

INSPECTION REPORT

NEW MARSTON FIRST SCHOOL

Oxford

LEA area: Oxfordshire

Unique reference number: 123048

Headteacher: Mr J F Kent

Reporting inspector: Mrs V Ward
19028

Dates of inspection: 27th to 30th March 2000

Inspection number: 190804

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Copse Lane Headington Oxford
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr N Paplomatas
Date of previous inspection:	28 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs V Ward	Registered inspector	English Under fives	What sort of school is it?
		Information technology Music	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught
Mr W Twiss	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents and the community?
Mrs M Debrou	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Geography Physical education	
Mr J Iles	Team inspector	Mathematics History Art	
		Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language	
		Pupils with hearing impairment	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

New Marston First School is situated near the centre of Oxford. The school has 152 pupils in the main school and 51 in the nursery. Twenty four of these pupils attend the nursery class part-time. Altogether there are 94 boys and 109 girls, aged between three and nine years. The school is slightly smaller than it was at the time of its last inspection, when there were 217 pupils on roll. At the time of this inspection there were seven children of ages three and four in the school. When the children are first admitted to the nursery, their attainment is similar to that found in other schools nationally. Fifteen per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is about average. Thirty pupils are identified as having special educational needs, a figure which is broadly average. Six pupils have statements of special educational need. The school houses the Mid-Oxfordshire Base for Hearing Impaired Children. The staff from the base give support to eight hearing impaired pupils in the school. There are currently 23 pupils who are learning English as an additional language; this is above average. These pupils come from a wide range of countries. Pupils are taught in six classes, two of which contain single year groups. Pupils from mixed age classes are taught in single year groups for some lessons.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has several strengths, particularly in giving care and in successfully promoting the pupils' pastoral development. Parents and pupils like the school. It is increasingly focusing on academic achievement and this is beginning to take effect. Though its national results are below those found in similar schools, in the inspection, standards were found to meet expectations in all subjects except mathematics, speaking and listening where they were higher. The teaching is satisfactory overall, and has some strengths. However, leadership roles are not sufficiently developed to build on the school's strengths. There is strong commitment to school improvement from the governors and staff. The school spends its money wisely and achieves satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- | | |
|----|--|
| 64 | Achieves good standards in mathematics at both key stages |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fosters very positive attitudes and high standards of behaviour in the pupils• Makes very good provision in the nursery• Integrates its special needs pupils and those learning English as an additional language very successfully• Maintains good relationships with parents and very strong links with the community |

What could be improved

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aspects of leadership and management concerned with planning and target setting• Monitoring and evaluating how good the teaching and learning is• Leadership roles of the staff with management responsibilities• Standards achieved by more able pupils |
|---|

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since it was last inspected in October 1996. All the key issues raised at the last inspection have received some attention, although little progress has been made with two of them. Much hard work has been put into raising standards in information technology and into improving pupils' writing. Provision for teaching information technology is now good and standards are sound. Standards in pupils' writing are satisfactory at both key stages. Provision for acts of collective worship now meets requirements. Teachers now identify what the pupils are to learn in their planning, but often this takes insufficient account of the prior attainment of different pupils. A start has been made on developing the teachers' subject management roles, but this remains a key issue. Some monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place in literacy and numeracy lessons, but this is insufficient to improve teaching overall. Good initiatives have been put into place to promote reading. Standards of behaviour are better than at the last inspection. Standards in mathematics have improved. The school has maintained the high standards of provision and care for its hearing impaired pupils.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
reading	C	E	D	E	well above average A
writing	D	E	D	E	above average B
mathematics	C	C	D	D	average C
					below average D
					well below average E

The table shows that results have fluctuated and are mainly below average. Several factors contribute to this. The school has varying numbers of pupils with special educational needs and, when the cohort of pupils taking the test is small, they can form a significant percentage in the results. Also, pupils who are attending whilst their parents visit from abroad to work temporarily at the nearby university or hospital, do not have sufficient command of English to achieve their full potential by the time the tests are taken. These pupils' results in mathematics are often considerably higher than those in reading and writing. Inspection findings indicate that current standards meet expectations in reading, writing and science, and exceed them in mathematics, speaking and listening. In all other subjects, standards are satisfactory. The school has identified reading as a focus for improvement, particularly for boys, and has introduced several successful initiatives to raise standards. Also, groups of pupils are receiving additional support for literacy and this is enhancing their learning. However, a rigorous system for setting targets in order to raise standards is not in place.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are well motivated and eager to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils show respect for others and for their environment.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships. They get on well with their peers and teachers. Pupils are willing to take responsibility.
Attendance	Good. Above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	very good	satisfactory	satisfactory

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

The teaching of language and literacy is satisfactory overall, but is often good in the whole class parts of the literacy hour. The teachers have good knowledge of the national literacy strategy. They promote good standards of speaking and listening. The teachers provide well for pupils with special educational needs and for those learning English as an additional language, and this impacts positively on their learning. Planning for more able pupils often does not provide them with sufficient challenge and this slows their progress. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. The teaching of mental arithmetic has a very positive impact on learning. In all other subjects, teaching is satisfactory, but has some good features. In the nursery, teaching is very good overall in all areas of learning. During the inspection, forty-two per cent of teaching was satisfactory, thirty-six per cent was

good and thirteen per cent very good or excellent. Nine per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. These proportions are similar to those reported at the last inspection.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum is broad and balanced and reflects the current emphasis on raising standards in literacy and numeracy. Planning in some subjects does not promote progress as well as it should.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, including provision for those pupils with disabilities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Teachers are caring and sensitive to the needs of these pupils and work hard to make the curriculum accessible to them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with particular strengths in provision for social development, but with the need to provide more opportunities for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Support and guidance for the pupils is a strength. Procedures for finding out and recording how well they are performing are unsatisfactory.

Relationships with parents are good. The school encourages parents to become involved. There is an active Parents and Staff Association and the involvement of parents in providing resources, such as story sacks, has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Particular strengths are found in the curriculum for literacy and numeracy. Some subjects, such as design and technology, history and geography, are not taught regularly enough, and this makes it more difficult for pupils to develop their skills systematically. Good child protection procedures are in place and staff are vigilant as regards the health and safety of the pupils. Outside agencies are used well to support pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory, but with some significant short-comings in the monitoring and assessment of school performance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities, with the exception of those for teacher appraisal.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory, but a sound start has been made.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory.

There are enough teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum. The accommodation is spacious and is used well. There are satisfactory learning resources to enhance the pupils' learning. Pastoral leadership is a strength. Though planning for school improvement lacks rigour, a start has been made to establish better procedures. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning, and the teachers' management roles are under-developed. The governors and headteacher have satisfactory awareness of the principles of best value and are beginning to apply them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That their children like school• That their children make good progress, especially in literacy and numeracy• That the school promotes good standards of behaviour• The usefulness of the information they receive about forthcoming events and news items• That they can talk to the teachers before and after school on any day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information about how well their children are progressing• The amount and regularity of homework given to the children is not consistent• The provision for more able children• The range of activities provided outside lessons

The inspectors endorse most of the parents' views about the school. The school does promote very good standards of behaviour and communicates well with parents about events in school. The information provided on pupils' written reports has shortcomings, and there is inconsistency in the implementation of the homework policy. Provision for more able pupils often does not provide sufficient challenge. The range of activities provided outside lessons is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 64 The results of the 1999 national tests for seven year olds indicate that, in comparison with all schools, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with schools where pupils come from similar backgrounds, results were below average in mathematics and well below in reading and writing. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher level 3 was similar to the average nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Teacher assessment of standards in science shows results to be average when compared to all schools nationally. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was below the national average. Results in science have risen over the last four years in line with national trends.
- 65 Results in reading, writing and mathematics have fluctuated over the past four years, particularly in reading and writing. Contributing factors to this are the varying numbers of pupils with special educational needs and the admission of pupils from overseas who often stay for only one year whilst their parents work at the nearby university or teaching hospital. When these pupils are present for the national tests their command of English is often not yet sufficient for them to demonstrate their potential in reading and writing, though their results in mathematics are often considerably better.
- 66 The 1999 test results showed improvement over the previous year. The predictions for the current year indicate a further rise such that the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level is likely to reach the national average. Inspection findings indicate that, by the end of Year 2, standards meet expectations in reading, writing and science, and exceed them in speaking, listening and mathematics. Standards in religious education meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement in information technology and all other subjects is in line with what is expected for seven year olds.
- 67 By the time the pupils leave the school at the age of nine, standards in English and science meet national expectations. In speaking, listening and mathematics, standards exceed expectations. Standards in religious education meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In information technology and all other subjects, standards meet national expectations.
- 68 The children under five are on track to achieve the expected outcomes by the time they are five, and often sooner. This is particularly the case in personal and social development, where most of the children attain high standards. They show high levels of independence and share and take turns well. The children listen intently to stories and instructions. They make themselves understood and join in discussion confidently. Most of the children recognise letter sounds and some words, and use picture cues and memory well as their skills of independent reading develop. They make good progress as writers, learning to form letters correctly and writing their names. Their independent writing shows understanding that writing is linear in form, and the children begin to use some recognisable letters. The children know several numerals and can put out the right number of objects to match them. They are aware of the world around them and show great interest in discovering new knowledge. They use their imaginations well when involved in role play, painting or using malleable materials. The children recognise and name several percussion instruments and sing tunefully and enthusiastically. They use scissors and brushes with increasing skill, and successfully fit together pieces of construction kits. All the children run, jump and balance well, and show good awareness of space and of each other as they move around.

