and raise standards are not consistently focused on comparing the school's results with those of similar schools, and this limits their effectiveness. With this exception, the governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities to a good standard. The school development plan is an effective working document, which has been kept to one year because of financial uncertainties. This does not affect longer-term priorities, such as the computer suite and landscaping, and planning arrangements now include good provision for the development of subjects, which was not in place during the last inspection. The appraisal of teachers is carried out to a very good standard, with systematic, balanced feedback from senior management and clear and

effective personal targets. These are effectively monitored, and are used in association with the school development plan to contribute to priorities for professional development. Information from courses has been used positively to develop the school's work in ICT, and the acting headteacher has good plans to use procedures from a course attended by a teacher during the inspection to improve the use of assessment in planning pupils' work.

36. Educational priorities are clearly identified and effectively supported through careful financial management. For example, the governors have succeeded in maintaining single year group classes, and have used funding skilfully to provide a well-equipped computer suite capable of supporting whole class teaching. Reliable financial information is readily accessible and prudent management keeps spending within budget. The school secretary is well informed and provides high quality and unobtrusive support. All budgetary information and some administrative information is held on computer, back-up systems are up-dated three times a week, and the school is registered under the Data Protection Act.
37. The school keeps close track of its spending, and specific funds are spent appropriately. It takes care to achieve value for money, although the principles of best value are not used in all areas, for example in the relatively small budgets delegated to subject co-ordinators, or in the effect on standards of the allocation of funds to promote the achievements of high-attaining pupils. The last audit was undertaken in 1997 and some recommendations are still outstanding. These include the implementation of a school purchasing policy, maintaining an up-to-date inventory, and keeping a formal record of governors' pecuniary interests.
38. The school has sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the National Curriculum and its additional classes, and teachers have a good range of qualifications and experience. Teaching assistants and mid-day assistants are well qualified and have appropriate training. Resources for learning have been carefully built up to support the curriculum, and are of good quality, with particularly good resources for art and ICT. Teachers are often imaginative in constructing their own resources, which make a good contribution to learning. The school has adequate accommodation, though the exterior of many of the buildings is in poor condition; a number of health and safety hazards have been notified to the acting headteacher, including some that have also been identified by the local authority. The playground is of good size for the numbers of pupils who use it, and an attractive new garden was under construction during the inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. To raise standards and promote consistently high achievement in all subjects of the curriculum, the headteacher and governors should:
 - (1) Improve standards in writing, by:
 - ensuring that written work in all subjects helps develop pupils' writing skills;
 - ensuring that teachers' co-operative planning includes detailed attention to the design of writing tasks;
 - developing and sharing formats for writing to meet the needs of pupils at different stages in learning to write;
 - developing a consistent approach to marking, and improving pupils' use of marking to improve their work;
 - monitoring progress in writing closely within each year group.
(Paragraphs 1, 12, 39-46)
 - (2) Improve the consistency of learning among higher attaining pupils, by:

- ensuring that work is consistently matched to their learning needs from the time they enter the school;
 - using the higher level descriptions of the National Curriculum to set fully demanding targets for learning in each subject;
 - making maximum use of teachers' advanced skills in specific subjects, both in teaching and in support for colleagues.
(Paragraphs 3, 5, 10, 12, 34, 68)
- (3) Improve the range and consistency of achievement in all subjects of the curriculum, by:
- extending the length of the teaching week to nationally recommended levels;
 - ensuring that each subject receives sufficient time to enable pupils to reach good standards in all areas of the National Curriculum;
 - using samples of pupils' work to monitor standards in all subjects in relation to National Curriculum level descriptions.
(Paragraphs 4, 5, 11, 16, 18, 27, 65, 68, 79, 90-93)
- (4) Use information from assessment consistently to raise standards and set targets, by:
- taking full account of the standards reached by new seven-year-old pupils when setting targets;
 - including targets for pupils both to exceed and to reach nationally expected standards.
(Paragraphs 3, 12, 13, 27, 34, 35)
- (5) Ensure that pupils with serious behavioural difficulties do not interfere with the education of others, or pose a threat to their own and other pupils' health and safety, by:
- providing sufficient and effective adult support for such pupils;
 - keeping detailed records of their behaviour.
(Paragraphs 7, 14, 21, 25, 29, 34)

