

INSPECTION REPORT

FIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Watford, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117160

Headteacher: Mrs J. Henley

Reporting inspector: Mr V. Johnson
3603

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

Inspection number: 191469

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11 Years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G. Greenstreet
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd December 1996

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		Music	2.1 The school's results and pupils' achievements
			4. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			7. How well is the school led and managed?
			8. What should the school do to improve further?
Ros Wingrove	Lay inspector		2.2 Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			5. How well does the school care for its pupils?
			6. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Roy Griffiths	Team inspector	English	Special educational needs
		Information Technology	
		Physical Education	
Gill Battarbee	Team inspector	Science	3. How well are pupils taught?
		Art	English as an additional language
		Design Technology	
Pauline Cue	Team inspector	Geography	Equal opportunities
		History	
		Religious Education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Field Junior School caters for children aged between seven and eleven and is located near the centre of Watford, adjacent to Watford Fields. The school is housed in extensive Victorian buildings including the former St James' Church. It is a school of average size, with 238 pupils on roll at the time of the inspection. About a quarter of the children come from minority ethnic groups and of these about half are Pakistani and a fifth Black African. A relatively high number of pupils, (48), have English as an additional language and of these six are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The main languages spoken other than English are Bahari, Urdu, Hindi and Gujerati. Just over 20 per cent of the children are known to be eligible for free school meals but in previous years this figure has been consistently higher than the national average. 65 pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and of these 21 are at the higher stages. Two pupils currently have statements of special educational needs, a figure just above the national average. Pupil mobility is high: in the last school year, 22 children joined and 17 left at times other than those normal for admission and leaving. Children come from families with a broad range of social backgrounds and they live in a mixture of rented, privately owned and local-authority housing. Most pupils transfer from the nearby Field Infant School. Attainment on entry varies from year group to year group but is currently a little below the national average, as it often has been in the past. The school was inspected at a time of change, a few weeks after the retirement of its former long-serving headteacher, the promotion to another school of one senior staff member and very early in the life of an almost completely new governing body.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a rapidly improving school. It has a powerful new professional leadership team and mainly high-quality teaching. Standards are rising and should continue to do so if the monitoring of pupils' performance is improved and current progress towards targets is maintained, tracked and any slippage responded to. This has happened recently, particularly in maths and English. The leadership in aspects of artistic education in the school, music, art, dance and drama is very strong, and the school is well placed to capitalise on its rich curriculum. Recently, standards in the core subjects have been low and the school is very aware of this. Staff have now taken effective action to improve standards and the impact is already being seen. Standards in other parts of the curriculum are at least in line with national expectations and are good in art, music and physical education, particularly at the upper end of the school. The new governing body has great potential and members are aware there is much to be done; some of this may require different styles of leadership. Overall, the school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- There is a powerful new professional leadership team
- The whole staff team is purposeful, cohesive and forward-looking
- There is a shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed
- Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are good and pupils' social development is very good
- There is much good teaching and learning in the school
- The school has maintained its well-established, caring approach
- Standards in art, music and physical education are high
- The curriculum is broad and well supported by an extensive programme of visits and activities
- There is good provision for special educational needs and English as an additional language

What could be improved

- Standards in English writing across the curriculum
- Standards of the presentation of work
- The governing body's role in the strategic management of the school and its communication with parents
- The roles of some subject co-ordinators in monitoring planning and standards
- The monitoring of standards, and particularly the analysis, evaluation and reporting of data
- Information to parents about their children's standards and how they can best help them learn

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

At the time of the last inspection, **standards** in English were on course to achieve national expectations. Since then they have dipped significantly, particularly in 1999. Standards have improved again, especially in speaking and listening, and in reading. In mathematics many areas have shown improvement, particularly in data handling and the use and application of maths. This is directly linked to improvements in the teaching and the management of the subject. The school has focused hard this year on the under-achievement in science, and standards of work now show a significant rise in attainment, partly as a result of improvements in planning and teaching. Standards in music, art and information technology have all improved.

The following Key Issues were highlighted in the last inspection. **Assessment and record keeping** have shown some improvement, but some continuing weaknesses are only now being addressed. **Marking** has improved but there is still considerable inconsistency, particularly in the lower part of the school. **Monitoring the quality of teaching** is much better, the quality has improved overall but there are still significant variations. **Teachers' understanding and use of learning objectives** have improved, particularly in English and maths, but there is still further work to do in understanding and ensuring **progression** in some parts of the school and in some areas of the curriculum. The school is now targeting **good-to-average and high attainers** with some success, but recognises the need for more work on this. **School development plans** have improved but further improvements, particularly in the processes of planning, are necessarily in hand. Overall, there have been improvements in many areas, but these come after a period of some lack of progress, particularly in standards.

The last action plan was not clear or comprehensive enough to address all the important elements of the Key Issues, and there has been some lack of vigour in concentrating on pupil achievement. There has been, however, significant improvement in the past year or so, strongly helped by the appointment of new staff. Good recent senior management team appointments have re-invigorated and sharpened the search for improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	C	E	E
Mathematics	B	C	E	E
Science	C	C	E*	E*

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Performance in English and mathematics in 1999 was well below the national average and levels achieved by similar schools. Performance in last year's science tests was well below the national average at Level 4 and in the lowest 5 per cent at Level 5 and when compared with other schools. Taking the last four years together, performance in English and maths was close to the national average but science was below. The trend from 1996 to 1999 was one of standards declining against national averages, in part but not wholly explained by changes in the composition of year groups, with more pupils with special educational needs, higher mobility and more pupils joining the school with relatively lower levels of attainment.

The inspection evidence suggests that standards in English are now average overall. They are above average in listening and speaking, average in reading but below average in writing. There has been a marked improvement in standards this year, particularly at the upper end of the school. The current Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve challenging targets, and Year 5 pupils to attain results that are better than in recent years. Standards in maths are improving fast. Almost all attainment seen during the inspection was average or better and both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils seem well placed to achieve at least the targets set. This should bring them close to the national average this year and next. During the last year the school has focused on the under-achievement in science. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm there has been a significant rise in attainment, resulting in standards which are now just below the national average. Standards in art are high throughout the school and in music and physical education are high, particularly at the upper end of the school. Standards in all other subjects are in line with national expectations. The school recognises that standards have been low recently and are still not high enough in the core subjects, particularly in writing and in aspects of presentation. Inspection evidence suggests that overall improvements in the quality of teaching and in the provision for English and maths particularly, with a greater focus on achievement and target setting, have shown significant impact in recent months.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to life in the school, to their work and to the broad range of activities offered are overwhelmingly positive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour, both in classes and around the school is very good. Some restlessness occurs in the very few lessons where the pace of work is slower.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils are given and accept responsibility within the school and relationships are generally very good.
Attendance	Attendance levels are above the national average and unauthorised absence is below but there are a few cases of persistent lateness.

Good behaviour in every facet of school life is a major strength of the school. Pupils are keen to come to school and take part in the rich curriculum that is offered. Their relationships with adults, visitors and their peers are very good and they readily accept responsibility, for example, within the School Council. Most of the children are well mannered, considerate, confident, hard-working students, but on a few occasions, particularly when the pace in lessons is slow, there is some restlessness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 7-11 Years
Lessons seen overall	Good

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

Teaching is a strength of the school. In the great majority of lessons the quality of teaching is good or better. The best teaching, at the upper end of the school, is dynamic, exciting and highly effective. In general, teachers are confident in their subject knowledge, have high expectations of behaviour and organise well-paced lessons. Learning objectives are carefully explained to pupils and time targets for completing work are a regular feature of the programme. Pupils are given a clear understanding of the context of their work and how subjects relate to each other. Teachers use good questioning techniques, and support their pupils with praise and encouragement. Overall, the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy lessons is good. Support staff make a valuable contribution, they are well deployed and they ensure that all pupils are able to take a full part in the lessons. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, resulting in pupils who are confident and able to concentrate well. In many instances, however, insufficiently high expectations are set and made clear to pupils for the standard of written work and presentation. Standards of marking vary enormously and in many cases the marking does not support pupils' learning. Where teaching is less strong the level of challenge is also too low and well within the capability of some pupils, who, consequently, are not stretched. The few unsatisfactory lessons lack a brisk pace and in some instances pupil contributions to lessons are not recognised, resulting in pupils becoming de-motivated and occasionally misbehaving.

Overall, 93 per cent of the teaching observed in lessons was satisfactory or better, 57 per cent was good or better and 24 per cent very good, with a small percentage of that being excellent. The remaining 7 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a rich curriculum to its pupils. It is enhanced by the use of the school grounds, the local area, day visits further afield and residential visits, as well as a very wide range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, most of whom make good progress. The quality of support work is high.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language, most of whom make good progress. The quality of teaching and support work is high.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good. In particular, there is very good provision for children's social development across the curriculum, through extra-curricular activities, and through the way that the school is run. This is a strength of the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very caring environment where teachers know and encourage the children. The way children care for one another is a strength of the school. Academic progress in English and maths is satisfactorily assessed. Children of all abilities are well supported. The school has very good procedures relating to child protection and to ensuring pupils' welfare.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The newly appointed headteacher provides good leadership, very ably supported by her new deputy and another recently appointed member of the senior management team. Together they make a very powerful leadership team which is well focused on improving standards throughout the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The newly formed governing body fulfils its statutory duties well but has yet to play a significant part in shaping the direction of the school, for example, by taking an active part in the school development planning process. It takes insufficient account of performance data and does not yet have systems for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It needs to become more openly accountable to parents.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring of teaching and learning is sound and improving rapidly. Until very recently there has been insufficient analysis, evaluation and reporting of key pupil performance data, but the school is well aware of this and is acting on it. The roles of some curriculum co-ordinators are too limited.
The strategic use of resources	Sound use is made of the buildings, human and financial resources. The school is at an early stage of applying the principles of best value but, overall, provides sound value for money.