- 69 At the last inspection in October 1996, standards in writing and information technology were unsatisfactory and their improvement was a key issue. Since then the school has worked successfully to raise standards in these areas, and both are now satisfactory. Standards in mathematics have also improved at both key stages. However, whereas standards in religious education at Key Stage 1 were above expectations, they are now satisfactory. Standards in physical education and parts of history are no longer above expectations. The teachers attribute this largely to a reduction in teaching time as a result of the recent focus on literacy and numeracy. The school has implemented the national literacy and numeracy strategies very successfully.
- 70 The school is well aware that its pupils need to do better, particularly in relation to pupils in similar schools. However, the school has taken, and continues to take, steps to raise standards. For example, the school has begun to analyse its test data and, as a result, has targeted the attainment of boys in reading as a focus. Several strategies have been successfully implemented to generate interest, including starting a pre-school reading club and setting a male role-model for reading by inviting men in uniform to read and share their enthusiasm for books. The school has set satisfactory targets for the Year 2 cohort of pupils in 2000 and 2001, and is just beginning to develop these into individual targets for pupils. Careful consideration is being given by the school to improving the quality of learning for pupils. The placing of pupils in classes according to prior attainment for some subjects is helping teachers to focus more closely on individual learning needs. Pupils identified as having special educational needs receive suitable support and make good progress in building on their prior attainment. However, more able pupils do not achieve consistently as well as they should, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. Provision is particularly well targeted for the children who have hearing impairment. The teachers make good provision for the pupils learning English as an additional language and they make good progress in speaking, reading and writing standard English. There is no significant variation in attainment among pupils from different backgrounds, those with special educational needs or those learning English as an additional language. The attainment of boys is generally lower than that of girls, but no evidence of gender bias is apparent in the school.
- 71 By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils speak confidently and express themselves well. Good progress is made and, when the pupils leave at the age of nine, they use a wide vocabulary and articulate their thoughts clearly. Pupils at both key stages concentrate intently when they are listening and this skill is developed consistently well by the teachers. At Key Stage 1, pupils make sound progress in developing independent reading skills. They use their knowledge of letter sounds and blends, together with cues from the pictures and the context of the story, to help them read unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 2, they read accurately and with understanding. By the age of nine, pupils read with greater understanding and expression. Overall standards in writing and spelling are in line with expectations. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards in their use of punctuation and standard English. They learn a satisfactory range of styles of writing, such as poetry, stories and instructions and develop sound skills of drafting their work. Standards of presentation and the use of a cursive script vary between classes and are not consistently satisfactory. This was also a concern at the last inspection.
- 72 In mathematics, suitable priority is given to developing pupils' mental agility with numbers and they use their knowledge and skills well in investigative work. Mathematics is used satisfactorily across the curriculum, in subjects such as science and geography. Learning in most aspects of science is satisfactory. However, learning in experimental and investigative work is below the standard found in other schools. In information technology, the pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The creation of a computer room and the regular use of this facility is providing a better learning environment and is helping to raise standards. The good use of the large screen helps pupils to learn new skills rapidly. The organisation of the timetable means that the gaps between revisiting some subjects are too long for the pupils to remember well the skills, knowledge and understanding they achieved previously.

This is particularly the case in history, geography and design and technology. However, the school is currently reviewing its curriculum, ready for implementation in September 2000.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 73 The pupils' attitudes to their work, their behaviour and the relationships within the school are very good. The pupils' personal development is also very good. Staff, pupils and parents have clear expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in and around the school. Parents are well satisfied with the consistently high standards of behaviour that are achieved by the school.
- 74 In classes, the pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy coming to school and talk enthusiastically about their lessons. The pupils are well motivated and are often keen to learn and volunteer their own thoughts and ideas. They are not afraid to ask interesting and challenging questions. For example, the pupils in a Year 2 literacy lesson closely questioned the teacher on compound words which they enjoyed learning about. Pupils of all ages settle quickly into lessons, frequently working together and sharing ideas. The older pupils talked about various ways of using frames, pictures and text, thus developing a range of ideas amongst themselves, for use in an information and communications technology lesson. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, have very positive attitudes to learning. The vast majority of the pupils are diligent in their approach to work. They sustain concentration and stay on task even when not formally supervised. The pupils are keen to take part in additional activities, such as residential visits and the school's regular tennis club.
- 75 The pupils' behaviour is very good. They are responsible and mature in their actions. They move about the school in an orderly fashion and arrive at their lessons on time. The pupils behave very well in classes and, as a result, there is no disruption to lessons. During the inspection, no lesson was observed in which behaviour was unsatisfactory. The same orderly picture was found at playtimes and lunch times. There were no signs of bullying or other forms of oppressive behaviour, and pupils could not recall any such instances. There have been no exclusions in the last three years.
- 76 Relationships in the school are very good. The pupils are polite and courteous to adults and care for their environment. They relate well to each other, to visitors and to their teachers. They collaborate effectively and take turns when, for example, using equipment in the playground. Pupils from the rich diversity of cultures within the school mix well together. The pupils show respect for the resources available to them.
- 77 The pupils' personal development is good, and sometimes, very good. They learn a good range of social skills and have opportunities to develop self-reliance through events such as residential visits. The pupils respond well to opportunities to help the teachers with routine jobs. Even the youngest pupils take seriously their responsibilities for jobs, such as taking the registers to the office. The pupils discuss imaginative ways of raising money for local and national charities.
- 78 Levels of attendance are good and are above the national average. Since the last inspection the school has succeeded in reducing the level of unauthorised absences to negligible levels. The pupils come to school on time and the vast majority of lessons start and finish promptly.
- 79 The school has improved upon the good attitudes, standards of behaviour and relationships reported on at the last inspection. The high levels of behaviour and attendance have a very positive impact on the standards achieved by the pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 80 Teaching is sound overall and impacts satisfactorily on pupils' learning. Teaching was sound in forty-two per cent of lessons, and in forty-nine per cent of lessons, it was good or better. Thirteen per cent of teaching was very good or excellent, and nine per cent was unsatisfactory. These proportions are similar to those reported at the last inspection. The proportions of satisfactory, good and unsatisfactory teaching are similar at Key Stages 1 and 2. There is more very good and excellent teaching at Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2. Teaching is good overall in mathematics and satisfactory in all other subjects.
- 81 The quality of teaching in the nursery is never less than good and is often excellent. All the staff have very good knowledge of the needs of young children and provide an excellent range of experiences which cover all areas of learning. They interact with the children very well, encouraging them to think and to extend their learning. The staff give personal development, language and literacy, and mathematics suitably high priority. The teachers and nursery nurses work very well as a team and provide an excellent balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities. Preparation is thorough and support assistants and parent helpers are well briefed about their roles. Behaviour is managed very well and this has a positive effect on the standards achieved. Teaching methods and the organisation of the children are successful in producing a positive learning environment in which the children feel secure and happy. The staff set suitably high expectations of what the children can achieve and use praise and encouragement extremely well to motivate the children and give them confidence.
- 82 At Key Stages 1 and 2, the teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory overall, but has strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are well informed about the literacy and numeracy strategies and this impacts positively on how well the pupils learn, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge and to practise and reinforce their previous learning. The level of teachers' knowledge varies between teachers and subjects. Their knowledge is generally good in literacy and numeracy, but is variable in other subjects, such as science, design and technology, music and history. Similar comments were made at the last inspection.
- 83 Teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection. They now identify what they want pupils to learn, though this is better in English and mathematics than it is in other subjects. Sometimes teachers confuse what the pupils are to learn with what they are to do. Where the teachers share what is to be learned with the pupils, the pupils are given a better understanding of what is expected of them and make good progress. For example, in a lesson about compound words, the teacher described very clearly what the pupils would be learning. This enabled them to work productively and at a good pace. It also helped the pupils to develop a better understanding of how well they were doing.
- 84 In lessons other than literacy and numeracy, planning rarely describes what the pupils of different prior attainment are to learn. This results in work which is too hard for some pupils and too easy for others, and reduces the quality of learning. Links between planning and assessment are unsatisfactory. Recording systems are informal and inconsistent between teachers and, whilst they know their pupils well, the teachers carry this information in their heads. The extent to which teachers modify their weekly planning in the light of pupils' learning means that lessons often do not build sufficiently well on previous attainment and on these occasions, progress slows down.
- 85 The teachers set high expectations in literacy and numeracy and this gives good pace and rigour to learning. For example, in a lesson about writing a whole class story, the teacher set a brisk pace so that the pupils were kept on task and interested. In other subjects, expectations are sometimes lower and pupils, particularly the more able, are not always given sufficient challenge.