Minor issues for action

- Monitor the effectiveness and consistency of homework between classes.
(Paragraph 13)
- Provide more information on individual pupils' standards and progress in annual reports. (Paragraphs 24, 30)
- Improve ventilation in the computer suite. (Paragraph 77)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	70
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	33	34	24	3	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	Y3 - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	330
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	73

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	3.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
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 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	56	42	98

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	45	46	52
	Girls	37	32	38
	Total	82	78	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (83)	80 (68)	92 (85)
	National	70 (65)	64 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	44	44	50
	Girls	37	34	36
	Total	81	78	86
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (86)	80 (77)	88 (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	0
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	224
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	515,418
Total expenditure	521,418
Expenditure per pupil	1570
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,000
Balance carried forward to next year	10,000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	330
Number of questionnaires returned	132

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	45	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	6	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	47	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	49	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	62	34	2	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	47	18	5	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	41	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	40	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	48	14	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	44	48	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	50	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	42	16	4	2

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

ENGLISH

40. Eleven-year-olds reach good standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Their results in national tests are above average, and include above-average proportions of pupils exceeding the standard expected nationally. They are in line with those in similar schools, and have improved over the last three years at a rate similar to that achieved nationally. Overall, standards in English have been sustained at the level reached during the last inspection. Pupils start at the school with very good overall standards in reading, speaking and listening, and good standards in writing. In this context, the standards reached by eleven-year-olds are in line with those parents are entitled to expect.
41. Pupils behave very well and work hard in English lessons. They take part in discussions with interest and enthusiasm, and show good initiative in individual research work. The quality of learning is good, but ranges in individual lessons from satisfactory to excellent. The inconsistency is most evident in the learning of the highest-attaining pupils. Their learning is excellent in lessons where the teaching fully extends them, for example, in a class of ten-year-olds during the inspection, which explored scientific language to a level consistent with good GCSE work. However, in some other lessons, pupils are given work which gives them scope to reach high standards, but lacks the clarity of focus needed to enable them to work consistently to their full potential. The issue of consistency appeared clearly in an analysis of pupils' work since September, in which progress between comparable groups of pupils was very good in some classes and only satisfactory in others.
42. Pupils who have English as an additional language, including some who arrived at the school speaking no English and with very limited previous experience of school, make very good progress in the early stages of learning English. Once past this stage, their learning is satisfactory, but progress is slower. This is because the teaching they receive is matched to the standard they have reached, rather than to their particular learning needs. The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Learning is very good where teaching is closely focused on individual needs and well integrated with the work of other pupils in the class. Where learning is satisfactory, the teaching has appropriate aims, but learning tasks are less closely focused on individual needs. The quality of learning in booster classes for older pupils just below the nationally expected standard is very good in response to carefully-planned teaching, based on very clear explanations of points of difficulty. Pupils with behavioural difficulties make satisfactory to good progress in most lessons, but in some they do not have sufficient adult support to prevent them from disrupting the learning of other pupils.
43. Standards of work and the quality of learning are consistently good in speaking and listening, and this aspect of English contributes very effectively to pupils' personal and social development and to the aims of the school. However, the pace and challenge in the most successful lessons is much brisker and more demanding than in some others, in which pupils have scope to reach high standards but are less consistently spurred to reach them. Standards and learning in reading are good overall, though they are best when teachers sustain close dialogue with pupils, both orally and through their reading diaries. Most pupils read a good range of suitable books, but only in a minority of classes are higher-attaining pupils consistently guided towards fully demanding literature and non-fiction. The greatest inconsistency is in writing, where progress overall is satisfactory

despite good or better work in roughly half of the classes. Progress in writing is at its best where each task is thought through in terms of its contribution to writing, and where the teacher provides consistent guidance. However, this does not happen in all classes. In one year group, for example, good marking and attention to detail by the pupils led to very good progress in handwriting, spelling and composition in their writing in history. This was not reflected in the writing of another class in the same year, in which much of the work was copied.