The inspection took place at a time of great change for the school, which has had several significant changes to its leadership and management, after a very stable period under the previous long-serving and well-respected headteacher. The newly appointed head and deputy headteacher form a very powerful new partnership, well supported by other recently appointed senior staff and active, very committed, but less experienced members. This cohesive, forward-looking team is already having a substantial impact on standards through raising expectations. The team has focused most recently on raising the quality of teaching and curriculum provision, particularly for English and maths. This has been achieved without loss of the school's generally very caring ethos, or its deserved reputation for effective work with pupils with English as an additional language and those having special educational needs.

There are some important weaknesses, however. The monitoring of standards is at a very early stage of development, particularly the extent to which co-ordinators are involved, and data is not well analysed, evaluated and reported. The governing body, which has only recently been reconstituted and has had to focus immediately on making new senior appointments, has been seen as rather remote from parents and overprotective of the school. It has had little involvement in shaping the direction of the school and has neither requested nor received sufficient information to enable it to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in standards, teaching and learning. New ways of working are being sought, particularly by the new parent governors and others keen for greater openness and involvement in key areas of the life of the school.

Staffing levels are good, and the school is well supported by hard-working and competent ancillary staff. The accommodation is very spacious and provides a very good range of specialist areas, many of which have been well maintained and enhanced in recent years. Learning resources are good overall, but the library stock is in need of the planned further investment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is caring and supportive • Children are encouraged to behave well • New energy and enthusiasm • The open door policy and approachable teachers • Excellent extra-curricular activities and visits • Good support for children with learning difficulties • Improvements in maths teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater concentration on raising standards • Consistent implementation of the behaviour and bullying policy • Better communications with the governors • Consistent implementation of the homework policy • More information particularly about achievement and how they can help their children learn

51 questionnaires were returned and 16 parents attended the meeting with inspectors. As will be clear from the rest of this summary, the inspection team supports all the positive views expressed by parents. It also confirms the need for continuing the focus on raising standards, to which the school is already committed. The team judges that the behaviour and bullying policies are generally applied consistently and effectively. Communication with the governing body is in need of improvement and the newly agreed homework policy is not yet consistently applied. The school is making increasingly greater effort to inform parents about curriculum matters, the targets and achievements of pupils, but this is not yet consistently the case and the new leadership team is committed to working even more closely with parents on the partnership.

Evidence from the questionnaires suggests that most parents are confident that the school is providing a good education for their children and are generally well informed about it. A significant minority of parents and most who came to the parents' meeting felt there was much more the school could do in this area. These parents feel they have insufficient involvement in their children's learning at school and would like more information to enable them to support more at home. Inspection evidence overall suggests that the school already works reasonably well with its parent body and has recently extended its provision of regular information to include, for example, curriculum evenings, but plans further developments. The governing body's relationship with parents is not yet sufficiently open and encouraging of appropriate challenge. Parents give good support to the school through the Parents' Association.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school varies from year group to year group but is currently a little below the national average for children at the beginning of Key Stage 2 as it often has been in the past. Recently, standards in the core subjects have been low and the school is very aware of this. Performance in English and mathematics in 1999 was well below the national average and when compared with similar schools. Performance in last year's science tests was low overall for those children reaching Level 4 and in the lowest 5 per cent at Level 5 and when compared with other similar schools. Taking the last four years together, performance in English and maths was close to the average but science was below. The trend from 1996 to 1999 was one of standards declining against national averages, in part but not wholly explained by changes in the composition of year groups, with more pupils with special educational needs, higher mobility and more pupils joining the school with relatively lower initial levels of attainment.

2. The inspection evidence suggests that standards in **English** are now average overall. They are above average in listening and speaking, average in reading but below average in writing. There has been a marked improvement in standards of literacy this year, particularly at the upper end of the school. The current Year 6 pupils are on course to achieve challenging targets, and Year 5 pupils to attain results that are much better than in recent years. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils took part in a debate for which they were well prepared through studies in class. They demonstrated a deep understanding of the issues under discussion, expressed their ideas clearly and with conviction, reflected on each other's point of view and were sensitive and thoughtful. Confidence and fluency in **reading** is average overall but ranges from high to low levels. Pupils of all abilities show interest and enthusiasm for reading and articulate their tastes and interests well. Their ability to understand and retain information varies from well above average to below, but they all make connections between what they read, their own experiences and their prior learning. Standards in **writing** are generally lower, and skills are not well developed. Sentence structure is often weak, handwriting is erratic and pupils do not use punctuation well enough for their age. Plans to concentrate efforts on this are appropriate.

3. Standards in mathematics are improving fast. Almost all attainment seen during the inspection was average or better and both Year 5 and Year 6 pupils seem well placed to achieve at least the challenging targets set. This should bring them close to the national average this year and next when they may exceed it. Many of the children throughout the school, but particularly at the upper end, are confident to calculate mentally, to estimate, to make and support hypotheses and to use correctly a full range of appropriate mathematical language. There is particularly good work on handling data throughout the school. While the quality of much of the work on display is high, samples of work show that standards of presentation in the subject have often been, and in some cases still are, too low. There are many rather untidy exercise books and too many disorganised collections of rather scrappy worksheets, some of doubtful value.

4. During the last year the school has focused on the under-achievement in **science**. The standards of work seen during the inspection confirm there has been a significant rise in attainment, resulting in standards which are now just below the national average. Pupils are now able to set up experiments, ask challenging questions and describe ways in which to set up fair tests such as those in Year 5 establishing conditions for plant growth or the Bouncing Ball test in Year 6. However, the standards in investigative science remain below the national average. Attainment in Life Processes and Living Things is above national expectations. All the pupils are able to talk about the functions of the human body vital organs and describe the parts and functions of flowering plants. In Materials and their Properties and Physical Processes, pupils achieve an average level with some aspects of their work being above national expectations, such as the good understanding of evaporation and condensation, and the formation of shadows and position of the sun, demonstrated by Year 6 pupils.

5. Pupils who have English as an additional language make good progress and currently achieve standards slightly below the national average in English, maths and science.

6. In **information technology**, standards are in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. They are now good in relation to word processing and data handling but are weaker in control, monitoring and modelling. Pupils are familiar with computers and confident in their use. They demonstrate good prior knowledge and extensive experience of word processing and desktop publishing, for example, in producing the 'Year 6 News' bulletin. They choose fonts and colours of text; they highlight text and use the spell check. They are familiar with the use of 'wizards' and incorporate pictures using clipart and digital imaging. They have good technical vocabulary and can access the Internet, search, input, retrieve and interrogate information.

7. Standards in **art** are high throughout the school. In the upper school, sketching, drawing and painting are well above national expectations. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are now able to talk about famous artists such as Seurat and they also learn about art from other periods in history, such as the Roman mosaics Year 3 discussed before trying out their own design. Art displays around the school are well presented and attractive. Work from all the age groups is presented, and although it varies in quality from satisfactory to very good, it highlights the high profile of the arts throughout the work of the school.

8. Standards in **music** are also high, particularly at the upper end of the school. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Children are learning a great deal about styles of music, the influence of various composers and traditions. They are encouraged to work hard on structure as they appraise music and then apply what they have learned in their own compositions. This they do very effectively. Additional help for keen and more able musicians is provided through opportunities for specialist support in lessons and in the choir. In these sessions the standards are very high. Children sing well in class lessons and reasonably well in assemblies. Standards achieved by the choir are excellent and have impact on the appreciation and enjoyment of music throughout the school.

9. In **physical education** standards are also high, particularly at the upper end of the school. Pupils respond positively to the variety of challenges that are set, refine their performance and demonstrate increasing control and accuracy. Throughout the school pupils plan, perform and evaluate their work and apply physical and creative effort as, for example, seen in a gymnastics lesson where pupils made good symmetrical balances, paired sequences and mirror images. Pupils showed imagination, confidence and a good level of prior knowledge and understanding. They generally achieve well and demonstrate clear progression in the acquisition of skills, as, for example, in a games lessons where there was evidence of an increased appreciation of catching and fielding techniques and improving competence. In another lesson, pupils had progressed from working at close quarters to more extended distances. Pupils co-operate well and work purposefully, for example, in a good dance lesson they increased their skills and understanding in groups, produced a short performance which was of a good standard and which they shared in turn with the rest of the class.

10. Standards in all other subjects are in line with national expectations and further detail will be found in the relevant subject sections.

11. The school recognises that standards have been low recently and are still not high enough in the core subjects, particularly in writing and in aspects of presentation. Inspection evidence suggests that overall improvements in the quality of teaching and in the provision for English and maths particularly, with a greater focus on achievement and target setting, have shown significant impact on standards in recent months.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour in class and around the school are excellent. The school provides a good climate for learning and the children are considerate, confident and hardworking. Pupils for whom English is an additional language have very good, and occasionally excellent, attitudes towards their learning. All pupils are enthusiastic, very well behaved and are involved in a wide range of the activities offered by the school. The pupils form very good relationships with each other and with adults.

13. Parents confirm that their children are very keen to come to school, attracted by the broad and balanced curriculum and the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them, such as chess, drama, choir and gardening. Excellent after-school sporting activities include netball, sailing, girls' football and basketball. Year 6 pupils have a booster class to help revise for their SATs. Some children are able to learn Urdu, Spanish or have additional lunchtime English classes. The school arranges many visits to theatres, museums and other educational venues and also takes pupils from all years on residential visits. Visitors come to the school frequently. The children's ability to recognise and name instruments playing in a recorded jazz item was the result of a visit to the school by four professional musicians shortly before Easter. All these activities are well supported and pupils' personal development and academic studies are greatly enhanced by them.

14. Pupils pay very good attention to what is being taught in class, they work on their own or in groups, and their perseverance is very good. They are quick to answer questions, do not call out but raise their hands and wait to be asked. Sometimes, they are encouraged to challenge the obvious view with thought-provoking statements, for example in a literacy class where children were reading dialogue between hedgehogs, the statement that animals do not speak was challenged by a child who reminded the class that dolphins do communicate. Other pupils then gave examples of more species that are known to do so. Whole classes settle down quickly and quietly when they are given work to do in their ability groups. In the few lessons which did not move at a good pace, some children were seen to become restless.