- 86 The teachers have implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies very successfully. They are generally better at organising the whole class parts of the literacy hour. The teachers regularly remind the pupils of their previous work and this helps them to set new learning in context. Teachers use questioning well, often tailoring it to specific pupils. An example of this was seen in a lesson about rhyme and rhythm in poetry, where good questioning ensured that the pupils were involved, encouraged them to participate and enabled them to succeed. In group activities, the planned work is not always linked closely enough to the pupils' prior attainment, and then the quality of learning is reduced for some pupils and they work less purposefully. Sessions at the end of lessons are often used well to reinforce new learning and help the pupils gain an understanding of what they have learned.
- 87 The teachers manage pupils well and make their expectations of behaviour clear. The pupils are secure in these established routines and respond positively, showing interest, working productively and with concentration.
- 88 The teachers teach the pupils with special educational needs well, and this impacts positively on their learning. They are aware of the targets in the pupils' individual education plans, and cater for this in their teaching. In literacy, they make better provision than in other subjects. Pupils are sometimes withdrawn for extra tuition. When this reflects the work carried out in the classroom, it is very effective. At other times the pupils miss out on what is happening in class. The teachers provide good support for pupils who are learning English as an additional language. They make sure that they listen carefully and that they understand instructions. The teachers encourage the pupils to speak and to involve them in all activities.
- 89 The teachers prepare and use learning resources well. Learning support assistants are well briefed by the class teachers. During group activities, they make good use of support assistants to work with pupils. This enables the pupils to make good progress. However, during whole class introductions, they are sometimes not used productively.
- 90 Pupils appropriately take home books to read and spellings to learn as part of their homework. Parents made the point that there is some variation in the practice of setting homework and the inspection findings supports this view.

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

- 91 The curriculum provided throughout the school is broad and balanced. It incorporates all National Curriculum subjects, including religious education, and meets statutory requirements, including those for children aged five and under. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection. The curriculum for the children under five is good. It pays due regard to the recommended areas of learning and prepares children well for work in the National Curriculum. At Key Stages 1 and 2, the strategies for teaching the basic skills in literacy and numeracy have been successfully introduced and a good emphasis is given to teaching these subjects. The time allocated to other subjects has been reduced and, except for physical education, they are taught as part of planned topics for each key stage. Some of these subjects, such as design and technology, geography and history are not taught regularly enough and so pupils do not have the opportunities systematically to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Planning for science does not provide enough structure to help pupils progress at an appropriate rate, particularly in investigation and experimentation. The school recognises the need to review its current planning model in line with new national recommendations. At the time of the previous inspection, plans for science, information technology and design and technology were at an early stage of development and these are now in place. Also at the last inspection, weekly and daily planning varied in quality and often did not make clear

what the pupils were to learn. Whilst this has now improved, it is still an issue for the school and continues to result in some pupils undertaking work which does not always build on their prior attainment.

- 92 Good opportunities are provided for pupils with special educational needs, and the school complies fully with the requirements of the Code of Practice. Individual education plans have clearly defined targets and these are reviewed regularly. The school's arrangements for meeting the needs of pupils who have English as an additional language are good, although there are difficulties in finding translators to cover the wide range of languages. Many pupils make significant gains during the year and perform well in their work. Sometimes, they return to their own countries before taking the statutory tests at age seven. This means that their good progress is not reflected in the school's overall results.
- 93 Although the school is successful in most aspects of its provision for equal opportunities, equality of access is unsatisfactory for some pupils. A number are withdrawn regularly from assembly for recorder lessons and from physical education lessons for targeted learning support. In some subjects the planned curriculum does not make adequate provision for pupils of differing ages and abilities. Too often pupils of differing ages and abilities cover the same work at the same level, in lessons other than literacy and numeracy. This provides work which is too hard for the less able and gives insufficient challenge for more able pupils. This finding reflects the views of those parents who felt that the more able pupils sometimes failed to achieve their best.
- 94 The curriculum for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Sound policies for sex and drugs education are in place and this aspect of the curriculum is studied through life and living processes in science. The school nurse is appropriately involved in supporting pupils' understanding.
- 95 About twenty per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire thought that the school does not provide enough extra-curricular opportunities. The inspection findings show that the school's provision is adequate and includes French, recorders, tennis and a book club. The lunchtime French club organised by a parent is well attended. The after-school tennis club run by the headteacher is very popular and pupils benefit from carefully structured and energetic sessions.
- 96 The school has very strong links with the community and encourages the use of the building and facilities during the school day. This provides a very positive example of the importance of life-long learning and has a strong social element to it. Visits from local community workers and the church are strongly promoted. Despite a few parents' concerns that there were too many trips, the inspection confirmed the school's view that the curriculum is enriched by the range and quality of the visits on offer. Arrangements for transfer to the next phase school are satisfactory and a joint programme has been drawn up to ensure pupils feel secure and informed.
- 97 Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall and this is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. However, the development of spiritual awareness and understanding is not adequately planned for throughout the school and is unsatisfactory. The school complies with the statutory requirements for collective worship. A consistent effort is made to raise pupils' self esteem by celebrating their achievements and efforts in special assemblies. Assemblies are linked to moral themes and often include periods of reflection through "thinking times" or prayers. However, opportunities are missed to establish an appropriate mood of joy and wonder and to involve pupils actively in making thoughtful personal responses. When pupils are withdrawn for other activities, this further devalues the very special contribution which assemblies should make to the whole life of the school.
- 98 The understanding of the difference between right and wrong is effectively promoted and provision for moral development is good. Both in class and in the playground, pupils' behaviour is very good and the

systems in place, such as the agreed rules of conduct, have a positive impact on maintaining these high standards. Teachers set a good example by valuing the ideas and opinions of the pupils and provide opportunities for classes to share feelings and beliefs. A wide range of charities are well supported by pupils and adults.

- 99 Provision for social development is very good and this contributes very effectively to the atmosphere of calm and order throughout the school. Parents feel that the school is very successful in promoting positive attitudes and behaviour. Pupils respond very well to expectations that they work sensibly and productively together. They enjoy taking responsibility for a range of school duties such as helping at lunchtimes and clearing up after their work. School trips and residential visits provide an important extra dimension to their social development. Relationships between adults and pupils are very supportive and staff provide a good role model in their relations with each other.
- 100 Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Work in geography, art, dance, music and religious education provides opportunities for pupils to acquire insights into the values, beliefs and traditions of a range of countries. A special millennium display celebrated the historical and cultural achievements of the British Isles. Pupils study the techniques of European and Asian artists and learn about the cultural and religious traditions of other major world faiths. The school organises special theme days and weeks that focus on countries abroad. These have included European Day, World Wide Week and Chinese New Year. The school also benefits from a rich cultural mix amongst the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 101 The school cares for the pupils well. Pastoral leadership is strong and the staff have a good working knowledge of the pupils for whom they are responsible.
- 102 Child protection procedures are firmly established within the school. The headteacher ensures that all staff are fully briefed about such matters. Specialist professionals provide routine health screening for the pupils and the school nurse makes a useful contribution to the pupils' personal, social and health education. From time to time visitors such as the community police officer come into school to alert the pupils to some of the dangers that they may face in society as they grow up. All staff are vigilant in health and safety matters. They immediately report any hazards which they observe. Prompt remedial action is taken and risk assessments are kept up to date.
- 103 The teachers are alert to the individual needs of the pupils. They use their personal knowledge well to provide appropriate extra support when it is needed. The school prides itself on early identification of pupils who need further help with their learning. This support is effective in ensuring that pupils receive extra teaching to enable them to maximise their full potential. The school is keen to provide help for those pupils who are learning English as an additional language. For instance, it provides both professional and volunteer support for these pupils and this helps them to become fully integrated into lessons and the everyday life of the school.
- 104 The school cares well for pupils who have hearing difficulties. It hosts a resource base specially designed for this purpose. Through its thorough understanding of their needs, it ensures that the pupils receive suitable extra help and equipment to enable them to play a full part in lessons.
- 105 The school works hard to promote good levels of attendance. It has recently tightened up procedures and this is making a worthwhile contribution to keeping attendance levels high. The teachers, pupils and the parents fully understand the school's rules on behaviour. Measures to eliminate bullying and any form of offensive behaviour are successful.
- 106 The school has made a start on assessing the academic progress of the pupils. Much of this relies on data analysis but there are still some significant gaps. For example, though pupils are assessed

at age five, they are not formally assessed when they come into the nursery for the first time. Consequently, it is difficult for the school to judge the effectiveness of its teaching and learning over time. Additionally, whilst the school has extensive data available, it is unsure as to how to put this to good use in shaping future plans for improving standards throughout the curriculum.