44. Some teaching of pupils with special needs makes very good use of individually designed overlays for the concept keyboard. The school is introducing more general use of ICT in English for both reading and writing, and pupils are making extensive use of e-mails. The work in reading is effective, leading higher-attaining pupils, and some who have special educational needs, to seek out demanding texts related to their work and to read them independently. However, with some exceptions, the work in writing is so far generating interest in the subject rather than contributing to high standards.
45. The quality of teaching during the inspection was good or better in half of the lessons, and very good or better in a fifth. Almost all of the remaining teaching was satisfactory, though there was some unsatisfactory drama teaching during the inspection, caused mainly by lack of pace and direction. Once longer-term evidence from pupils' work is taken into account, the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, though with outstanding work in individual classes. The best teaching generates enthusiasm, interest and commitment among the pupils by challenging them to work to the very best of their ability, and by supporting this challenge with clear and effective explanation. The qualities of the most successful lessons are different – the 'booster' class work is exceptionally calm, concentrated and purposeful, for example, while some of the poetry is more obviously exciting – but they are all very well matched to the learning needs of the pupils, and lead to accelerated learning. These lessons also place strong emphasis on personal commitment and responsibility, with effective questioning and a high level of thought from pupils and teachers in discussion. These qualities are present, though in less concentrated form, in the good lessons. Where the teaching is satisfactory, lessons are effectively planned, pupils have a sound range of work, and good relationships almost always ensure a positive outcome. The match of work to learning needs is, however, less clearly thought out, and it is not always clear how each aspect of the work contributes to overall progress. In one lesson, the quality of attention the teacher could give to the class was limited by the compelling needs of a pupil with behavioural difficulty.
46. Work is regularly marked, and in some classes pupils are encouraged to use issues raised in marking to improve their work. When this happens, there is often an immediate improvement, but the approach is not used consistently, so that some significant weaknesses in writing – for example, incomplete work – are allowed to persist for too long after they have been identified. Longer-term assessment is used effectively in individual classes to promote high standards, but this is not consistent, and contributes to the variations in progress noted above. While there are some inconsistencies in the quality of homework in English, it is regularly set, and often of good quality, particularly when pupils take the initiative and do more than is required.
47. Teachers have a sound understanding of the National Curriculum, and use the structures of the National Literacy Strategy to a satisfactory standard. In some lessons, these structures are modified for particular purposes; this is generally successful in work with lower-attaining pupils, but leads to a lack of challenge to higher-attaining pupils in some lessons. Co-ordination in English has been effective in introducing the national strategy, and in promoting professional interest in the subject through supportive feedback from monitoring.

The school's arrangements have not, however, focused clearly enough on promoting consistently high standards and progress. This issue needs to be addressed if the school is to derive maximum benefit from the strengths of its most successful teachers in English.

MATHEMATICS

48. Standards in mathematics at eleven are above national average levels, and have been maintained since the last inspection. In the 1999 national tests for eleven-year-olds, pupils reached standards which were above the national average, and in line with those achieved by similar schools. In view of the very good standards of pupils entering the school, the overall standards reached by eleven-year-olds are satisfactory, though higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 are not producing their best work consistently. There has been some fluctuation in results over recent years, but the position is now stable.
49. The National Numeracy Strategy has been introduced successfully, and the mental mathematics warm-up sessions are very effective in raising standards throughout the school. Lower-attaining pupils have good support and learn effectively, both within classes and in withdrawal sessions. In the very best lessons, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress as a result of clear mathematical targets in their individual education plans. The school is particularly successful in getting pupils to develop an independent and investigative approach to mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 5 investigate rotational symmetry, creating well constructed but complicated shapes to challenge each other. Questioned by their teacher, they immediately provide a wide range of synonyms for rotational symmetry, developing and extending their skills in literacy as well as in mathematics. Learning in Year 3 is very well supported by teaching which looks at mistakes as problems in thinking which have to be investigated. Other subjects make good contributions to learning in mathematics, for example in the skilful interpretation of graphs in science, and in ICT in Year 6, which includes extensive investigation of number patterns, using algebraic equations. Pupils enjoy their learning and look forward to mathematics lessons. This contributes greatly to the quality of their learning.
50. The overall quality of teaching is good. Two thirds of lessons observed were good or better, and almost half were very good or excellent. Teaching is especially strong across Years 3 and 5, with high expectations set for all pupils, including those who are gifted. However, in other year groups there is some variation between classes in the quality of challenge made to higher-attaining pupils. This limits the consistency of their learning, and removes some of the impetus generated by the best of the teaching. Most teaching makes effective use of the format outlined in the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers make pupils aware of the overall plan for the lesson, and most set clear time targets, letting pupils know how much work is expected. In the best lessons, explanation through direct teaching is so clear and exciting that pupils are eager to start on their work in groups. For example, higher-attaining pupils in a Year 3 lesson quietly and quickly started work on fully-demanding tasks, enabling the teacher to focus on work with other pupils without interruption. By contrast, in a small minority of mathematics lessons in which the structures of the national strategy had been significantly altered, pace and challenge were not sustained at the same high level, and the progress and learning of higher-attaining pupils were slower, though still satisfactory. In the very small proportion of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory there is not enough explanation of key ideas, and tasks are set for a whole class. This leads to some deterioration in behaviour, and to a slackening in the pace of work. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language benefit from good teaching in mathematics, including effective emphasis on vocabulary and on basic skills. Homework is regularly set and effective.