15. When moving around the school, in assemblies and at lunchtime, the children behave in an orderly way and hardly ever need reminders to do so. They have very good manners, are polite and courteous. On a number of occasions children were seen to hold doors open for other children and receive an audible "Thank-you". Although conversation became a little loud at times, behaviour in the dining halls was very good indeed, and children know the routines well. Pupils form an orderly queue and are polite to dining room staff. Hardly any food was on the floor when the hall was cleared.

16. Relationships in the school are very good. Many children told inspectors how much they liked their school and teachers. Pupils from all age groups, both sexes and all the various ethnic groups in the school play well together and help one another when necessary. It was noticeable how children assisted their colleagues who have mobility problems and dealt with any who had minor accidents at playtime. Older pupils take on responsibilities around the school and Year 6 pupils act as "buddies" to whom others can take their troubles, but on occasion this does not work when the "buddy" does not take the role seriously. When it is wet, younger children have two Year 6 pupils as well as their allocated supervisory staff watching over and helping them. Again this encourages mutual dependence and responsibility.

17. Good opportunities are given in discussions and circle time for pupils to show that they do understand how much their actions can affect other people, and they have done much to raise money for charities. There was no evidence of bullying or anti-social behaviour in the school, although there were reports of some in previous years. There has been only one short exclusion in the past year which was for poor attitude rather than bullying. There is a School Council to which two pupils from each class are appointed by their classmates and/or teachers and serve for one year. The Council has been successful in making a number of useful suggestions.

18. Attendance levels are above the national average and unauthorised absence is below, but there are a few cases of persistent lateness which the school is doing its best to deal with. Lessons begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching is a strength of the school. Overall, 93 per cent of the teaching observed in lessons is satisfactory or better. 57 per cent of teaching is good or better and 24 per cent is very good with a small percentage of that being excellent. The remaining 7 per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection when teaching was reported as being broadly satisfactory. 80 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better and 40 per cent was good or better. At that time no teaching was observed to be excellent and 20 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with the predominance of very good and excellent teaching in the upper school. Although the overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection the difference in quality between the upper and lower school remains.

20. In the great majority of lessons the quality of teaching is satisfactory or good. In these lessons teachers have good subject knowledge across the areas of the curriculum, they plan and organise lessons well and have a good range of teaching strategies to draw on. Lessons are well paced and support staff contribute effectively. The management of pupils is very good and everyone has high expectations of pupil behaviour. Pupils respond well to this, they behave very well, remain on task and are interested in their work. Pupils co-operate well and make good progress. However, in some lessons, teachers do not give pupils explicit high expectations for the work that is to be completed, resulting in untidy presentation and inattention to detail such as the date. The marking of work often lacks focus and offers little additional support and direction to pupils.

21. Where teaching is of the highest quality, enthusiasm for the subject, very good relationships with the pupils and high expectations result in the enjoyment of learning situations in which pupils are enabled to recognise and build on their own progress. Carefully selected resources and activities motivate all pupils to progress at their own level. Pupils are given clear guidance regarding time targets for lessons, pace is used as a tool, often with brisk pace to motivate and enliven lessons whilst time is also allowed for pupils to think and to work carefully. Questioning forms an important part of the teaching in the best lessons. Questions are differentiated for ability and structured to ensure building pupils' self-esteem and maximising the chances of success. However, there are occasional missed opportunities when the teacher becomes over-involved in giving information. Overall, the teachers and pupils are confident in the shared learning process and are able to celebrate their successes and share their mistakes with humour and purpose.

22. Teachers understand and implement the National Literacy Strategy well and pupil progress in literacy is good. The teaching in these lessons is almost always good or very good. Where teaching is best the pupils are fully involved and interested in the content of the lesson and they understand and share the teacher's high expectations. Teachers maintain a brisk pace, are very well organised and constantly question pupils to reinforce and extend their understanding. They unstintingly give supportive feedback and encouragement to pupils who respond with enthusiasm and hard work.

23. The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good and pupils progress well. The National Numeracy Framework is well used throughout the school. Where teaching is very good, imaginative and effective strategies are used to begin lessons and catch the interest and imagination of the pupils. In the upper school, where pupils are set by prior attainment many of the lessons are opened at a brisk pace carefully designed to engage all the pupils in mental activities to improve their mathematical agility. This strategy motivates pupils and engages them well. A good range of teaching strategies is used, pupils are keen to take part and are encouraged to respond with their own challenging questions. Where teaching is less good, pace is not maintained effectively and pupil participation is limited.

24. Teaching in music, physical education (PE), information technology, art and geography is good or better overall. In PE and music a significant proportion of the teaching is very good and excellent. Science teaching is good overall with the majority of satisfactory teaching in the lower school and very good teaching in the upper school. Teachers have secure subject knowledge, explain the learning objectives clearly to pupils and have high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are well motivated by practical activities and visits. Areas of teaching in those subjects that are under-developed include the variable levels of challenge offered to pupils sometimes through the over-use of undemanding worksheets, the unsatisfactory presentation of written work and wide variation in the quality of marking.

25. The quality of teaching in religious education is satisfactory throughout the lessons seen. Pupils take part in interesting activities and some imaginative approaches are used. However, in some instances the strategy of teaching religious education through the medium of another subject, such as art, tends to mask the primary objectives relating to religious education. There is little evidence of useful marking to inform pupils of progress and improvement.

26. Only a small sample of design and technology lessons was observed during the inspection, the overall quality of teaching for this sample is satisfactory.

27. There are very small amounts of unsatisfactory teaching in English, mathematics, design and technology, and music. In these lessons, slow pace and laborious explanations mean that some pupils lose involvement. Insufficient structured support for individual pupils and groups leads to pupils becoming restless when they lack understanding or have finished tasks. These lessons provide few opportunities for pupils to reflect on or extend their learning.

28. The very good management of pupils is a key element in the success of teaching in the school. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. Teachers know their pupils well, they engage pupils in conversation about their work, use praise well to motivate and encourage and the odd shared moment of humour goes down well. As a result the pupils feel valued, are confident to ask questions and contribute well to lessons. At the time of the last inspection some poor control of pupils was reported, this is no longer the case and only a small amount of restless behaviour now results from the very small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching.

29. Teachers use a good range of teaching strategies in lessons. Learning objectives are now carefully explained to pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was reported that learning objectives lacked clarity. Time targets for completing work are a regular feature of the lessons and pupils are given a clear understanding of the context of lessons and how subjects relate to each other. Overall, lessons progress at a good pace and pupils understand the routines of lesson structure, what they are expected to learn and what tasks they are expected to complete.

30. Teachers use good questioning techniques both to motivate pupils and to check on progress during lessons. Plenary sessions are generally used well to consolidate learning and assess progress, and pupils are able to talk about what they have learnt and what they are still unclear about. This aspect of teaching has improved since the last inspection when low levels of guidance and support were reported.

31. The marking of pupils' work was a key issue in the last inspection report. This is still an area of some weakness. There is a wide variation in the quality of marking across the school and across the different areas of the curriculum. The marking of English and mathematics in the upper school is satisfactory, and most provides regular feedback for pupils. However, in the other subjects across the whole school marking is unsatisfactory when limited to ticks or occasional words of encouragement. In some instances work is marked incorrectly and in others there is no evidence of the work having been checked at all. In a significant number of cases pupils were unable to explain how the marking of their work had helped or supported them.

32. Teachers plan well for a variety of teaching methods that include opportunities for pupils to work both independently and collaboratively. Written work, discussion, debate such as the "By Pass" in Year 5, practical work "Making Buggies" in all years and games like "Winner Takes All" in Year 6, are all well used as means of teaching. In the majority of instances these tend to be teacher directed resulting in limited opportunities to investigate and explore. The lack of this aspect of teaching limits pupil independence and creativity. Pupils respond well to the variety of situations they are offered and consistently demonstrate their ability to work steadily and concentrate on the task in hand.

33. In the great majority of lessons, expectations of pupil achievement are satisfactory, but many are safely within the capability of the pupils, resulting in a steady but less challenging rate of work. Only the best teaching provides consistently high levels of challenge matched to the different levels of ability in the class. This was demonstrated by a Year 6 music lesson in which the teacher complimented the pupils with the highest expectations of what they would gain from the unlikely comparison between a Kenyan Boma and a chorus performed by a Welsh male voice choir. In such situations pupils respond with vigour, enjoyment and determination to maximise their progress, and in this particular case the pupils revelled in the experience and its sequel.

34. Support staff are deployed well. In the great majority of instances they have a clear understanding of the learning objectives for the lesson, work well with groups and individuals and provide good support and guidance. They know the pupils well, provide positive role models and support the inclusive nature of the school by ensuring and maintaining the involvement of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The visit to the school pond by a group of Year 4 pupils and support assistant demonstrated the inclusive ethos of the school through the automatic inclusion and acceptance of all, including the physically disabled, to experience the excitement of the “first find” of the lesson. This is an improvement since the last inspection when a small percentage of very ineffective support teaching was reported.

35. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also well supported. The quality of support teaching is always satisfactory or better and often very good. Class teachers and support teachers plan carefully in order to maintain an appropriate balance between the curriculum subject and language development. For example, the support for Year 3 science ensures that the scientific concept of the way in which sound travels is developed alongside the necessary vocabulary both to understand the concept and to be able to talk about it. Teachers differentiate their support effectively depending on the ability and language development phase of the individual pupils. Generally questioning is used well in order to challenge and encourage pupils to express themselves using correct grammar and vocabulary.

36. Some very good ongoing assessment is carried out with the pupils. This is used extensively, not only to inform the planning for the next lesson but also to contribute to the homework content and the Homework Club, such as the work on connectives in Year 5. Where teaching is very good, pupils receive not only positive feedback but are often challenged to make further improvement. Relationships are very good and pupils respond to lessons confidently and enthusiastically, demonstrated by a pupil's request to repeat a class presentation because “I could do it better next time”.

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

37. The school offers a varied and rich curriculum to its pupils. It is enhanced by the use of the school building and grounds, the local area, day visits further afield and residential visits, as well as a very wide range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although the school day is slightly shorter than DfEE recommendations. Lessons start promptly and usually teaching, learning and assessment continue right up to the very last minute of the lesson, with no reduction in pace.