- 107 Current procedures for recording pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. Pre-written statements on the existing records are too broad and do not help teachers to know what specific help the pupils need. This means that the link between planning and assessment relies heavily on the teachers' personal knowledge of the pupils, without the support of sufficiently detailed documented records. The school has recognised these short-comings and has begun to make changes.
- 108 Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the strengths and rectified most of the weaknesses identified at that time. Although assessment and record keeping procedures do not contribute significantly enough to raising achievement, the overall care offered to the pupils makes a positive contribution to their learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOLWORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 109 The school enjoys good relationships with the parents. It provides an open and welcoming atmosphere which encourages them to become involved in the life of the school. The parents' views of the school are positive and they express strong satisfaction with the quality of teaching and the progress that their children make. The induction procedures for children joining the nursery are very effective and parents are appreciative of the sensitivity of the staff to the children's needs.
- 110 The school provides a regular flow of information for parents. A profile on what the pupils are learning is available to parents. An annual report outlines what the pupils have done and indicates the standards that they have achieved. It does not, however, give targets for improvement. The quality of written reports was identified as a weakness at the last inspection. An appropriate range of meetings is available for parents, at which they can meet the teachers to discuss how their children are getting on at school. The teachers are always available at the start and end of school to discuss any relevant matters with parents. The parents of pupils who need extra help with their learning are invited into school to discuss how this may be provided and to set and review targets for improvement.
- 111 The parents contribute effectively to the life of the school. A band of volunteers help in the classes with important things like reading and mathematics. In the reception and Year 1 class, the teachers' plans clearly indicate what the parent helpers will do and how their work contributes to the overall lesson objectives. A useful literacy diary lists the books that pupils have read and confirms, through comments, that the majority of parents help their children to read at home. These are used to greater effect than was found at the last inspection. A recent development, fully supported by the parents, is the introduction of story sacks which, in addition to a story or non-fiction book, contain such items as tapes, puppets and games to enrich the story, and an activity card which relates the story to other areas of the curriculum. Over fifty such sacks are in regular use and they make a significant contribution to the children's literacy work. The youngest children speak enthusiastically of the help that they receive from parents in class, for their reading work.
- 112 A thriving Parents' and Staff Association raises significant funds for the school through social events. This makes a good contribution towards resources and has recently provided extra computers, library books and improvements to the building. Overall, the parents make a positive contribution and this has a beneficial effect on the work of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 113 The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall but there are some significant shortcomings. Consequently, much of the school's direction and desire for improvement relies on informal arrangements and the conscientious approach of individuals. Although a start has been made on evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning, it is not as yet rigorously embedded in the culture of the school. The school has, however developed ways of evaluating the teaching of numeracy and literacy and is able to point to improvements as a result of this work. As yet, targets for achieving high standards are lacking and it is not always clear to the teachers and pupils what they need to do in order to improve. The last inspection report identified, as key issues, the need to implement monitoring systems and to develop the role of the co-ordinators. The school has made only limited progress with both of these issues.
- 114 The governing body is properly constituted. It fulfils its duties adequately but relies heavily on the information supplied to it by the headteacher. Whilst there is a satisfactory committee structure, the governors' role in setting appropriate targets for school improvement is not evident.
- 115 The headteacher and senior management staff know what needs to be done to drive forward school improvement and provide a sound foundation for development. However, they lack clear strategies for achieving their aims. Although a start has been made on identifying groups of pupils with potential to improve, there is no systematic way of assessing the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school analyses data from tests but does not have a comprehensive approach for using this information. This means that opportunities to shape future plans are often lost. The school has not, for example, implemented a thorough system of identifying what the pupils know when they come into the nursery. It does, however, assess the pupils as they enter the reception classes and has started to use testing at the end of most years. The tracking of how well pupils are progressing is underdeveloped and, as a result, additional help is currently restricted to booster sessions for a small group of pupils with potential to improve their achievements in literacy.
- 116 The school makes satisfactory use of the resources which are available to it. It spends the specific grants which it receives for their intended purposes and has, for instance, used a grant from the National Grid for Learning to improve provision for information and communications technology. The school has recently improved its financial administration and planning procedures. As a result, it is now monitoring expenditure effectively and is beginning to use this information when making important spending decisions. Allocations of money are carefully considered in relation to the school's educational priorities.
- 117 The current plan for school improvement lacks detail. Much of the planning is based on reviewing existing strategies and misses opportunities to set out clear targets for taking the school forward. The plan lacks information about resources and it is therefore difficult to assess how well the principles of best value are being applied. The planning process is headteacher led, and several staff have only a limited knowledge of how it impacts on their roles within the school. The co-ordinators are, for example, still somewhat unclear about their roles in managing improvements within their subject specialisms. However, recent developments have been successful in co-ordinating the strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. The co-ordinators have also made a start on improving and monitoring planning in most of the subjects. They are building up examples of the pupils' work so that their colleagues have a clear idea of the standards which they should aim for in order to secure further improvements in the work of the pupils.
- 118 The school has enough teachers and support staff to meet the demands of teaching the National Curriculum. A relevant programme of staff development is in place and much of this has recently concentrated on improving the teachers' expertise in teaching literacy, numeracy and information technology. Induction arrangements support new staff as they develop their careers within the

school. Although staff are offered informal opportunities to discuss their development aspirations, the systematic appraisal of teachers is not in place.

- 119 The accommodation is good and provides spacious rooms and play areas. Attractive displays brighten the walls and depict the pupils' work on the history of the last millennium. The addition of a new computer suite makes a useful contribution to the pupils' work in using information and communications technology. Overall resources are adequate, and contribute positively to the pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Issues marked # are already identified by the school for improvement.

- 120 In order to bring about successful school improvement, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Improve aspects of leadership and management. This will involve:
 - # setting clear targets to raise standards;
 - # setting in place rigorous assessment procedures for tracking progress and using that information in planning;
 - involving staff and governors in producing a more effective school improvement plan, and using it as an effective management tool;
 - developing the governors' role in shaping the direction of the school.
(Paragraphs 7, 21, 43, 44, 50, 51, 54, 80 and 94)
- (2) # Establish, implement and review rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. These should involve the headteacher, staff and governors in their appropriate roles.
(Paragraphs 7, 43, 52, 82, 89, 94, 105, 109, 114, 123 and 128)
- (3) # Strengthen the roles of subject co-ordinators, such that they are able to shape and influence standards and provision in their subjects.
(Paragraphs 54, 82, 89, 94, 105, 109, 114, 119 and 124)
- (4) Raise the standards achieved by more able pupils, by:
 - matching planned work more closely to their needs;
 - raising teachers' expectations of what these pupils can do.
(Paragraphs 7, 22, 30, 79 and 94)

Other issues which should be considered by the school

- Ensure that the school's policy for homework is uniformly applied between classes.
(Paragraph 27)
- Raise staff awareness of opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual development and make sure that this is planned for in lessons and collective worship.
(Paragraph 34)
- Complete and implement the current review of the curriculum, ensuring that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed more frequently and systematically, with particular reference to history, geography and design and technology.
(Paragraphs 28, 100, 105, 109, 114 and 123)
- Ensure that teachers have regular opportunities to discuss their professional development and receive their statutory entitlement to appraisal.
(Paragraph 55)

- Review equality of access to the curriculum for pupils who are withdrawn from classes or assemblies for extra tuition and recorder lessons.

(Paragraph 30)

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

MID-OXFORDSHIRE BASE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED CHILDREN

- 121 The school hosts the base for hearing impaired children. The majority of pupils with hearing impairment are educated at their local mainstream school, but a few need the additional resources that the base at New Marston offers. All the pupils wear aids for hearing. Teachers from the base work in partnership with the school in order to facilitate the successful integration of hearing impaired children. It is the aim of the service “for children from the Base to achieve their full potential academically whilst enjoying the benefits of a rich and varied language environment.”
- 122 Class teachers plan with teachers from the base. At those meetings, decisions are taken about where the teaching should take place. For example, the nursery teacher gives copies of nursery planning to the base teachers. Planning is discussed and appropriate times are identified for pupils to be in a whole class situation. When times are considered inappropriate for learning in a whole class environment, learning support assistants, who share in the planning, work with the pupil in a quiet area. Sometimes this is in the specially adapted classrooms in the base. The teachers of the hearing impaired keep satisfactory records of the pupils’ language development.
- 123 Learning support assistants choose from a list of activities to support the learning objective for the targeted areas. The nursery teacher follows up the work of the learning support assistant. If the activity is inappropriate to meet the needs of the pupil, the activity is adapted or changed. Continuous assessment influences planning. It is very important that good communication is maintained and that discussion continues, as pupils’ needs are continuously reviewed. The base is very supportive and allows the school to borrow and change resources frequently. The teaching emphasis is on visual impact.
- 124 Hearing impaired pupils are allowed to take friends to the base. This is an advantage for such pupils because they can see and hear examples of speaking and listening with active conversation taking place. In this way they learn to take turns, to share, and to learn when to look and listen and when to speak. There is an appropriate emphasis on learning social skills.
- 125 Contact with parents is very effective. Each child has a home/school book, to which both base and school staff contribute. Activities of the day are written down. Sometimes communication is through pictures, as some parents do not speak English. Pupils often take photographs home in order to share experiences with their parents. Parents are informed about the quality of their child’s day. Teachers suggest the type of support parents can give to help their children. Base teachers make weekly home visits. In addition, parents attend a range of meetings, including reviews, so that liaison opportunities are good.
- 126 Pupils are very well integrated into the mainstream school. They are confident as they move about the classroom, have many friends and thoroughly enjoy their time in school. They take part in almost all activities with their friends and with very good quality support they make good progress with their work. The current arrangements successfully meet the needs of the pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	4	36	42	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	152
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	28

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	6	34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	23

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.4

School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	13	12	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	7	9	11
	Girls	10	11	12
	Total	17	20	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68(63)	80 (69)	92 (87)
	National	82(80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	9	12
	Girls	11	12	11
	Total	20	21	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (70)	84 (85)	92(88)
	National	82 (80)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	141
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y4

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

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
	£
Total income	438040
Total expenditure	384727
Expenditure per pupil	2236.78
Balance brought forward from previous year	not available
Balance carried forward to next year	53313

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

203

Number of questionnaires returned

55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	20	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	27	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	32	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	42	14	2	9
The teaching is good.	62	33	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	25	13	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	22	6	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	33	7	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	49	31	12	4	4
The school is well led and managed.	63	31	0	2	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	60	32	4	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	36	18	4	18

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY PARENTS

A few parents expressed the following views:

- there are too many educational visits;
- behaviour in the playground is thought to be not as good as that in school;
- assemblies are thought to foster caring attitudes but to lack sufficient Christian focus.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 64 At the time of the inspection, seven children in the nursery were under five. At the start of each term, children who have reached their fifth birthday move into school and new children are admitted in the nursery. The children enter the nursery with a very wide range of attainment. The very brief assessment of their skills made by the school, combined with the inspection findings, show that the children's attainment is similar to what might be found in other schools nationally. The children make good progress and by the time they are five, the majority reach the expected outcomes in all areas of learning. The children with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are given good levels of support and encouragement, and this enables them to make good progress. The children are well prepared for work in the National Curriculum when they move into main school. At the end of their time in nursery, a significant number of children leave to attend local denominational churches or primary schools which are nearer to their homes. In all areas of learning, teaching is at least good, and it is often excellent. Particular strengths are the high levels of understanding which the staff have of the needs of young children, and the way in which this is translated into meaningful and interesting activities. The nursery continues to achieve the good standards and to provide the wide range of activities which were reported at the last inspection.