51. The school has good arrangements for co-ordinating work in mathematics. Teaching is effectively monitored, with a good system of sharing feedback between teachers. There are good procedures for assessment, which support pupils in each learning step, building knowledge and confidence, although these are not yet closely enough focused on the standards reached by the highest-attaining pupils. The school is making increasingly effective use of data from tests to group pupils and is beginning to use analytic techniques effectively to focus on areas for improvement.

SCIENCE

52. Standards in science at eleven have improved since the last inspection and are now above national average levels. This is due to improvements in the quality of teaching, a thorough scheme of work, regular and well-organised 'hands-on' investigations, and very effective, systematic revision in preparation for national tests. Inspection findings reflect the school's performance in 1999 national tests. An above-average proportion of pupils reached the benchmark standard of Level 4, and a well above average number achieved Level 5. These results are better than those achieved by most similar schools.
53. Standards and the quality of learning are good overall, and range in individual lessons from satisfactory to very good. Particularly good learning takes place among higher-attaining pupils in the most successful lessons, and the learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs are good. Some of the best learning occurred in a Year 5 lesson, where pupils enthusiastically and accurately described the passage of air in the lungs to the alveoli, and knew that there is an attraction between blood haemoglobin and oxygen. They conducted well-structured experiments to chart the effects of sustained exercise on pulse rate, and designed accurate, well presented line and block graphs to clarify their results. Pupils throughout the school understand and use a good range of scientific vocabulary – at its best, to a level well above that expected in primary education – and discuss and evaluate the results of experiments very well. This contributes much to the development of speaking and listening skills in English, complementing the contribution of the best English teaching to the development of pupils' understanding of scientific language.
54. Independent learning in science is effectively extended through the scientific experiments in the school's programme of activities afternoons. Pupils' knowledge of science, and in particular of the factual content of the National Curriculum, is very effectively consolidated by revision lessons, which at their best are combined with further experiments, for example on the electrical conductivity of materials. Visits to sites of scientific interest, including a steel works and a coal mine in the study of materials and their properties, are used to extend understanding. Pupils' own response to the teaching, which involves open-minded exploration of ideas and sharing of scientific findings, also contributes to the standards they achieve. In a small minority of lessons, however, the pace of work and management of behaviour are less effective, leading to lapses in concentration among some pupils.
55. Teaching is good or better in two thirds of science lessons, with very good teaching in a third. The remaining teaching is satisfactory. The quality of teaching during afternoon activities sessions is very good, and benefits from the contribution of well-informed parent volunteers. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge, and work hard to make lessons interesting and relevant, with a good variety of learning opportunities. Lessons combine a strong element of direct teaching with practical opportunities for pupils to explore, discover and reflect, and teachers make very good use of a wide variety of resources. For example, a life-sized model of the human heart and lungs extends pupils' understanding of the circulatory system. Arrangements for assessing pupils' work are

satisfactory. In the minority of lessons in which pace and behaviour management show some inconsistency, the overall quality of teaching remains satisfactory.

56. Science has a high profile in the curriculum and is very well managed. The co-ordinator has managed the development of excellent resources for science, including an extensive environmental area in the school grounds. Pupils regularly visit an environmental education farm which is part of the Avon Wildlife Trust. They experience a three day course there which qualifies them as 'Earth Keepers'. The school sets a good example by regularly collecting materials for recycling, and its work on environmental learning has been recognised by a national award.