38. Curriculum planning has improved since the last inspection. There is an established long-term plan, and learning objectives are clearly stated in medium-term plans. Progression and continuity are still not fully established in aspects of some foundation subjects, for example, in some aspects of information technology and map work in geography, and these should be addressed in the school's forthcoming curriculum review. Planning is not yet monitored fully enough. The school has maintained the curriculum strengths noted in the previous inspection report and worked on the weaknesses in investigative and problem-solving activities in science and maths with significant success, and there have been good developments in enriching the provision for dance.

39. Equality of access to the curriculum is good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in class to ensure that they have opportunities to take part. The core curriculum is carefully planned to ensure appropriate support for pupils with English as an additional language. The language support teachers work closely with the classroom teachers in order to ensure that the subject content as well as the language development is planned for pupils who are at different phases of language development. The inclusive nature of the school is demonstrated by the popular and effective Urdu class. It is open to all pupils and has provided opportunities for Year 6 pupils to gain GCSE levels. Very good support is also offered to the pupils in the well-attended Homework Club. In this, issues identified in lessons are systematically followed up and pupils are offered further opportunities for explanation and practice, such as the reinforcement of the understanding and use of connectives.

40. High-attaining pupils at the top end of the school are given challenging work and those who are exceptionally gifted have Individual Educational Plans. There is less evidence of challenge for high-ability pupils at the lower end of the school. Withdrawal for individual music lessons affects curricular provision for a small minority of pupils, but the school is aware of the need to monitor the impact closely.

41. The curriculum is enhanced by visitors and events such as a book week, an environmental day and other activities related to music, literacy and technology. Peripatetic staff teach violin, flute, clarinet and trumpet. There is a Christmas performance for the whole school and a range of other music and drama events. Visits are linked to a range of curriculum areas; every year group visits local places of worship relevant to its topic of study, and there are also trips to museums and to local sites for geographical study.

42. Children in each year group are also offered residential visits. In most cases they are provided with appropriate alternatives if they are unable to go, and the school needs to ensure that this always happens. Some residential trips are not fully integrated into subject planning, which is a weakness which also needs to be addressed by the school. All these visits and activities are recalled vividly by the children; they provide opportunities for first-hand experiences which greatly enhance their learning.

43. The broad range of extra-curricular activities and sporting events noted in the last inspection report has been maintained and strengthened, and this is much appreciated by children and parents. There is a football and netball team in the local league, a cricket team and a girls' football team. There are also many non-sporting activities which contribute to children's social and cultural development.

44. Provision for pupils' personal development is good. As in the previous inspection report, it is a strength of the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was identified by the school in analysis of its 1999 results as an area for development as a means to raising standards. A policy has been written, and the school day restructured to allow more time for PSHE activities, including work on good health, smoking and drugs. Sex education is given with sensitivity to the concerns of different ethnic and religious groups in the school. Police Officers have visited the school to talk about drugs and bullying. Assemblies are linked well to children's interests and experiences; they make a valuable contribution to children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good use is made of effective visiting speakers who contribute well to this programme.

45. There is particularly good provision for children's social development across the curriculum, through extra-curricular activities, and through the way that the school is run. Year groups raise funds for agreed causes. For example, recently Year 3 ran a coffee morning, and Year 6 a Blue Peter "bring and buy" sale. Children from different year groups take part in shared reading activities. Children set class rules which are on display in every room. A School Council meets regularly. Weekly option sessions are timetabled in summer as an incentive for good behaviour. The lunchtime "buddy" system, however, is not always effective and some younger pupils have some concerns about it.

46. Provision for moral development is good. It is fostered through many of these activities and through opportunities in subject areas, as in, for example, discussions on racism in English, care for the environment in geography, and a debate on vegetarianism in Year 6 topic work. Cultural development is also well catered for. There are many opportunities in music, English, geography, history and other subjects, as well as through the wide range of extra-curricular activities. One Year 6 lesson seen provided an outstanding example of cross-cultural comparison between English and African music. Provision for spiritual development is good; spiritual awareness is encouraged in many subject areas such as art, music and drama, as well as in RE where, for example, children reflected quietly on the story of Jesus calming the storm.

47. There are effective links with the local community through the rich range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities offered, and also links within the curriculum. For example, Year 5 participated in a "passport to literacy" project run by the local newspaper. There are established links with the feeder school, although changes in personnel at both schools have temporarily weakened these. Parents have some concerns about transition from the feeder school, and rebuilding these links is important.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

48. The large majority of children at Field Junior School are very happy to be there. This is partly because of the caring ethos of the school. Teachers and classroom assistants know the children well and are able to talk to them about any problems they have with their work or in their personal lives. The school has welcomed children with physical difficulties and others with a range of health problems. Several children have come from other schools where their behaviour was causing difficulties, have settled in well and are making good progress. Everyone in the school makes an effort to help pupils with difficulties and the children are great "carers".

49. Children with special needs and those having English as an additional language are supported very well. Where support teaching is very good, assessment notes are made during lessons and then followed up with pupils during group and individual sessions. Where necessary, teachers and pupils use the Homework Club as a means by which concerns may be followed up. Pupil progress is carefully monitored and individual pupil targets are set for both English and maths as well as for the language phase of the pupil. The planning of support programmes is well informed by monitoring.

50. The personal development of pupils is monitored and the information shared with parents at meetings twice a term and in the end of year reports. Parents are urged to send their children to school regularly and on time. In the few cases where there are difficulties, the welfare assistant and the Education Welfare Officer do all that they can to help and encourage the families to attend regularly and be punctual. The school has well-established links with the Infant School close by, staff meet regularly and two-way visits are arranged for the children; there have been some changes to these links recently and the school is keen to continue to develop them. Comprehensive records and samples of work are received from that school when children transfer. Although pupils leaving Field Junior School go to a large number of secondary schools, every effort is made to give plenty of information to their new schools and allow opportunities for them to visit and make the acquaintance of their new teachers. Pupils are able to use the swimming pool at the local Girls' Grammar School for their lessons.

51. The current and past headteacher, governors and parents have made sure that the security of the school has been an important consideration, and when the children use the public field opposite for play or sport, stringent efforts are made to check for and remove any glass or hazardous material. Supervision is a prime concern and particularly when using the field. The school is housed in an old building which needs constant repair and re-decoration and the hard-working caretaking and cleaning staff keep the school immaculate. The headteacher and a welfare assistant are responsible for child protection matters and keep any necessary records. Systems and procedures are very good. All staff were given training which will be repeated soon for new staff members.

52. In the last inspection report, a key issue for action was the setting up of effective systems to assess pupils' work accurately, record attainment and monitor academic progress. The school has worked hard on establishing common understanding of National Curriculum levels; teachers have made agreed judgements on children's work in English and science, and all years now do the optional National Curriculum tests as well as other assessments. Attainment is now recorded according to a common system. Children's attainment and targets are recorded termly in English and mathematics, and annual judgements on progress are made in other subjects. In some classes, children are involved effectively in target setting, but this is not yet found across the school and some parents are concerned about the inconsistency. Teachers are also beginning to record achievement and targets for children's personal and social development. However, the assessments made are not yet used consistently to guide planning, and the monitoring of results is still in its early stages. These are still areas of weakness. The new assessment policy is clear and well thought out, and forms a useful basis for developing consistency of practice across the school.

53. Good encouragement is given to pupils in their studies. Merit points are given and regular "Achievements Assembly" are held where certificates are awarded and points noted. The Bullock prize and annual certificates for exceptional progress are also awarded. Good behaviour is a strength of the school and efforts to promote it involve the use of the Local Education Authority's advice about bullying. The school is successful in being a place where pupils can develop their confidence and improve their knowledge free from interference by or discouragement from other pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Generally, parents are pleased with their children's progress and the caring attitude of the school. They give it their wholehearted support. Responses to the questionnaire prior to the inspection show that most parents are confident that the school is providing a good education. Parents of children with special needs and those with English as an additional language are very well involved with and informed about their children's education. A few parents work in the school and some are able to give assistance with clubs and visits. Parents feel welcome in the school and know that they can talk to teachers at any time by arrangement. Some concerns were expressed about bullying although it appears that these relate to children who left the school last summer. However, parents have not been sent copies of the bullying policy. Instead they are welcome to come into school to see it if they wish.

55. In the main, good information is provided for all parents. A significant minority of parents and most who came to the parents' meeting felt there was much more the school could do in this area. These parents feel they have insufficient involvement in their children's learning at school and would like more information to enable them to support more at home. Inspection evidence overall suggests that the school already works reasonably well with its parent body and has recently extended its provision of regular information to include, for example, curriculum evenings, but plans further developments. There is a newsletter issued weekly with details of all the visits and extra-curricular activities the school provides. Every term each class teacher communicates to parents details of the curriculum for the forthcoming term. Year 6 provide a newspaper to show their parents what they have been doing in that week and they produce it themselves using computer graphics for illustration. The school Prospectus is being updated and there are plans to let all parents have a copy as a reminder about the rules, equipment necessary and school uniform.

56. Some parents would like to see an increase in the amount of homework set and a consistent system used. Inspection evidence confirms that the setting of homework is still variable and the new policy is not yet being consistently implemented. The Homework Club is very beneficial for those children who participate. Home/school link books have been introduced this year. These give teachers and parents a good opportunity to communicate with one another about homework and other matters, and allows pupils to add their comments. These link books are only just being fully used and have yet to be evaluated. End of year reports are specific to each child, giving good details of the work studied and how the particular child has progressed in each subject. Although stating what should be done, they do not yet give actual targets for each child.

57. Although the school makes very good efforts to involve parents in their children's learning at home and at school, and gives opportunities for meetings and workshops about the curriculum, the latter are not always well attended. There is a need for parents to become more involved and to know how best to help their children. Parents responded well to questionnaires about the home/school agreement which was recently introduced and all but a very few have signed and returned it. Support for the Parents' Association is very good and large sums of money have been raised by fairs, discos and other social events for new equipment and security measures in school. Because of limitations on space parents are not invited to school assemblies although the annexe is used for the annual Harvest Festival when parents, families and friends of the school can be present.

58. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents and the Prospectus give a lot of information to parents although not everything is included that should be. A significant group of parents feel that they do not yet have sufficient opportunity to question and debate with the governors, important matters to do with school policy and performance.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

59. The inspection took place at a time of great change for the school, which has had several significant changes to its leadership and management, after a very stable period under the previous long-serving and well-respected headteacher. The newly formed governing body has continued to make good new appointments. The very recently appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher form a very powerful new partnership and are well aware of the many issues facing the school, particularly in relation to the raising of standards. There is an effective senior management team that includes another recently appointed senior colleague. The staff team as a whole is very committed and active, with a number of less experienced but high-quality members. Some of the best teaching comes from the staff appointed to the school over the last two years. The whole, cohesive, forward-looking team is already having a substantial impact on standards through raising expectations and undergoing well-targeted in-service training and curriculum support. The management team has focused most recently on improving the quality of teaching and curriculum provision, particularly for English and maths. This has been achieved without loss of the school's generally very caring ethos, or its deserved reputation for effective work with pupils with English as an additional language and those having special educational needs. Parents attest to these strengths too.

60. There are some important weaknesses, however. The monitoring of standards is at a very early stage of development and data is not yet sufficiently well analysed, evaluated and reported within the school, to governors and to parents. Performance data is now at the heart of discussions within the senior management team and, indeed, central to many staff discussions. This has been particularly noticeable in the focus on mathematics in the last year or so, but is increasingly so in other core subjects. Many of the curriculum co-ordinators are not yet sufficiently involved, however, in management, monitoring and school development functions.

61. The governing body, which has only recently been reconstituted and has had to focus immediately on making new senior appointments, fulfils its essential statutory functions properly but has been seen as rather remote from parents and overprotective of the school. It has had little involvement in shaping the direction of the school and has neither requested nor received sufficient information to enable it to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in standards, teaching and learning. This has meant that at times many parents have felt unable to explore issues as fully as they would have liked or to express their concerns in the knowledge that they would be fully explored. New ways of working with senior staff and parents are being sought, particularly by the new parent governors and others keen for greater openness and involvement in key areas of the life of the school. The leadership of the governing body has been effective in many areas in the past, particularly in relation to buildings and financial matters, and the current Chair, despite ill-health, puts very many hours into the school. Overall, this leadership has not proved effective recently in identifying key areas for development, empowering other governors or sustaining the confidence of staff and parents. There is much to do but the new governing body has great potential and is completely committed to school improvement.

62. The enthusiastic, newly appointed headteacher, who previously served the school for some years as deputy, provides good leadership. The new deputy, who is an energetic and highly skilled teacher and very effective subject leader, was appointed to the SMT at the beginning of the academic year and gives the head, SMT and staff very good support. The school is well staffed and teachers are adequately qualified for the lessons they are teaching. There is a good balance of experience on the staff and they form a good team. Good opportunities are given to attend training and there is a well-written staff handbook. There are seven support assistants, some of whom are qualified while others are studying to gain additional qualifications for the role they undertake. Two are specifically trained and appointed to help children with physical impairment. In addition, the school makes good use of specialist teachers to help those with special needs and in need of further language development. Funding for the support of those children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is used well. Both areas are well managed throughout the school. Support is carefully and effectively deployed. Support staff and class teachers work closely together. Pupils' progress is monitored and a wide range of opportunities is offered to pupils. Most of these children make good progress as a result. There is a newly appointed school secretary and a part-time bursar, both of whom give valuable and effective service.

63. The amount of teaching space available is a very positive feature of the school. Field Junior School occupies a Victorian building which was once a secondary school, and has plenty of classroom space for National Curriculum subjects. In addition to two halls and eight classrooms there are resources rooms, a library, an art room, a computer room, an audio-visual room, a kitchen, a music room and a number of offices and store rooms. There are sufficient cloakrooms and plenty of toilets. Two large redundant rooms are let to provide substantial income, as is the annexe in a disused church, which also provides space for physical education, adventurous activities such as rigging a sailing dinghy, drama lessons and productions. The buildings are kept clean and in reasonably good repair. Some external decoration and replacement of windows will soon be essential. A priority for the headteacher and governors is the clearance of part of the annexe and to develop an improved reception area which will be converted from the cloakroom. The site has two good hard playgrounds and a reasonable amount of parking space. The field, however, is a public open space on the other side of a service road, with all the difficulties and hazards that that implies. This is a weakness in an otherwise well-provided school, but the school manages the situation well.

64. Resources for most areas of the curriculum are at least sound and many are good or very good. The library is the highest priority for improvement since enhancement ceased while money was allocated to buy new books for literacy and numeracy. Although the school makes good use of the local authority's library service, there is a shortage of books for reading and reference and the governors have plans to address this very soon. There is a book fair every year and the school benefits from money raised and generously donated by the Parents' Association for purchasing new books.

65. Overall, sound use is made of the buildings, human and financial resources. The school is at an early stage of applying the principles of best value but overall provides sound value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the school further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Continue to focus on raising standards across the curriculum and particularly in English writing and the presentation of work, through further monitoring, co-ordinator support and staff professional development. (Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 24, 27, 68, 69, 72, 75, 82, 83, 107, 112, 114)
2. Develop governors' knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that they are better placed to identify strengths and weaknesses, to communicate more effectively with parents and to engage more fully in the strategic management of the school. (Paragraphs 58, 60, 61)
3. Place even greater emphasis on the monitoring of standards and particularly the analysis, evaluation and reporting of pupil performance data. As part of this, develop the roles of subject co-ordinators, particularly in monitoring planning, the quality of provision and standards. (Paragraphs 38, 52, 60, 73, 92, 98, 111, 120, 145)
4. Continue to develop the partnership with parents by providing consistently high quality information to them about their children's standards and how they can help them in their learning. (Paragraphs 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61)

Other less significant issues for development

- a. continue to develop the marking policy and ensure its consistent application (Paragraphs 24, 31, 44, 52, 72, 89, 108, 119)
- b. reduce the use of worksheets in some classes (Paragraphs 24, 75, 89, 144, 118)
- c. improve the consistency with which the homework policy is applied (Paragraphs 56, 79)
- d. ensure that planning for residential visits is included in subject planning (Paragraphs 42, 110)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3%	21%	33%	35%	7%	-	-

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	YEARS 3-6
Number of pupils on the school's roll		233
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		48

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YEARS 3-6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		66

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	48

Pupil mobility in the last school Year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final Year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting Year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	26	28	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	11	16
	Girls	16	17	13
	Total	27	28	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	50 (70)	52 (59)	54 (70)
	National	70 (65)	69 (58)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	11	17	16
	Girls	15	23	22
	Total	26	40	38
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	48 (77)	74 (78)	71 (71)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	12
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	
Indian	6
Pakistani	29
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	175
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school Year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	2	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.8
Average class size	29.8

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	106

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial Year	98 - 99
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	£
Total income	417,820
Total expenditure	416,345
Expenditure per pupil	1,750
Balance brought forward from previous Year	9,937
Balance carried forward to next Year	11,412

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	238
Number of questionnaires returned	51

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57.0	33.0	6.0	2.0	2.0
My child is making good progress in school.	51.0	39.0	6.0	4.0	
Behaviour in the school is good.	41.0	41.0	12.0	4.0	2.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27.0	41.0	27.0	4.0	
The teaching is good.	35.0	55.0	8.0		2.0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41.0	45.0	8.0	4.0	2.0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57.0	37.0		6.0	
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59.0	33.0	4.0	4.0	
The school works closely with parents.	34.0	52.0	8.0	6.0	
The school is well led and managed.	36.0	50.0	6.0	8.0	
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44.0	44.0	6.0	6.0	
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62.0	30.0	4.0	2.0	2.0

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is caring and supportive Children are encouraged to behave well New energy and enthusiasm The open door policy and approachable teachers Excellent extra-curricular activities and visits Good support for children with learning difficulties Improvements in maths teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater concentration on raising standards Consistent implementation of the behaviour and bullying policy Better communications with the governors Consistent implementation of the homework policy More information particularly about achievement and how they can help their children learn

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

ENGLISH

66. Standards in English at the end of the key stage are average overall. They are above average in speaking and listening, average in reading and below average in writing. Standards improve as pupils move through the school. Pupils on entry in Year 3, and in the lower school generally, are below average in all the English components. However, they make better than average progress in Year 5 and Year 6 and are achieving a higher level.

67. The recent emphasis on speaking and listening has paid off and standards for pupils aged eleven are above average. For example, in a Year 6 class pupils took part in a debate. They were well prepared through studies in class, they demonstrated a deep understanding of the issues under discussion, they expressed their ideas clearly and with conviction, they reflected on each other's point of view and were sensitive and thoughtful. In reading there is a wide range of ability. Confidence and fluency, for example, ranges from a high level to a more stumbling delivery. Pupils of all abilities show interest and enthusiasm for reading and articulate their tastes and interests. Their ability to understand and retain information varies from well above average to below, but they all make connections between what they read, their own experiences and their prior learning.

68. By the age of eleven the most able pupils write legibly in sentences and make appropriate use of commas, full stops, speech marks and question marks. Some organise their work into paragraphs and content is imaginative and thoughtful. For the majority, however, writing skills are not well developed for pupils of this age. They write over-long sentences for example, and make too little use of punctuation. Handwriting for many of these pupils is erratic and lacks fluency and some have not made the transition from printing to joined writing. These weaknesses are more marked in Y3 and Y4 where sentence construction, punctuation and the use of appropriate vocabulary is underdeveloped and where there is too little extended writing. Plans to concentrate efforts on improving standards in writing are appropriate.

69. End of key stage results, taken together, show that the performance of pupils in English between 1996 and 1999 was close to the national average. However, there was a steady decline in attainment during this time, and since the last inspection, and the most recent results are low compared with similar schools. The decline has been reversed this year and standards are now higher again. The school has set realistic and achievable targets, which are close to national averages, and is on track to meet them.