Personal and social education

- 65 Most of the children achieve good standards in this area of learning. The children show high levels of independence in fetching their coats from the cloakroom. They put them on without help and persevere to fasten zips, confidently asking for help when needed. They show very good understanding of nursery routines and are helped to respond positively by the consistent approach of all staff. The teacher and nursery nurses share common expectations of the children's growing independence and are skilled at intervening to encourage or assist when necessary, such as in teaching children how to tidy away resources, or helping them to wash their hands properly before handling food. The staff make the most of opportunities for children to take turns, such as when throwing bean bags into hoops, outside. Children stand in line confidently when going out to play. Children competently get out resources and know that they must wear an apron if they wish to play in the water and hang it up when they have finished. Two children playing with toy animals co-operated well in sharing the animals and invented a story to go with their play. The children show good levels of perseverance in, for example, trying to fit pieces into a puzzle.
- 66 The staff give very clear instructions to the children, so that they understand what is being asked. The children respond quickly when asked to sit on the carpeted area or to organise themselves into a circle. They express feelings of joy when playing with a butterfly puppet, admiring its beautiful wings as they open and close. The staff provide many rich opportunities for the children to learn about different cultures through celebrations such as Divali and Christmas, and through the provision of a range of dressing up clothes and musical instruments.

Language and literacy

- 67 The teaching of language and literacy is given suitably high priority throughout the nursery curriculum. The staff encourage the children to express their ideas and to engage in conversation at every opportunity. They successfully extend the children's vocabulary by, for example, explaining words like 'mischievous', and helping the children to think of words which mean 'small'. The staff tell stories very expressively and this captures the children's interest, helping them to concentrate and fostering a love of books. The children understand that pages in books are turned in sequence,

starting at the front, and they know that print carries meaning. They join in with familiar text in stories that they know, and the more able children recognise a few words. The staff teach the children to form letters correctly, paying due regard to correct pencil grip. They intervene well to make sure that the children start each letter in the correct place, so that they develop good writing habits. The regular assessment of the children's progress and use of that information ensure that learning for each child is pitched at the right level. The children learn to write their names and use familiar letters in their independent writing; these attempts are valued by the staff and this helps the children to gain confidence as writers. The more able children name several letters and know the sound that they make and relate the letters to the initial sounds of simple words. The transition into main school is carefully considered and the use of elements of the literacy strategy helps to prepare the children well.

Mathematical

- 68 The majority of children count to at least five, the more able counting to twenty and beyond. Children sort objects by colour and type. They understand the language of position, such as underneath and next to. They gain a good understanding of comparative size as they talk about the chairs and the beds in the story of Goldilocks. They use words like shorter and longer accurately as they sort and match a range of objects. They begin to record numbers and to understand simple addition and subtraction as they count out the correct numbers of each of the fruits eaten in a story about a very hungry caterpillar. All the staff take every opportunity to develop mathematical understanding. For example, the meaning of the words full and empty were explored when children were filling jugs with juice. Opportunities to encourage counting are taken as children fill jugs with water, and the language of position is explored as children stand in front of or behind each other as they play outside.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 69 Through planting and watching the growth of beans and cress the children gain good understanding of what plants need in order to grow. They know which is the stem and the leaves and, with prompting, remember that the roots absorb water to keep the plant alive. The children learn action rhymes which help them to name parts of their bodies. They show awareness of their surroundings, as in recognising the similarity between a zebra crossing and the marks on a zebra. Children learn about technology as they use telephones and cash registers in the role play area. They have good opportunities to use computers, both in the nursery and in the dedicated computer room. Children show confidence in controlling the mouse to select and drag icons when using an art program. They fasten together tracks to make a railway and realise that they have to join the two ends to make it continuous. Most know the difference between pushing and pulling the trains. They are aware of some of the ways that they have changed since they were babies and know that they need bigger sized shoes as their feet grow.

Physical development

- 70 Resources for outdoor play are very good. The staff provide a good range of planned outdoor activities and use the area well throughout the year. The children expend energy running and show an awareness of space and of others. They chase after bubbles blown by the staff and are careful not to run into each other. Similarly, they push wheeled toys and balance and climb on outdoor equipment with increasing skill. The staff intervene particularly well during outdoor play by, for example, teaching the children action rhymes to help them keep warm, reminding them to take turns and share, or helping them practise throwing and catching. Most children manipulate scissors with considerable skill, and show a growing ability to wipe the right amount off a paintbrush in order to create the desired effect. They use small construction kits with appropriate skill for their ages. They make objects with dough, using their hands and tools to shape it effectively. They persevere to

cut up fruit to add to a drink, under the careful guidance of a nursery nurse, and patiently thread wool through paper leaves to represent the holes left by the hungry caterpillar. Many good opportunities to develop the children's manipulative skills are maximised by the staff, such as using a juice squeezer to remove the juice from oranges.

Creative development

- 71 The staff make very good use of music to encourage the children to listen well. They teach singing very effectively and this encourages the children to sing tunefully and with enthusiasm, learning appropriate actions to songs. The children express preferences for certain songs and enjoy sharing these experiences with the other children. They know the names of a few percussion instruments and understand how to play them. The staff are very vigilant in making sure that all of the children are involved. The children develop their creative skills as they paint pictures of members of their families, or create collages from twigs and leaves they have collected in the school grounds. Children playing in the role play garden centre develop their imaginative play as they buy and sell flowers and plants. The children learn about colour, smell and texture as they use fruit to make a drink.

ENGLISH

- 72 Standards in reading and writing in the 1999 national tests for seven year olds were below those attained in other schools nationally. The percentage attaining the higher Level 3 was close to the national average in both reading and writing. When compared with schools with a similar intake to New Marston, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected level was well below average in reading and writing. The percentage attaining the higher Level 3 was about average in both reading and writing. Teacher assessments were similar to the test results. Over the past four years, the results have varied, and with the exception of reading in 1997, have been below the national average. Three factors contribute specifically to the variation in results and to the below average standards. Firstly, some pupils who are learning English as an additional language and enter the school from abroad when they are five or six, do not have sufficient command of English to perform in line with their abilities in the tests. Secondly, pupils with hearing impairment are delayed in acquiring sufficient language to perform well by age seven. Thirdly, the number of pupils with special educational needs varies and when the overall cohort of pupils is small, make a significant impact on the statistics. However, the school is beginning to analyse its data closely and to put in place strategies to raise standards. For example, the under-performance of boys in reading has been identified and the school has introduced several initiatives to promote their interest and raise standards. The results in 1999, though still below the national average, showed significant improvement on those attained in 1998. Predictions for the present Year 2 pupils show that standards should be in line with the national average. The inspection judgements confirm this view. By the time they leave the school at the age of nine, the pupils attain standards in reading and writing which are in line with expectations. At both key stages, pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress.
- 73 At both key stages, standards of speaking and listening are good. Pupils listen intently to their teachers and join in with discussion confidently. They listen to stories and instructions carefully, asking appropriate questions and making relevant comments in response to stories. Most listen carefully when other pupils read out their work at the end of lessons.
- 74 By the end of Key Stage 1, the majority of pupils read fluently and with expression. They recognise a satisfactory number of commonly used words by sight, and use a range of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words. These include sounding out letter blends, using pictures and the context of the story. The pupils understand the meaning of words like 'poet' and 'author' and know where to locate them on books and poems. A few pupils express preferences for favourite authors, and most know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. They make satisfactory progress by the time they leave in Year 4, and the majority of pupils read with greater fluency and accuracy and use expression to give meaning to the story. They discuss the plot, showing satisfactory understanding of the stories they read, The pupils know that long stories are divided into chapters and understand

the terms 'character' and 'plot'. They use the school library and access its cataloguing system satisfactorily, as well as contents and index pages, to find information.