ART

57. Standards have improved since the last inspection, and are now very good throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs often make very good progress, particularly when handling clay. High-attaining pupils, and those with a particular gift in the visual arts, make especially good use of their weekly activity afternoons, where they gain knowledge of a broad range of materials, and have opportunities to explore and understand the links between art, design and technology and science. There is a developing use of information technology as a tool within art.
58. Older pupils have good understanding of techniques, particularly when using clay, or when painting in the style of an artist, and make good use of colour. They use technical vocabulary fluently and well, for example when making decorative plates. Sketchbooks are a central feature when recording observations or experimenting with colour or tone, though they are not yet used consistently, by all pupils, as a tool for design work. Large-scale group studies are a particular strength of the Year 5 pupils' work, as for example the montage interpretation of Millais' Ophelia, the sectional painting of Van Gogh's sunflowers, and the newsprint model of a 1940's schoolboy. In Year 4, pupils develop effective clay models of the local landscape, although sketchbooks are not used sufficiently to explore possible locations, or to support pupils' visual memory. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 produce very good work in the style of several twentieth century artists and sculptors, including L S Lowry, Beryl Cook and Barry Flanagan.
59. This very effective learning is the result of very good teaching. The ethos in the best lessons is excellent. Much hard work has ensured consistency of approach by all teachers through well planned activities and very good resources. These are reflected in excellent displays of pupils' work, which often contribute to their understanding of other subjects, particularly in history. Teachers' consistent discussion and explanation of the principles of works of art lead pupils to develop awareness and appreciation of the visual arts, which spills over into their daily lives beyond the school. For example, pupils often report recognising works of art, studied in school, on television or in other aspects of their daily life. They enjoy creative activities, behave well, listen carefully and work hard at the tasks they are set.
60. Teaching and learning are well supported by parental help. Visits and visitors enrich pupils' knowledge and understanding, and extend their visual awareness. Occasionally, helpers do not fully understand that they are providing learning opportunities for the pupils, rather than producing carefully-crafted results. Where teachers have explained the approach to the task and work closely with helpers, pupils benefit from visitors' knowledge and skills, and extend their understanding of social issues, for example through listening to one lady's wartime experiences.

61. Co-ordination is very good. The co-ordinator has vision, and her passion for the subject is evident in the work of all of her colleagues. While there is no systematic monitoring of teaching, regular staff development sessions in using materials and developing techniques ensure consistency in teachers' approach and in display, though some work remains to be done on the use of sketchbooks and on assessment. Time allocated for resource management has been very well used, and the kiln area in particular is very well managed.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

62. Standards at the time of the last inspection were good, and have been maintained, though the oldest pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are more advanced in making than in design processes. Pupils quickly develop skills and confidence when working with kits and instruction sheets, as in the work on cogs and motors. Craft skills are good, and include batik designs made after studying the rainforest, and decorative shakers, made after studying the work of David Cox. Standards of wood construction, for example in a project to make watch-stands, are more variable, partly because of the lack of a bench with proper clamping, and there are some missed opportunities for pupils to plan, modify and evaluate their work, for example by using their sketchbooks.
63. Pupils studying Giacometti have good understanding of proportion, and quickly develop skills in linking units together, so that when the models are coated in plaster bandage they retain their shapes. These pupils also develop good understanding of materials. Good practical skills were also shown in relief models of half-timbered Elizabethan buildings, in baking Celtic bread, in making make honey cakes and in exploring the older technologies of wool weaving for fabrics and woven wattle shelters for containing animals.
64. Teaching is always at least good and on occasions very good or excellent. In the most successful lessons, teachers have very good knowledge and understanding both of the subject and of their pupils. Pupils in these classes face tasks confidently and work hard to achieve their goals. They enjoy opportunities to make objects, and to experiment with mechanisms and structures. They behave well and concentrate on the task in hand. Boys and girls benefit equally from the experiences offered. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the teacher or helpers within the classroom. Good use of computers was observed in a Year 4 class, where pupils had downloaded information about a particular weaving process. They then wrote their own instructions for a Year 3 pupil, before following the instructions themselves, and making further modifications. However, the wider use of computers in the subject is under-developed.
65. Co-ordination provides effective support for teachers, but there is very little use of assessment to guide pupils towards the higher levels of the National Curriculum. While most health and safety issues are effectively addressed, the food technology area is cramped, and there are too few resources for holding wood safely while it is being worked on.

GEOGRAPHY

66. Standards in geography are in line with those in most schools. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of the aspects of the subject they have studied, but standards are limited by pressure on time caused by the short teaching week, and have fallen from the good standards reached during the last inspection.