70. Standards in Year 5 show that this improvement will be maintained, and targets for 2001 should be achieved or bettered. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in English in Year 5 and Year 6 and achieve well. Progress in Year 3 and Year 4 is sound. There is a clear link between improved standards, good teaching, focused provision in class and in booster classes, good support for pupils with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language. Pupils are achieving best in those classes where teachers make informed assessments of pupils' strengths and weaknesses, set targets for improvement and give regular feedback on progress.

71. Teaching is good overall. Of the sample of lessons observed a high proportion was good or better and a third was very good or excellent. Much teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 has been very good this year and this has had a very positive impact on the quality of learning and led to improvements in standards. There are relatively few unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers keep to the structure of the literacy hour and implement the National Literacy Strategy well. In the best lessons teachers' subject knowledge is good. There is a proper emphasis on basic skills, which are taught well. Teachers make learning objectives explicit and explain tasks well, which helps pupils understand what they are to do and why. The pupils make good progress in lessons where teachers choose challenging texts, introduce demanding vocabulary and ask a range of open and closed questions which make them think hard. In the few unsatisfactory lessons there is the need for more focused vocabulary work to extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding. In one lesson the pace was too slow and pupils were allowed to talk over each other. Pupils did not make sufficient gains, therefore, from expressing and sharing ideas and opinions. They became distracted, did not focus on the task sufficiently or reflect on their learning in a meaningful way.

72. Teachers' expectations of presentation and quality of written work vary. In those classes where pupils are given short-term targets and receive focused feedback on attainment and progress the work is of a high standard. However, this is not consistently the case and in some classes work is accepted that does not truly reflect pupils' capabilities. Likewise the quality of marking varies. In some classes it is consistent and supports learning by identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' writing and what must be done to improve. In other classes it does not. Classroom assistants and students in training make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They are well briefed and support groups of pupils and individuals well.

73. In classrooms there is a good supply of reading materials and other literacy resources, which have been enhanced by contributions from the Parents' Association. Texts for the literacy hour are generally well chosen and give a good basis for class and group teaching. The central library, however, has significant gaps in provision. The school is aware of this and has plans to upgrade the book stock. At the time of the inspection the co-ordinator had been in post for only a few days and it will take some time before she is fully conversant with recent developments and plans for the future. Several strategies have already been introduced, however, for monitoring and evaluating the work in English. These include the scrutiny of teachers' plans and sampling pupils' work. Last year teachers' lessons were observed during the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Most of these measures are at an early stage of implementation, however, and are not yet fully embedded in regular practice.

MATHEMATICS

74. Standards in mathematics were average at the time of the last inspection. They were about average in 1997 but above the average in similar schools at both Levels 4 and 5. In 1998 they were close to average at Level 4 but below average at Level 5, although overall they were still close to the average in similar schools. The 1999 figures were lower still and showed results well below average both in relation to the national average and in comparison with similar schools. Some, but not all, of this decline relates to variations in the cohort through factors such as increased mobility and incidence of special educational needs.

75. Inspection evidence suggests, however, that standards have risen again sharply this year, partly with the different cohort but also as a result of changes in staff, improved teaching and the very effective work done in the school to implement the numeracy strategy. Most attainment in the school is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils in both Year 5 and Year 6 are well on the way to achieving targets which are much higher than those achieved last year and should bring them close to the national average this year, and possibly above it next. Work on symmetry in Year 3 was good, that on probability, data collection and interpretation in Year 5 and data analysis and presentation in Year 6 were very good. Many of the children throughout the school, but particularly at the upper end, are confident to calculate mentally, to estimate, to make and support hypotheses, to use correctly a full range of appropriate mathematical language, such as difference, factor multiple, mean, median, mode and range. While the quality of much of the work on display is high, samples of work show that standards of presentation in the subject have often been, and in some cases still are, too low. There are many rather untidy exercise books and too many disorganised collections of rather scrappy worksheets, some of doubtful value.

76. Pupils are generally keen and interested in the work, respond enthusiastically and often say that maths is their favourite subject. Relationships between pupils and with teachers are very good and often excellent; friendly, supportive but challenging. Many children are keen to continue their investigations, work collaboratively and carry on until they have finished a task. They are very well behaved and take responsibilities seriously, when using special equipment, for example.

77. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection. Standards clearly declined to start with but have improved sharply recently; children are now more confident in investigations and mental calculation and very strong in data handling. The quality of teaching in the subject has improved and attitudes are at least equally good. The leadership of the subject is now very good, particularly this year; there is a good policy and scheme of work now in place. Good use has been made of training, and of improvements in assessment, and the school is now concentrating well on pupil achievement.

78. The teaching of maths is good overall, with about two thirds of it good or better. There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. Nearly all lessons are well planned and organised, with an appropriate range of motivating and often very well-paced starter activities which really motivate and challenge the children as individuals or groups. Most staff also provide good direct teaching in all parts of the lesson. This is based on secure subject knowledge and a commitment to assessing the children's knowledge before moving them into the next learning activity. Often, different tasks are prepared for pupils working at different levels. Again, these all help to interest, prepare, extend and challenge them. The school is careful to provide effective support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and English as an Additional Language and this helps them to make good progress. Assessment and marking, including pupil self evaluation against targets in some classes, are now becoming more consistent across the school. The very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was too slow from the outset, engaged too few pupils in the early activities, and set insufficiently high expectations for some groups.

79. The numeracy strategy of the school is securely in place and the daily mathematics lessons are well structured. Good use is made of the national framework for planning and delivery of maths and adequate time is given to the subject. One year-group's unusual decision to teach maths more often in the afternoon has helped with the amount of time and facilities for maths teaching as well as spreading the load for other subjects and resources. It appears to be working very effectively and is popular with both staff and pupils. There are also good examples of homework linked to and extending the current work in the class, but still too many examples where there was no such link and where, occasionally, the work was highly unlikely to challenge the more able pupils.

80. Leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator sets very high standards and the profile of the subject in the school is high. This is shown on the walls, in the classrooms, by the enthusiasm and commitment of all staff and most pupils and by the rise in standards. Monitoring and staff development are sound and improving; the focus is clearly on improvements in the quality of teaching and the raising of standards throughout the school. Training has been effective and there has been good work with parents. There are a few resource issues: not all classes have overhead projectors yet and would benefit from these; much of the equipment is still stored centrally and this makes it difficult for pupils or staff to choose to use items spontaneously; some equipment, such as number lines, does not yet have a high enough profile in classrooms and so far there is insufficient use of information technology to support the subject.

SCIENCE

81. At the time of the last inspection standards in science were described as broadly satisfactory. However since 1997 standards declined from a level matching national averages to a very low level. During the last year one of the school priorities has been to address the under-achievement in science. This focus and the quality of teaching have had a positive impact and the standards of work seen during the inspection confirm a significant rise in attainment, which is now just below the national average and that achieved by similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining levels above the national average also dipped to very low. There is evidence that this trend is also reversing but that these percentages remain below the national average.

82. Within the different aspects of science there are variations in strengths and weaknesses. For the great majority of pupils their knowledge and practical skills are in line with national expectations and for a significant minority their attainment in these aspects is above or well above expectations. However, the majority of pupils' written work in science remains below national expectations.

83. At the time of the last inspection the Experimental and Investigative element of the work was not in line with national expectations. Since that time the school has highlighted this as an area for development and there has been significant improvement. From the lessons observed and discussion with pupils, their experimental work by the end of the key stage is now in line with national expectations. Pupils are able to set up experiments, ask challenging questions and describe ways in which to set up fair tests such as those in Year 5 establishing conditions for plant growth or the Bouncing Ball test in Year 6. However, the standards in investigative science remain below the national average. By the end of the key stage attainment in Life Processes and Living Things is above national expectations. All the pupils are able to talk about the functions of the human body vital organs and describe the parts and functions of flowering plants. In Materials and their Properties and Physical Processes pupils achieve an average level with some aspects of their work being above national expectations, such as the good understanding of evaporation and condensation or the formation of shadows and position of the sun demonstrated by Year 6 pupils.

84. The school is in the early stages of setting targets in science. Work has been monitored and assessed during the year and predictions have been made regarding individual Year 6 pupil outcomes. In September 2000 the school plans to include science in the formal annual target-setting procedures.

85. The great majority of pupils enjoy science lessons and are enthusiastic. Overall, the standard of behaviour is very good. Pupils concentrate well and maintain group discussions about their work. They share ideas, help each other and in the upper school the pupils are learning to collaborate, exemplified by the challenging debate held by a Year 5 group concerning the best methods for establishing fair test conditions for plant growth. Pupils use resources carefully and show respect for plants and animals. This was demonstrated by the very careful way in which pupils handled plants when removing them from their pots in Year 5 or the way in which Year 4 handled the plants and animals found in the school pond. In both instances concern was expressed by the pupils that the animals and plants should not be harmed.

86. All pupils make good progress in acquiring scientific knowledge and in the use of scientific vocabulary, including pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. In the lower school the scientific enquiry skills are satisfactory, pupils carry out planned experiments and are encouraged to make predications, such as those made by Year 3 about the way in which sound travels. In the upper school pupils make good progress in acquiring scientific enquiry skills where they are encouraged to ask questions and to design experiments as a planned part of the lesson.

87. Overall, the quality of teaching in science is good and in the upper school is very good. The best teaching is dynamic, challenging and fun. A careful balance of praise, humour, critical support and questioning is used to motivate pupils, raise their self-esteem and challenge their thinking. This results in pupils who are enthusiastic and confident to question and contribute to lessons knowing they will be listened to and their efforts appreciated. Teachers plan well and use a wide range of teaching methods that include elements such as practical work, discussion, questioning, games and visits. Lessons are well organised with interesting resources for the pupils to use, such as the alien game that Year 4 used to create a simple classification key. Teachers encourage pupils to use their knowledge to make predictions and then to evaluate what they have achieved. Overall, the pupils are managed very well. They are given a clear understanding of the learning objectives and organisation for each lesson. Teachers also ensure that the lessons move along at a good pace and are at pains to explain how the learning is relevant to the rest of the curriculum.