- 75 Improving standards in writing was a key issue at the last inspection. The school has introduced several initiatives to improve standards and these have been successful in raising levels to those expected nationally. Strategies include well planned and focused work during the literacy hour, which was introduced several months in advance of the national requirement. The compiling of class books, containing pupils' writing, helps to celebrate their achievements and to raise the status of writing.
- 76 By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils write imaginative stories which show that they understand that stories have a beginning, middle and an end. The majority use capital and full stops with satisfactory accuracy, the more able using exclamation and speech marks. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes, including stories, lists, descriptions, instructions and poems. By the time they leave at the age of nine, most of the pupils use correct grammatical structure in their writing. The use of capital letters and full stops are largely accurate. Pupils show ability to choose words to create particular effects. Pupils writing similes picked suitable words for comparison. Throughout the school, spelling is improving and is satisfactory overall. Pupils know how to find words from dictionaries, word lists and other resources in their classrooms. Standards of presentation vary and are not consistently satisfactory. This was also raised as a concern in the previous inspection report.
- 77 At both key stages, teaching is satisfactory overall, and has some good features. The teachers all show good knowledge of the national literacy strategy and have worked hard to implement it successfully. They teach phonics and basic skills well. Planning shows awareness of what the teachers want the pupils to learn, although this rarely relates to different levels of prior attainment in the class. Where teachers share what is to be learned with the pupils at the start of the lesson, the pupils understand what they are to learn and are more able to evaluate their success afterwards. The teachers manage the whole class sessions very well, often targeting questions at specific pupils to make sure that all are involved and to tailor questions to ensure that all can join in. They value the contributions of all pupils and this gives them confidence to attempt answers, even when they are not sure. The teachers regularly remind the pupils of previous work, so that new learning is put in context.
- 78 Teaching of the whole class at the start of the literacy hour is usually good. Teachers show generally high expectations of what the pupils will learn and pitch the content at suitable levels. A lesson with reception pupils, in which they practised writing a story in sequence, showed high expectation and rigorous intellectual challenge. It combined very good learning about how stories are structured, modelled writing in sentences, using correct punctuation, with practice in reading. Where pupils are encouraged to look for particular word patterns or letter sounds during shared reading, they have an incentive to read carefully and accurately. Sessions at the ends of lessons are often used very well to reinforce new learning and to celebrate the pupils' achievements. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to help the pupils themselves to evaluate their degree of success.
- 79 When pupils move into groups during the literacy hour, the rate of learning often slows. The teachers' planning often does not build so well on the pupils' prior learning and then there is insufficient challenge in the work they are given. This is more often the case for the more able pupils. At times, the pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are given specific help from learning support assistants. Where this is carefully planned to meet the pupils' particular needs, it promotes good quality learning. Close attention is paid to pupils' individual education plans and this helps them to make good progress. At other times, and particularly during whole class teaching, the support assistants have passive roles and do not give additional support to pupils. Teachers expect and achieve high standards of behaviour

from the pupils. Only occasionally, when there is insufficient challenge in the work given, do they become restless or too noisy.

- 80 The testing of pupils' skills in English provides useful information about their progress. The staff are beginning to use this information, for example, in setting targets for pupils, though this is at an early stage of development. Additional support for literacy is provided for some pupils, and the use of volunteer readers contributes effectively to the pupils' interest in and practice of reading. Diaries provide a useful record of books read, and help to keep parents informed of their children's progress. Oral feedback to pupils during lessons is usually helpful in advancing their learning. Written work is usually marked, but the usefulness of marking varies between teachers. At its best, marking refers to the learning intentions for the lesson, lets the pupils know what they have achieved, and sets targets for further development. A new policy for marking has recently been introduced, but this is not yet fully implemented. All pupils take home reading books, and the introduction of reading sacks is very motivating for the younger pupils.
- 81 Word processing is used satisfactorily by pupils to write stories, messages for greetings cards, and labels for work in science. Literacy skills are developed through a good range of activities in other subjects, such as written accounts of educational visits, descriptions in history and lists of items needed for activities in design and technology.
- 82 Although the co-ordinator monitors the medium term planning and has observed some teaching, her role is currently underdeveloped. She has too little knowledge of standards throughout the school, and too few opportunities to influence teaching and learning in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

- 83 The results achieved by seven year olds in last year's national tests were below the national average when compared both with schools nationally and with results in schools where pupils come from similar backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher levels was close to the national average. These results indicate a decline in standards since the last inspection when overall attainment was described as sound at both key stages. However, the action taken to analyse these results and address weaknesses has been successful. Inspection evidence indicates that, by the ages of seven and nine, standards in mathematics are now above the national average. This is attributable to the successful implementation of the national numeracy strategy, the setting of pupils according to their prior attainment, and the very high quality of teaching in Year 2 and Year 4, all of which have made a significant impact on learning at both key stages.
- 84 Trends in results over a three year period suggest that the results for boys in mathematics at Key Stage 1 are below the national trend, while those for girls are close to the national average. However, the analysis of teaching during the inspection found no evidence of gender bias. Girls heavily outnumber boys in Year 2.
- 85 By the age of seven, pupils make good progress in developing their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils in Year 1 confidently recognise numbers and can count on to ten. They identify the value of the number which needs to be added to the base number and are beginning to discover strategies for simple subtraction. Most pupils can count in threes and fives and recognise patterns in the sequence of numbers. Pupils have a good understanding of the months of the year and how the months relate to seasons. More able pupils can accurately match each month to its correct position in the year and readily identify the months which are part of each season. In Year 2, the majority of pupils can count forwards and backwards in a range of numbers. More able pupils enjoy the challenge to devise and discuss methods for adding nine to numbers. Pupils in a high ability class are aware of a variety of ways to classify data, including graphs and Carroll diagrams. They recognise the importance of linking criteria to position when placing data on diagrams. The most able pupils devise their own criteria in problem solving situations and can give sound mathematical reasons for their choices. Pupils produce graphs to show their results when

they roll dice in an investigation on probability. They discuss their results and can explain why certain numbers appear more frequently than others. Less able pupils add and subtract two from two digit numbers. Most can name a range of simple two dimensional shapes, identify lines of symmetry and know that some shapes have more than one line of symmetry. However, difficulties were encountered by some pupils when they were asked to translate shapes from worksheets on to pin boards. Throughout all activities strong emphasis is placed on the correct use of language to describe the work being undertaken, and this provides a good link with literacy.

- 86 Pupils in Year 3 are able to halve even numbers and are aware of the relationship between odd and even numbers. Less able pupils recognise that the same fractional parts can be expressed in a variety of ways. More able pupils in a Year 4 class confidently calculate fractional parts of numbers. They recognise the links between multiplication and division in their work. They enjoy challenges.
- 87 Almost all pupils know the properties of two dimensional shapes. They can describe shapes using the correct language, and challenge each other to identify shapes from their descriptions. They are able to apply their knowledge and draw conclusions in a clear and organised manner. The numeracy strategy is being implemented very effectively. The benefits of improved mental recall and the systematic development of mathematical knowledge and understanding are seen in pupils' approaches to investigative work. Pupils are confident in their approach to mathematics. The guidance provided by the Numeracy Strategy supports teachers in their planning, and this has had a substantial impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- 88 The quality of teaching is at least good in two thirds of the lessons observed, with some examples of very good and excellent teaching. Teachers plan their work carefully and include imaginative and innovative strategies to develop and extend learning. In a Year 4 class, the teacher insisted that pupils and partners test their descriptions of polygons as a quality assurance procedure before sharing them with the class. This encouraged precision in their mathematical thinking and careful consideration of the language they used to describe their work. These two important elements promoted very good quality learning. A feature of an excellent lesson in Year 2 was the very good quality of the structure of the lesson; a review of previous learning provided a platform from which to make further good progress in learning. Clear exposition, using very good quality language at a precise level to match pupils' understanding, combined with appropriate, well focused questioning techniques, maintained pupils' motivation. Well chosen learning resources helped to translate ideas into mathematical transactions. Carefully considered activities which matched the levels of pupils' learning extended pupils and ensured good gains in progress being made by all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Learning support assistants are aware of their roles, and refer to pupils' individual education plans to provide rewarding support for pupils. A very important feature of successful mathematics teaching at this school is the enjoyment in learning through the interaction of teachers with good subject knowledge and highly motivated pupils.
- 89 Much of the success of the good progress made in mathematics is due to the leadership provided by the co-ordinator. A start has been made in enabling the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching of mathematics, though this work has not yet been extended to allow staff to discuss and consider the features required to ensure consistent, successful teaching in the subject. Unfortunately, no opportunities have as yet been provided for teachers to observe the very high quality teaching of the co-ordinator and deputy headteacher.

SCIENCE

- 90 Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave at the age of nine are in line with national averages. Results in the 1999 national teacher assessments at Key Stage 1 indicate that the percentage of pupils achieving the expected Level 2 was in line with national averages and with results in schools where pupils come from similar backgrounds. The exception was in investigative and experimental work, which was well below national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining a higher level was below average overall. Evidence from the lessons observed during the inspection, discussion with pupils and scrutiny of their work and teachers' planning, indicate that attainment in both key stages remains in line with national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make sound progress. Standards overall are similar to those reported at the last inspection, when they were described as sound. Over the last three years standards have risen in line with the national trend.
- 91 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils explain that plants produce seeds for new growth and describe the growing cycle. They discuss seed shapes and sizes and describe their differences and similarities. They know how to sort various materials and can explain what transparent means. The pupils know that light comes from various sources and can be weak or strong. They understand that exercise and diet are important to keeping healthy and that medicines can make you ill instead of better if taken at the wrong time. Evidence from their work shows, for example, the recording of the findings of simple experiments in magnetism.
- 92 By the age of nine, pupils are beginning to show an understanding of air resistance as a force. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Year 4 were finding out how to change the shape of a piece of paper to make it fall at different rates. They are able to make reasonable predictions. They describe what makes a test fair and accurate. The pupils recall previous work, and describe a simple circuit and how to make a bulb light up. They know that some things dissolve in different ways and at different rates. They also explain that the earth goes round the sun and the moon goes round the earth.
- 93 Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is sound overall, and it is sometimes good. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally secure and this enables them to give clear explanations and to promote meaningful discussion. As a result, pupils are willing to offer ideas and suggestions confidently and are not afraid to be wrong. Good questioning helps pupils to clarify their thinking and assists the teachers in checking the pupils' understanding of what is being taught. When praise and feedback is focused on what the pupils are learning, they are secure in what they have achieved and what they can do to improve. Good class control and carefully structured sessions mean that pupils know what is expected of them, work well together and complete tasks with enthusiasm. When they are engaged in practical work, they share, take turns and listen to the ideas of others. In general, there is limited planning for pupils of differing abilities, especially the more able. The same task given to the whole class provides neither sufficient challenge nor motivation for these pupils.
- 94 The co-ordinator has only recently taken on this responsibility and is keen to make changes, especially in the school's approach to planning for the subject. At present, planning is incorporated within each term's topic and this helps pupils to make important links with other subjects. However, teachers now recognise that this does not provide sufficient structure to ensure that pupils progress as well as they could. In addition, there is little evidence of planning for progression in developing pupils' skills and understanding of scientific investigation and experimentation. This means that pupils of different ages and abilities often carry out the same experiment at the same level. Although work is regularly assessed at the end of a topic, the information it provides is not used consistently to build up a picture of the needs of different groups of pupils as they move through the school. The co-ordinator has drawn up a useful plan to review the subject in line with national recommendations. However, there

continues to be little opportunity for her systematically to monitor and influence the quality of provision throughout the school.