67. Pupils in Year 4 work confidently with co-ordinates and compass bearings, and have good knowledge of their local area and its position in England. Pupils in Year 3 have good knowledge and understanding of England, which is studied in combination with their historical work on the Romans. Learning in geography benefits from regular visits, for example to local docks and to Bath, and there is good use of ICT for mapwork in Year 4. Pupils enjoy their work in geography, and present it well in written work, which also makes a good contribution to mathematics through graphs and work on co-ordinates.
68. The limited teaching seen during the inspection was good, with well-chosen resources and a good working atmosphere in the computer suite. Analysis of pupils' work provided further evidence of good teaching, including good knowledge and understanding of the subject, challenging work for higher-attaining pupils, and effective modification of work for pupils with special educational needs. There is a good policy, which is used effectively by teachers, but there is little effective use of assessment. Resources are generally good and are being developed further to provide for orienteering work.

HISTORY

69. The school has sustained the good standards observed in history during the last inspection. Observation of lessons during the inspection was confined to the youngest classes, who were also accompanied on a very successful educational visit to Roman Bath. However, evidence from pupils' work and discussions with them indicate that overall standards in history are above average, particularly in the breadth of pupils' knowledge and in their practical understanding. Standards in the longer term are limited to some extent because the scheme of work does not provide sufficient specific attention to the higher levels of the National Curriculum. However, pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are boosted by very good contributions to history from other subjects, including art, science and design and technology.
70. The quality of learning reaches very good standards in aspects that are closely studied. The range of resources and evidence used in the younger pupils' study of Roman and Celtic Britain is unusually broad, and allows them to use a wide range of learning strategies to very good effect. For example, pupils investigate why the Romans built villas with rounded rather than prism-shaped columns, and discover that the former are five times stronger. They gain a rich sense of Celtic Britain by visiting a simulated ancient dwelling on an environmental farm. Here they actively learn Celtic crafts and skills, including cooking, spinning and weaving of cloth and of fencing.
71. Teachers make their history lessons exciting and interesting for their pupils, who respond with equal enthusiasm. Pupils listen well and usually speak confidently, for example when discussing what they had learned during their visit to Bath. They evaluate each other's follow-up work positively and sensitively, and this aspect of history makes an important contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills. A good contribution is also made to the development of reading non-fiction among younger pupils through their investigation of texts, some of which are very demanding.
72. The quality of history teaching is good, with some very good features. Teachers have very good professional knowledge and understanding of the subject, combined with strong personal interests in it. Lessons have good pace, and sustain high levels of interest among pupils. Teachers use a wide variety of relevant resources, including objects from the past, photographs and productive visits to museums and places of great historical interest beyond the school. Work is usually marked regularly and positively, though this does not

always help pupils to understand how they may improve their learning. Assessment techniques during lessons are good, but assessment is not used effectively throughout the school to ensure that pupils are reaching the highest standards they are capable of in the National Curriculum. The best teaching uses historical writing very well to develop more general writing skills, but in some lessons too much work is copied.

73. The leadership and management of history are good, and the co-ordinator has helped develop continuity in the curriculum for history between junior, infant and secondary schools. Resources are generous and well used, both within school and beyond. Several excellent art displays match artists to periods of historical interest - for example, pupils recreate Holbein's Tudor portraits and L S Lowry's paintings of industrial Britain. Some pupils use the Internet and other electronic data bases to gather historical information, though this is not yet consistent.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

74. The range of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of ICT is in line with that expected nationally. Standards during the last inspection ranged from average to above average in lessons that were observed. However, there was too little use of ICT for inspectors to judge the full range of pupils' skills, and co-ordination was not effective. While there has yet to be a significant change in overall standards, the use of ICT is now much more consistent, and the school has laid an excellent foundation for longer-term progress through its new ICT suite and excellent co-ordination of the subject. The present position shows good improvement since the last inspection, and provides an excellent platform for further progress.
75. The oldest pupils are confident in using the computer. They can write, save and edit text to a good standard, insert illustrations and manipulate fonts and the size of text. During the inspection, they were beginning to use a database and to insert and manipulate formulae. Most of this work was in line with the expected standard in the National Curriculum, with some progress beyond it. All pupils receive their lesson plans in printed sheets, which build into a personal manual over their four years in the school. This is a most effective feature, ensuring consistent development of skills for all pupils, and providing a clear reference point for parents and teachers. The consistently good or better quality of learning resulting from this provision is enabling younger pupils to develop the skills currently shown by those in Year 6 at an earlier age, and it is this factor that provides evidence of rising standards in the longer term.
76. The teaching of ICT is good, with some very good features. Planning is exceptionally clear and comprehensive, ensuring that the basic skills set out in the National Curriculum are properly covered, and that pupils have opportunities to progress further. Progress is very carefully monitored, through a system ingeniously built into the lesson planning, and there are good opportunities for higher-attaining pupils to learn at a faster rate. Explanations and demonstrations to pupils are consistently very good, based on teachers' clear understanding of the subject, and there is a good pace of work. Pupils are encouraged to use e-mail to communicate with each other and with their teachers. This builds familiarity with the system, though the content of the e-mails is often very limited.
77. The contribution of ICT to learning in other subjects is satisfactory and improving. The school has a small but well-selected collection of software to promote specific aspects of the curriculum, such as co-ordinates and points of the compass in geography, and there was one example of excellent use of a CD ROM as part of a science investigation in Year 5. Good use is made of a concept keyboard in some English work with pupils with special

educational needs. On the other hand, the school is not using its good stand-alone computers effectively, and this leads to pupils in many lessons using a less comprehensive range of information and learning resources than they should.

78. The improved co-ordination of ICT is having a considerable impact on attitudes to learning, particularly among some pupils with behavioural difficulties, who are beginning to take an interest in their work, and to bring work from home into school. The ICT suite is well equipped, and can accommodate a whole class at a time. It is, however, inadequately ventilated, resulting in a hot and stuffy atmosphere which is very uncomfortable for pupils and teachers, particularly towards the end of the afternoon. The co-ordinator has developed a high level of professional knowledge and understanding, including a training qualification, which enables her to ensure that all teachers have the skills and confidence to teach ICT to a good or better standard.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

79. The school teaches German in the context of its international exchange work. Standards are good, and have improved since the last inspection, when they were satisfactory.
80. Pupils make a very good early start in Year 5, learning German phrases with good pronunciation and intonation, and beginning to substitute words within phrases. They develop good understanding of some essential components of German grammar. While their writing is mostly copied, this is accurate, and they develop very good understanding of basic facts about Germany, including culture and geography. Standards in Year 6 are good, but the rate at which pupils progress beyond the earliest stages of learning the language is limited by interruptions to the regularity of their German lessons in the timetable, which involves each class missing one half term in three.
81. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good for pupils in Year 5. The teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the language, and adapts this very well to the learning needs of pupils in the early stages, for example by providing consistent opportunities for pupils to practise and reinforce what they have learned, and by balancing the use of German to ask questions with explanations in English when these are needed. German teaching makes good use of resources – though not of ICT resources. Relationships are good and lessons are well-paced, though the pace of work is better in Year 5 than in Year 6.
82. The balance of work in German makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and is complemented by the early opportunity offered to pupils and staff to form links with German schools.

MUSIC

83. Standards in music are good throughout the school, and have been maintained since the last inspection. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection were consistently good, and very good indeed in response to the best teaching. Work in this subject was particularly affected by the restricted teaching role of the acting headteacher, who is the co-ordinator for music and plays a leading role in music in the area.

84. Pupils in Year 6 listen to classical music with a critical ear. As a result of excellent planning by their teacher, they link their appraisal of Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' with their appreciation of natural sounds on a visit to Folly Farm. They listen very closely for extended periods, and interpret individually their thoughts and feelings about what they hear, identifying instruments and giving clear and cogent reasons for their views. The standard of teaching and learning for these pupils is very high. Year 5 pupils are confident and competent performers and composers. They are familiar with a wide range of percussion instruments and most successfully accompany their own singing with two part rhythm playing. They have worked on their performance in previous lessons but even so surprise their teacher with the standard of their performance. They sing well and make every effort to show what they can do. Pupils in Year 4 have a well developed sense of pitch and rhythm and use a wide range of percussion instruments to demonstrate change in pitch. As a result of good questioning by their teacher, they explain the reasons for change of pitch, for example by referring to the length of keys on xylophones and glockenspiels.
85. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in lessons in which the teacher has a high level of musical skill and understanding. Lessons are well prepared and planned, and proceed at a brisk pace. Teachers generate and sustain a high level of interest among pupils, and use questioning well to assess their attainment. They promote subject vocabulary effectively, and provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their work and on ways of improving it.
86. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in all aspects of music. Music is a living and lively part of every school day, and singing in assemblies is good. Pupils dance and sing for many reasons. For example, pupils in Year 6 rehearse their dance for the local inter-schools production of Joseph, and those in Year 3 sing about celebrations in the Jewish faith. The best of this work conveys a strong sense of spirituality. The school provides exceptionally good opportunities for pupils to learn instruments and to take part in school and community music making, including professional performances. Resources are very good, and pupils respond very positively to this rich curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