ART

- 95 A very small number of art lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements about standards have been made through the additional sampling of teachers' planning, discussion with pupils and sampling displays and pupils' work. By the end of Key Stage 1 and when the pupils leave at the age of nine, standards are similar to those found in other schools, and to those described at the time of the last inspection. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make sound progress over time.
- 96 The youngest pupils describe how to mix colours and have many opportunities to paint and draw pictures, create patterns and experience working with a range of materials. The teaching they receive in the reception classes enables them to name a wide range of colours and to understand how shades are created by mixing colours together. For example, they describe how adding white to red creates pink. In Year 1, pupils draw interesting pictures based on their studies of famous artists, including Renoir and Van Gogh, and describe the techniques and materials they have explored - for example, how effects can be enhanced through the use of fixatives.
- 97 Pupils' observational drawings show increasing detail as they progress through the school. For example, pupils in Year 2, as part of their work in science, looked carefully at sections of a range of fruit. Through the teacher's focused questioning pupils discovered that the arrangements of seeds in different fruits varied in appearance, colour and texture. Pupils worked carefully, to produce drawings which reflected the detail found in fruits. These skills were developed further to enhance the drawings by introducing pupils to painting with water colours. Because the teacher demonstrated how to mix and apply paint with care, the pupils made good progress in developing a new technique; they listened attentively and followed the teacher's example and, as a result, their pictures were detailed and attractive.
- 98 Displays provide examples of the links between art and other subjects. In discussion, pupils describe how they worked co-operatively to illustrate and reflect a range of important events in history - for example, in producing portraits of Queen Boudicca. They use a range of techniques, including pastels and fabric paints in their pictures, some of which enhance the school's public display areas.
- 99 By the age of nine, pupils evaluate their work and identify ways to improve and further develop their skills. Pupils enjoy art and concentrate well to meet the expectations made of them. They show interest in creating pictures and patterns and use tools and equipment sensibly, sharing resources and making constructive comments about each other's work.
- 100 Strengths in the teaching are exemplified by the way in which staff manage pupils' behaviour and organise their classrooms. In one lesson, specific skills and techniques were modelled well and the teacher made appropriate use of questioning to encourage pupils to reflect on their work. Weaknesses in the teaching arise when the allocation of time for art is shared with other subjects and the precise focus for learning becomes confused. The full impact of the quality of the teaching is not reflected in pupils' progress due to the reduced time allocation for art in the light of national initiatives. The reliance on a topic based approach to teaching the art curriculum restricts the opportunities for structured progression in knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 101 The art co-ordinator has recently taken over the responsibility for developing art, and revisions to the curriculum are drafted in line with national guidelines and the revised curriculum. A portfolio containing examples of pupils' work and photographic evidence is an identified area for

development to provide guidance in assessing pupils' progress. The local cluster of schools is developing an exciting initiative which draws together work samples from local primary and secondary schools. A range of drawings, pictures and three dimensional art is to be displayed at nearby Blenheim Palace, to celebrate pupils' achievements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 102 Very few lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are based on the observation of some teaching, scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and when pupils leave at age nine, are similar to those found in other schools. This reflects the findings of the previous inspection, when standards were described as sound. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, attain appropriate standards in relation to their abilities and make sound progress.
- 103 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils produce a simple design and know that this helps to clarify what needs to be done. They select appropriate material from a particular range and use tools safely. They are able to make sensible suggestions for improvement when given the opportunity. For example, in discussion, pupils in Year 2 described how they drew a design for a model flower which showed what it would look like and what they would use to make it. They had sensible ideas about what they might have changed to make it better - for example, using stronger glue. At age nine, pupils outline design ideas and label diagrams carefully. For example, in a study of rainforests, pupils in Year 4 designed an imaginary suitcase for a young explorer and gave sensible reasons for the choice of contents. When they made a stirrer for a tropical drink, they could explain why some of the material chosen from a limited range did not work. At this stage, too few opportunities are given to pupils to follow through their design ideas by actually making and evaluating a finished product.
- 104 Where teaching is good, teachers display secure subject knowledge and have high expectations of the pupils' work and behaviour. They show good understanding of safety issues. As a result, pupils know what to do and work safely and sensibly together, sharing tools, materials and ideas. They enjoy the activities and can see the value of developing a design idea first. The teachers question the pupils skilfully and encourage them to evaluate their work effectively. Pupils are then willing to ask questions and to make changes, and display pride in their finished work. Unsatisfactory teaching is largely a result of a lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject requirements. The tasks are too directed by the teacher and pupils do not have enough opportunity to show initiative or to develop their own ideas. In most lessons, the good behaviour of the pupils supports their learning. On a minority of occasions, pupils become bored and lose interest when the task is not appropriate to their level of ability or when they are confused about what they are supposed to do.
- 105 The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and determined to improve the current status of the subject. However, insufficient consideration is given to monitoring how the subject is being planned and taught, with too much being left to the discretion of individual teachers. Throughout the school, the planned activities do not provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to work with a range of tools and materials, carry out their own research to produce designs, make informed decisions or evaluate and refine as they proceed. The activities do not take appropriate account of the different ages and abilities of the pupils. Design and technology is often linked to work in science or art and there is insufficient understanding of the differing requirements of these subjects.

GEOGRAPHY

- 106 Only two lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based on the observation of some teaching, looking at teachers' planning and pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and when pupils leave at age nine, are similar to those found in other schools. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, attain appropriate standards in relation to their abilities and make satisfactory progress. Although there was also little opportunity in the previous inspection to observe lessons, the findings indicated that standards were satisfactory.

- 107 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are familiar with the significant features of a simple map and most are able to use a key to locate these. They become increasingly confident in using co-ordinates and symbols. For example, pupils in Year 2 draw and interpret an imaginary map, using symbols for such features as forest, bay, village and mountain. They name the major local amenities and describe different types of housing. They are aware of the need to look after the environment and describe some of the issues concerning rubbish disposal. When discussing their work, pupils in Year 4 describe different weather conditions and have some understanding of their effect on the environment. For example, they talk about a project on the rainforests and discuss how important the trees are in keeping the air fresh. They describe the similarities and differences between a local village and their city.
- 108 In the lessons observed, teachers had well-prepared resources and this helped to focus pupils' attention and support their understanding of the work. Teachers show secure subject knowledge and use appropriate vocabulary to explain what pupils are to do. Discussions are lively and, as a result, pupils are keen to be involved. For some pupils, the introduction is too long and they begin to lose concentration. Relationships are very positive and, therefore, pupils work well together, sharing ideas and resources. Teachers make effective use of questions to check pupils' understanding, and pupils respond confidently.
- 109 The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and experienced and has a clear understanding of what needs to be done. She has already drawn up plans to make changes in line with national recommendations. However, overall, her role is underdeveloped. As yet she has had little opportunity to check how well the subject is being taught, or to focus attention on raising standards. The subject is well supported by carefully considered resource packs and by a stimulating range of field visits and trips.

HISTORY

- 110 Judgements about standards in history have been made through a small number of lesson observations, the sampling of pupils' work and conversations with pupils. By the end of Key Stage 1 and when they leave at the age of nine, pupils' achievements are similar to those found in other schools. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, attain satisfactory standards in relation to their abilities and make sound progress. At both key stages, standards are similar to those described at the time of the last inspection.
- 111 History is taught as part of a series of topic-based units of study. The frequent long gaps between the teaching of history in block units, mean that pupils find it hard to sustain the knowledge and skills they have been taught, and this results in the revisiting of skills and concepts before new learning can be introduced. For example, pupils confuse their learning between periods of history and, at times, are unsure of the differences between history and geography. One pupil was able to talk about Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot but was confused about the names of the Parliament buildings in England and America.
- 112 In the one lesson observed with young pupils at Key Stage 1, the teacher made good use of a story to teach history. In telling the story, the teacher showed how the factual events on which the story of The Pied Piper of Hamelin is thought to be based have been retold in different ways. The story was read expressively, and this aroused the pupils' interest and they listened intently. The questioning focused well on historical language such as 'doublet', 'Middle Ages' and 'gilders'. This enabled the pupils to make good progress in understanding how types of money and styles of clothing identified periods of time and enabled them to talk about similarities and differences between lifestyles.