87. Eleven-year-olds reach good standards in all aspects of physical education, and very good standards in dance. Standards in games and gymnastics have improved since the last inspection, and standards in swimming and dance have been maintained. The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was consistently very good, and at best excellent. This indicates strongly that standards in this subject are rising further.
88. Pupils make good progress in gymnastics, dance, swimming and games. They develop good, and at times very good, physical co-ordination, balance and control of movement. Younger pupils develop good understanding of the effects of exercise on their bodies and of the importance of warming up and cooling down properly. Pupils work very well in pairs on mats, practising and perfecting flowing sequences of movements, and rolling smoothly from one controlled, stretched pose to another. Older pupils reach very good standards in dance, interpreting lively music well through active, structured movement. These high standards in dance make an important contribution to pupils' creative development. A high proportion of pupils reach the nationally expected standard in swimming. Almost all pupils have very good attitudes to their work and show very good awareness of safety.

89. The quality of teaching of physical education is very good overall and there was some excellent teaching. Teachers constantly emphasise the need for high standards of movement and control, and sequence activities very well to enable pupils to achieve these. They manage classes very well, constantly circulating and showing close awareness of every pupil's attainment. Teachers have the necessary skills to demonstrate movements, and to pick good examples of high quality work for pupils to show to the whole class. The use of drawings to demonstrate poses for younger pupils in dance lessons is particularly effective.
90. The subject is well co-ordinated, with good resources and a good scheme of work. A wide range of games clubs, including netball, hockey, rugby and football, make a strong contribution to learning outside the classroom, and there is regular competition with other schools. A group of dancers from the school is actively rehearsing for a combined schools' performance of the musical 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat'.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

91. Eleven-year-olds reach standards broadly in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. This represents a decline from the generally good standards recorded during the last inspection, caused by inconsistencies in planning and provision for the subject. In Year 3 standards are good, but there are significant variations in the knowledge and understanding of older pupils. In some classes pupils have an impressive depth of knowledge, but in parallel classes knowledge is scant.
92. Early achievement is good. Pupils develop a secure understanding of 'specialness', starting with their own experiences, and extend this to include special symbols and days which have meaning for Christians and Jews. In one very successful lesson, pupils made great strides in learning about the festival of Pesach. They listened to a story, handled religious objects, sang about the celebratory Seder meal, and finally wrote and drew to a high standard. Further successful learning in Year 5 provided pupils with impressive knowledge of Biblical text and the format of the Bible. Through very skilful questioning their teacher reviewed and revived learning about parables and fables, and pupils worked co-operatively to write their own fables, the moral to be deduced by listeners. The planning for this lesson involved excellent opportunities to develop literacy. On the other hand, while some older pupils had good knowledge and understanding of key religious tenets, for example of Islam and Christianity, many others knew very little, and could recall no recent teaching in religious education. This was reflected in the scrutiny of pupils' work, and indicates a significant lack of lesson time in some classes.
93. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good, with very good teaching in a quarter of lessons. Teachers plan interesting lessons, generating interest in the subject by means of a very good range of activities which involve pupils on a direct and practical basis. They use questioning skilfully to enable pupils to extend their understanding and to relate what they learn to their own experiences. Pupils are encouraged to respect one another, and respond accordingly. Relationships and the ethos in which the subject is delivered are good. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development, which would be more effective still if it were consistent in all classes.
94. There is a good scheme of work, based on the locally Agreed Syllabus, and the co-ordinator has built up an exceptionally good collection of resources. However, the school's arrangements for managing the subject do not ensure that it is taught consistently enough. Overall, provision only just meets statutory requirements, and the school is not getting the best return on some significant strengths in teaching and learning.