- 113 Discussions with pupils aged nine shows that they have a sound knowledge of different periods of history. They describe features of Celtic life, such as what the Celts ate, the type of homes they lived in, the features of life in farming communities, and their customs. They compare periods of history and recognise, for example, that many Romans were trained soldiers or engineers, that they constructed Hadrian's wall and had centrally heated homes. They identify towns of Roman origin such as St Albans, Colchester and Chester. Their knowledge is enhanced through educational visits to places of historical interest.. By listening to stories, pupils describe the lives of famous people such as Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale. They know that conditions in the past were different from those of the present day, both in the way that people lived and how they were cared for.
- 114 Pupils show positive attitudes to history. They answer questions thoughtfully and are eager to talk about their learning. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to undertake independent research to apply their knowledge and skills in a wider context. Good features emerge from the links made with literacy and other subjects, such as in the choice of 'The December Rose', which describes the adventures of a Victorian chimney sweep, as a text for the 'reading club'. Current planning does not help pupils gain an understanding of history as a subject in its own right, nor does it provide guidance to help teachers build progression securely into the pupils' learning. However, the curriculum is currently under review in the light of new national guidance.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 115 Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and when the pupils leave at the age of nine, are similar to those expected nationally. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make progress which is at least satisfactory. At Key Stage 1, pupils use the mouse confidently to move icons around the screen. They are familiar with the keyboard and use the space bar, delete and return keys. They use the shift key to select capital letters when writing their names and control the mouse well when choosing colours and designs from art software. Most pupils know how to print their work. They learn to log on and off and to shut down the computer. Pupils making messages to put in cards for Mothers' Day made good progress in learning how to change the font size. Headphones are provided in classrooms, and though none was seen in use during the inspection, the pupils are able describe how to use them. They make satisfactory progress in developing skills in control technology as they program directions into a roamer.
- 116 At Key Stage 2, the pupils are more adept when using the keyboard. They are beginning to use editing skills, such as highlighting text before deleting it, and using cutting and pasting as a means of moving text around. They follow a series of instructions closely when making frame borders using a publishing program, and show increasing skill as they plan their work with a finished product in mind. The pupils treat computers properly and take turns well. They are enthusiastic about their work and remain very focused on their tasks.
- 117 Standards in information technology were unsatisfactory at the time of the last inspection, and raising them was a key issue for the school. The school has worked hard and successfully to make better provision. It has used money from the National Grid for Learning to set up a computer room. Classes are now timetabled to work there regularly, and this is having a positive effect on standards. The staff are aware of gaps in their own knowledge and are beginning training in order to improve their expertise.

- 118 Teaching is satisfactory. The teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are generally appropriate. However, they usually teach the whole class the same skills when using the computer room, and thus no allowance is made for the pupils' prior attainment, nor what they have learned at home. This is partly a reflection of the teachers' current levels of expertise and the newness of this resource. The teachers give very clear demonstrations using the large screen and this enables pupils to learn new skills quickly. During a demonstration of how to make frames and borders, the pupils were suitably involved in using the mouse and in discussion. Usually, demonstration is followed by opportunities to practise new skills on the computer, and this supports good learning. For example, in a lesson about making frames and borders, the teacher introduced new skills at a good pace throughout the lesson, and this enabled the pupils to apply what they had just learned and make good progress. At the end of this lesson pupils were able to answer far more questions than they could at the start. The teachers make satisfactory use of information technology to support learning in other subjects, such as geography and design and technology.
- 119 The co-ordinator is well aware of the development needs of the subject and recognises the shortcomings of the present planning and the lack of effective assessment procedures. She realises that she does not have sufficient knowledge of standards throughout the school. Currently, however, there are insufficient opportunities for her to influence teaching and learning in the subject.

MUSIC

- 120 Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and when the pupils leave at the age of nine, are similar to those found in other schools. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, attain satisfactory standards in relation to their abilities. At both key stages, pupils listen to music attentively and make suitable comments about it. Pupils in Year 1, listening to the 'Carnival of the Animals', made good attempts to identify which animal was being represented. They identify some of the instruments they hear. No work on the composing or performing elements of music was seen during the inspection, but discussion with pupils and analysis of their work show satisfactory standards in composing musical patterns and using symbols to record their music.
- 121 In Years 3 and 4, the pupils listen to music with good levels of concentration and use their imaginations well in responding. After listening to peaceful music, they suggested such images as a castle in a mist, a spring day or dolphins swimming in the sea.. They use untuned percussion instruments satisfactorily to compose music which creates a particular mood. At both key stages, standards in singing are satisfactory, though often lacking in enthusiasm. All pupils have the opportunity to learn to play the recorder, and those that do make good progress. A few pupils benefit from violin lessons and this enhances their learning in school.
- 122 The school has maintained the sound standards reported at the last inspection. The listening and appraising aspects of music remain a strength and are taught more effectively than the composing and performing elements. Resources have improved and are now satisfactory.
- 123 Teaching in music is satisfactory. Teachers use taped music skilfully, stopping the tape appropriately to draw the pupils' attention to particular features, to prompt discussion, or to focus their listening. This encourages pupils to listen and it stimulates and maintains their interest. This is a particular strength at both key stages. Teachers give very clear instructions so that pupils know exactly what to listen for. Occasionally, the timing of lessons is such that pupils have too little time to compose their percussion pieces or to perform them. The current written guidance for teachers does not help them to plan for progression in the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

- 124 The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and has a good understanding of how the subject needs to develop. She has thorough and detailed plans for raising standards in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 125 During the inspection, lessons were observed in gymnastics, games and dance. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1, and when pupils leave at age nine, are similar to those found in other schools. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make progress which is at least satisfactory and is often good. Records show that in swimming, standards are above these expectations. In the previous inspection, standards were sound in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. The school feels that the reduction in the time now available for the subject has adversely affected the previous higher standards.
- 126 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils demonstrate satisfactory body control and imaginative and safe use of space and equipment. For example, pupils in a Year 2 class were able to show a variety of ways to throw, catch and control a ball and to apply this to devising a game with a partner. They are able to move lightly and sensibly when running and show good control when landing from a jump. At age nine, pupils can sustain vigorous activity in games and demonstrate good co-ordination when practising football skills. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups, play fairly and recognise the need for rules. When they are given the opportunity to evaluate and improve their performance, pupils respond confidently and are supportive and encouraging to each other. Generally, pupils' knowledge of the positive effects of exercise on their bodies is less well developed.
- 127 Where teaching is good, the sessions are well planned, have a consistent structure and proceed at a good pace. As a result, pupils change quickly, know what is expected and respond enthusiastically to the routines. Little time is lost in having to repeat instructions or check behaviour. Teachers make good use of pupil demonstration and give constructive, focused feedback. In the better lessons, therefore, pupils respond with a high level of energy and enthusiasm and are keen to practise and improve their skills. Teachers set a good example in their attitude and dress, and this has a positive effect on the pupils. Where teachers are less confident, the planned session does not include an appropriate warm-up activity or provide enough sustained physical exertion. Pupils are therefore not able to limber up properly nor sufficiently increase their circulation rate. When the hall is cold, this is particularly concerning. In these lessons, feedback is focused more on good behaviour than on improving performance, so that pupils are unsure how to refine and develop their skills.
- 128 Through successful bids and grants, the subject is very well resourced and the accommodation is very good. An after school tennis club is well attended. As an experienced co-ordinator, the headteacher is keen to ensure that the subject makes an important contribution to pupils' overall development. For this to happen, his expertise needs to be shared throughout the school to ensure greater consistency and confidence in teaching. At present there is no structured approach to monitoring standards or teaching in this subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 129 Judgements about standards in religious education have been made through a small number of lesson observations, the sampling of pupils' work and conversations with pupils. By the end of Key Stage 1 and when the pupils leave at the age of nine, attainment meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils with special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Standards overall are below those described at the time of the last inspection, when attainment at Key Stage 1 exceeded the local requirements.

- 130 By the time they are in Year 2, pupils know about special books such as the Bible and the Qu'ran. Pupils show understanding that different faith groups have different practices, may wear different clothes and have special sacred artefacts which must be treated with respect. They know that holy books give guidance and rules for living. Religious education supports moral development; for example, understanding that breaking rules may have an effect on others. By the age of nine, pupils talk about the Ten Commandments and the Five Pillars of Islam. Through celebrations, they are aware of the reasons for Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter. They know that other faiths have festivals such as Ramadan and Divali. Pupils understand that people of different faiths worship in different ways. Pupils in Year 4 talk about important customs of the Islamic faith - for example, fasting, and the importance of visiting Mecca before death. Overall, the pupils make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of religions as they move through the school, and pupils with special needs receive appropriate support.
- 131 The quality of teaching in the very small number of lessons observed was satisfactory. Teachers ask focused questions which enable pupils to extend their thinking. Pupils respond positively in lessons and have very good attitudes to learning. They are keen to participate in question and answer sessions. When answering questions they take turns. At times, the teachers' subject knowledge lacks depth, and opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge are missed. Although pupils are taught by teachers with particular interests in world religions, overall, most teachers have not yet received the appropriate training to improve their subject knowledge and expertise, and this is a weakness.
- 132 Resources are of good quality and represent a broad range of world religions. This provision is enhanced by inviting outside speakers to talk to pupils and draw their attention to similarities and differences between religious beliefs and life styles.