88. Well-structured brisk revision sessions in Year 6 proved to be very effective in consolidating knowledge and providing opportunities for questions and clarification. These were very popular with pupils who particularly enjoyed revision by way of a variation of the game "Winner Takes All". During this session pupils also demonstrated their very positive attitudes towards winning and losing, in which they supported and congratulated each other. Homework to support the revision programme is successful and comprises both compulsory and voluntary sections. End of topic assessments and careful questioning contribute to the teachers' ongoing assessment of pupil progress. Individual pupil progress and areas for development are shared with parents in the end of year reports.

89. Where teaching is less good, long lesson introductions, a lack of pace and insufficient recognition of pupil contributions result in loss of motivation and, in a very small minority of cases, inappropriate behaviour. Expectations of the quality and organisation of written work are unsatisfactory and do not match the high expectations teachers have of the pupil knowledge and understanding. This weakness had been noted by the co-ordinator and is included in the subject develop plan. In some aspects of science in the lower school there is evidence of an over-reliance on worksheets, which limits the development of pupil independence. In the majority of instances the marking of pupils' work does not support the learning and there is a significant amount of work undated. These points were noted in the last school inspection and are still weaknesses.

90. The school devotes an appropriate amount of time to science and plans effectively from a scheme of work for each year group. The recent focus on experimental and investigative work has had a positive impact on the range and quality of practical work which pupils now experience. However, the impact of this focus on the investigative aspect of science is still under-developed. The school has yet to address the progression and development of scientific literacy indicated by the quality of the written element of the pupils' work. The carefully planned support for pupils with English as an additional language makes a positive contribution to the pupils' scientific vocabulary and understanding of concepts. Numeracy skills are being incorporated into the science curriculum and pupils are using and creating charts and tables to show the results of their experiments, although there is limited evidence of the use of graphs in the upper school. As yet little use is made of information technology to collect and present scientific data and information.

91. The school makes good use of extra-curricular opportunities to support the science curriculum. Juice and biscuits provide a thoughtful welcome to the many pupils who attend Booster classes. The joint science and technology “Design a Buggy” visit by Science and Technology Regional Organisation was noted as a highlight by pupils in all year groups. The school pond and outdoor shrubs gave rise to a stimulating lesson for Year 4 who were intrigued by the range of animals and plants and thoroughly enjoyed searching for mini-beasts in the Gardening Club compost heap. The limited scope for outdoor activities is being well developed by the Gardening Club and the sunny window in the art room makes a convenient greenhouse for plants grown by the pupils.

92. Science has a high profile in the school. Most classrooms have good displays of pupils’ work and in many cases there are examples of experiments in progress. Teachers have access to a well-organised range of resources and the school has a scheme of work, which is supplemented by the use of various commercial series. In-service training has been organised by the relatively new co-ordinator and monitoring of the subject is in the early stages of development. Half-termly plans are monitored and some work sampling has taken place, however this is not yet systematic and the co-ordinator is aware that the monitoring of teaching and learning in science is an area for development.

ART

93. Art is now a strength of the school. In the last inspection the overall standards in art were described as satisfactory and since then there has been significant improvement. Standards in art are above national expectations throughout the school and in the upper school sketching, drawing and painting are well above national expectations. The pupils are able to talk about famous artists such as Seurat and they also learn about art from other periods in history, such as the Roman mosaics Year 3 discussed before trying out their own design.

94. Pupils make good progress in art and have an obvious enjoyment of the subject demonstrated by their enthusiasm and very good behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in art and take great pride in their work. All the pupils work very hard, show a very high level of interest in the objectives of the lesson and are keen to support and help each other with ideas and practical help. The pupils in Year 3 spontaneously helped each other with ideas about how to create a symmetrical Roman mosaic. Year 6 also demonstrated very good attitudes towards each other when beginning to piece together a large-scale mosaic reproduction of a painting by artist Tony Hudson. They admire each other’s work and take great pride in talking about the work they are engaged in such as the pointillism in Year 5 or the camouflage pictures in Year 4. The older pupils make good use of the art room in which they work very well. They take responsibility for the resources they need, know where everything is kept and ensure that the room is kept tidy.

95. Overall, the quality of teaching in art is good and in the upper school it is often very good. Teachers are knowledgeable about most aspects of the subject, the lessons are well organised and pupils are managed very well. Pupils are given feedback about their work during lessons, receive good-quality guidance and support, and the older pupils are beginning to assess their own work. Where teaching is best the enthusiasm, subject knowledge and high expectations from the teachers encourage and motivate the pupils. The response from pupils is characterised by perseverance and concentration, even when the task is difficult or when the first attempt was not quite what they had hoped for; some pointillism took several very good-humoured attempts. Teachers use the work of artists and the work of pupils to motivate. In one instance attention was drawn to the work of a pupil using oil crayon to create a likeness to animal hide. The teacher's praise of this work inspired and motivated the whole class.

96. The scheme of work for art covers all the major areas of the subject, but the emphasis has clearly been on the skills involved in drawing, sketching and painting. The co-ordinators recognise that there are a number of aspects of the subject that could now be developed further such as three dimensional work, work with fabric and the consistent use of sketch books to collect ideas and experiment with pattern, line and tone. In addition, at the time of the inspection there was limited evidence of a range of non-western cultures represented in the work of the pupils or in the school displays. Some aspects of art are offered to the pupils through the Craft Club and the "options afternoon", and although these are positive features of the curriculum the system does not ensure entitlement to all pupils.

97. The pupils are offered a good range of curricular opportunities. Art is built into many areas of the curriculum and in addition there are focus art visits, such as the one to Cassiobury Park. The school is also currently investigating a number of interesting projects through liaison with a local secondary school that could further develop and extend the range of artistic opportunities for the pupils.

98. The leadership and management of art is good. The joint co-ordinators of the subject are relatively new to this responsibility, but have already had a significant and successful impact through re-organising the facilities and resources for art. They provide good teaching role models. The art room now offers very good accommodation for the subject and is now well used. The co-ordinators have a range of developments in mind and are keen to continue to develop the opportunities and raise the standards in all aspects of the subject. Although they have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of art in the school, there is currently no formal monitoring of the subject and this is a weakness.

99. The display of art work around the school is well presented, and attractive. Work from all the age groups is presented and although it varies in quality from satisfactory to very good, it emphasises the high profile of the arts throughout the work of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

100. In design and technology there has been no change in the standards of attainment since the last inspection. Pupils remain on course to match national expectations by the age of eleven. During the inspection little evidence was found of high attainment but progress overall is just satisfactory.

101. The main weaknesses at the time of the last inspection were deemed to be the lack of a scheme of work, insufficient guidance and support for teachers, and the design aspect of the subject. These weaknesses were addressed to some degree by the provision of a scheme of work and a greater emphasis on design. However, during the last year there has been slippage in the timetabling of the subject and at the time of the inspection not all the planned work had taken place, although the summer term elements are on track for completion.

102. A very small sample of teaching was observed during the inspection and this was mainly satisfactory. Pupils are given clear explanations about the objectives of the lessons and the teacher knowledge is good. Teachers circulate well, involving pupils in discussions about the ways in which their work could be changed or improved such as a discussion in Year 4 about the relative strengths of different fixatives. The pupils' attitudes to their work are satisfactory. Where teaching is well organised and progresses at an appropriate pace the pupils display a good level of interest and enthusiasm and behave well. Year 6 pupils, for example, were able to talk enthusiastically about their balloon-powered carts. However, when the pace is slow or when pupils are not well motivated a small minority of pupils lose interest and spend some time off task. The pupils with special educational needs enjoy the tasks and produce satisfactory work but expectations for more able pupils are generally too low.

103. The planned curriculum indicates a satisfactory level of coverage including all the elements of the national curriculum. However, due to pressure of time the planned elements are not always followed through, such as the construction component of the curriculum and the use of simple electrical circuits. This lack of coverage is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is effective in making design and technology relevant through cross-curricular links, such as the stationery packs in English, the buggies in science and the photo frames in art. Year 3 pupils talked about the cakes they had made to raise money for wet play equipment and had enjoyed the involvement of parents in this task. They are enthusiastic about the development of the food technology element of the work during the summer term.

104. The pupils are able to talk about issues of health and safety and to recognise various hazards. They are aware of the need to use tools correctly and showed, for example, the safe way to use a saw. There is no evidence of opportunities for pupils to apply the skills and knowledge they learn creatively or imaginatively, to create individual and unique pieces of work. The majority of work follows an agreed pattern and most pupils produce similar items.

105. Very good opportunities are offered by the involvement of SATRO, the Craft Club and the renovation of the food technology room. A good initiative is the introduction of a more formal assessment element for the pupils in which they evaluate their work. This enables pupils to think about their work and how they might improve it.

106. The leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory in a number of respects but there is a significant lack of dynamism and enthusiasm. Resources are adequate for the majority of the pupils but there is little to challenge the able pupils. Although a scheme of work and policy have been produced, no action has been taken regarding the lack of coverage this year. Some of the most successful design and technology work has been organised through cross-curricular themes and led by the outside organisation, SATRO. The co-ordinator monitors the planning for coverage and progression but this has little impact on the quality of provision and there is no other evidence of monitoring in place.

GEOGRAPHY

107. Standards in geography are in line with national expectations for children's ages, as judged by a small amount of lesson observation, scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils. There is, however, variability in standards; much written work is below average but, in lessons seen, children's understanding of erosion and deposition in Year 5 was above expectations. The previous inspection found insufficient evidence to judge attainment or progress. In the few lessons seen, less able pupils attained above expectations because of the well-targeted support. The most able were appropriately challenged and achieved accordingly.

108. Schemes of work are well planned, with clear objectives. However, weaknesses in written work leads to difficulties in building on previous understanding. Little marking of work was evident, and some written work was unfinished. Some tasks offered to children in the lower years are undemanding, while others are challenging. Development of map work skills is variable; there is a lack of progression in the lower end of the school. Environmental understanding is a feature of the geographical work in the school.

109. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development. Children have a range of opportunities to work together, on fieldwork and in exercises such as deciding where to place facilities in a town. There are links with citizenship, for example, in writing to the council about river pollution as a result of their study. Children have an active concern about the environment. Those interviewed are keen to discuss their work and show enjoyment of it; in the few lessons seen they showed a lively interest, were all engaged in the task, and concentrated well. On the visit to a local river, behaviour was very good.

110. The emphasis is on teaching through direct experience, using the school grounds, locality and visits, and children respond well to this. There is a whole-school environmental day every year. Year 6 teachers are working hard to provide artefacts, videos and photographs for the Kenya topic. Each year group has a residential visit which includes a geographical element; Year 3 at Ivinghoe, Year 4 at Cuffley Camp, Year 5 at Hudnall Park, Year 6 in Wales or Rickmansworth Lakes. In Year 3, those who did not go to Ivinghoe carried out the same work in Watford, enabling all children to compare the two localities. Children had clear opinions about the advantages and disadvantages of each and could explain which they preferred. In other years, the geographical opportunities in these residential visits are not always fully integrated into subject planning.

111. The co-ordinator has a good overview of the subject curriculum through monitoring coverage; there are plans to tackle the overlaps in map work in some year groups. Further monitoring of standards and quality does not yet take place. The policy gives general guidance on assessment but no specific detail. The co-ordinator has reviewed and organised the resources, which are supplemented with loans from the school library service and materials brought in from home. There is a shortage of books in the school library on geographical topics.

HISTORY

112. Little teaching of history was seen, but evidence was drawn additionally from scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils. Standards in history, as seen in Year 3 lessons and in discussion with Year 5 and 6 pupils, are broadly in line with national expectations. However, the quality of written work across the school is generally weaker. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection report.

113. Year 6 pupils, discussing their Victorian project, have an understanding of the period. They can explain differing views on the British Empire in England and the colonies. Like other topics, this makes a valuable contribution towards pupils' cultural, social and moral education. Children's use and understanding of sources are good. Year 3 children made effective use of books and information sheets on the Roman army to find answers to questions they had generated. Year 5 pupils could explain how we know about the Ancient Egyptians and the significance of the Rosetta Stone.

114. Children are less confident about chronology, causation and describing the effects of changes. They have insufficient opportunities to develop a chronological framework for key events within a topic, or to relate the different periods studied. There is still too much variability in presentation and organisation of work. Work is often left unfinished, and corrections not made.

115. Children with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum through focused support and differentiated work. High achievers in Year 6 are challenged appropriately.

116. Children have a positive attitude to the subject, and are enthusiastic when talking about the topics studied. In the limited number of lessons seen, children were keen to start work and co-operated well, sharing resources and discussing what they found with each other.

117. It is not possible to judge the quality of teaching from the few lessons seen. Plans and scrutiny of work shows that teachers continue to make good use of the historic school building. The curriculum is also enriched by visits to, for example, Verulamium in Year 3, the Golden Hind in Year 4 and the British Museum in Year 5. These first-hand experiences are recalled well by pupils and contribute to their enjoyment of the subject as well as to the development of their understanding.

118. In some classes there is an overdependence on worksheets which are often undemanding. Some children have experience of a range of different types of writing such as reports, diaries, and persuasive writing, but in general there are not enough opportunities for extended written work. There are good links with other subjects like art.

119. There are still inconsistencies in marking. Weaknesses in written work and the lack of evaluation in planning make it difficult for teachers or pupils to build on earlier work over a longer timescale.

120. The co-ordinator monitors plans for coverage, and is aware that the National Curriculum review will require some changes in topics. She has worked effectively since the last inspection to improve the range and quality of resources. As yet, the co-ordinator has not had the opportunity to monitor achievement or teaching, and has no clear views of national standards.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Standards in information technology (IT) for the oldest pupils are broadly in line with national expectations, with a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Standards are good in word processing and data handling. Standards in control, monitoring and modelling are weaker. Pupils are familiar with computers and confident in their use. They demonstrate good prior knowledge and extensive experience of using word processing and desktop publishing, for example, in producing the 'Year 6 News' bulletin. They choose fonts and colours of text; they highlight text and use the spell check. They are familiar with the use of 'wizards' and incorporate pictures using clipart and digital imaging. They have good technical vocabulary and can access the internet, search, input, retrieve and interrogate information. Lower down the school, pupils have learned basic skills of using the mouse, loading, saving, and recording. They can sort information on a database and use a Roamer for control work.

122. Pupils are enthusiastic and some individuals have a high level of competence and expertise and support their peers well. Some programmes have been successfully adapted for pupils with special educational needs so they can take part in lessons and make good progress.

123. Teaching is good, overall. In the best lessons, teachers plan in detail. They have clear learning objectives and plans for future work, which they share with the pupils so they understand where the lesson is leading. In other lessons where learning objectives are less clear there is insufficient concentration on IT skills and progress is more limited. Some teachers know the subject well and activities are well focused and supported, although this is not consistently the case. Some teachers lack confidence and expertise with computers.

124. There are good links with other areas of the curriculum, for example in a Year 3 lesson where links were made with work done on symmetry in mathematics and physical education. In a Year 6 lesson pupils searched for information on the internet to support work they were doing on Africa and used a word processing package to present work being done in English. While there are several good examples of cross-curricular use, IT generally needs to be used more to support the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Lessons are generally well structured with ample time for instruction, demonstration, hands-on pupil activity and evaluation and feedback, a balance which is effective in keeping pupils on task, interested and well motivated. In one lesson this balance was not managed so well and pupils had insufficient time to complete the tasks they had been set and learning was more limited.

125. Sound progress has been made since the last report, when IT was found to be unsatisfactory. The school now uses the QCA scheme of work as the basis for its own scheme, allowing for limitations in resources, and is rightly working towards its full implementation as soon as practicable. The school will at this time also improve its system for recording attainment and progress by introducing associated assessment procedures. All classes are timetabled to use the computer suite and can book additional time depending on availability, although in practice during the inspection, this did not often happen. Good progress has been made with the IT development plan but it was written some time ago and is now in urgent need of revision. More emphasis on pupil achievement and intended outcomes is needed when this takes place.

126. Training, support and advice opportunities are good for those teachers who are less secure with the technicalities of the subject. With the recent purchase of RM Window boxes and the installation of Internet links IT resources are adequate to deliver most of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and linked guidance. However, the old Acorn Archimedes machines are out of date and in need of replacing to keep abreast of developments in subject requirements. It is important that the school initiates a hardware replacement plan identifying when new machines will be purchased and the source of funding. The provision of an IT room has enhanced pupils' learning, particularly of basic skills, by facilitating class and group teaching. However, as new machines are bought, the older units could usefully be returned to classrooms to provide additional computer time for individuals in the immediate class setting.

MUSIC

127. Standards in music are high, particularly at the upper end of the school where the quality of learning and performance is sometimes outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Children throughout the school are learning a great deal about styles of music, the influence of various composers and traditions. They are encouraged to work hard on structure as they appraise music and then apply what they have learned in their own compositions. This they do very effectively. Additional help for keen and more able musicians is provided through opportunities for specialist support in lessons and in the choir. In these sessions the standards are very high, as, for example, when they sang several choruses of a completely new work accentuating key words and with rapidly achieved accuracy in pitch, tempo and dynamics. Children sing well in class lessons and reasonably well in assemblies. Standards achieved by the choir are excellent and have impact on the appreciation and enjoyment of music throughout the school. Musical productions are judged by parents to be of high quality and they recognise the recent improvements in the subject.

128. Children enjoy and are very keen to take part in their music lessons and generally respond very well to the subject matter, teaching approaches and opportunities for performance. They reflect well on what they have heard or performed and engage in constructive criticism of each other's work. They show responsibility in using instruments and other equipment. Behaviour is generally very good and relationships are of a very high quality, particularly in the top classes where activities undertaken are often in activities and settings where any lapse in responsibility would show. In the small sample of unsatisfactory lessons with younger pupils, a lack of pace by the teacher and rather laborious approaches to the subject matter occasionally lead children to lose interest, make little progress and a few become restless.

129. The quality of teaching is good overall but is variable, ranging from some which is unsatisfactory through some satisfactory, good and very good teaching to some which is exemplary. A very good lesson by a non-specialist teacher in Year 5, for example, started with an extended series of rhythmic clapping demonstrating the build-up of a composition with ostinati. In a link with their current science work, the teacher then showed a silent video of the speeded up growth cycle of a plant with two completely different musical sound tracks. The children were rapt in concentration, they articulated the differences they felt clearly and learned rapidly as they began to apply some of what they had experienced to their own compositions. Pace and expectations were very high and routines well established allowing maximum benefit from a short period of time.

130. The model of teaching provided by the subject co-ordinator is outstanding. In one lesson observed, Year 6 pupils experienced and commented in an informed fashion upon several stunning pieces of "call and response" choral music from Wales and Africa. They rapidly learned the main elements of a new African Boma, ably tutored by the teacher who handed over the main roles progressively to pupils of varying musical confidence and competence. A performance was then tried and developed at increasing distances in the playground, and finally with buildings separating the main groups, bringing the experience as close as practicable to its original settings and purpose. The children revelled in the feel of the music and were uplifted by the experience; they demonstrated real accomplishment and responsibility. The lesson ended back in the music room with a superb rhythm dance based on "The lion sleeps tonight". This was a packed and thrilling learning experience.

131. The management of the subject is good and should be very good when time can be allocated to monitoring and to developing more consistency and raising teaching standards throughout the school. Adequate time is given to the subject, there is an attractive and well-equipped music room with a good collection of instruments and resources generally of very high quality.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

132. By the end of the key stage, standards in physical education (PE) are better than in many other schools. Pupils respond positively to the variety of challenges that are set, refine their performance and demonstrate increasing control and accuracy. Throughout the school, pupils plan, perform and evaluate their work and apply physical and creative effort, as seen for example, in a Year 3 gymnastics lesson. In this lesson pupils made symmetrical balances, paired sequences and mirror images. They were of a good standard and pupils showed imagination, confidence and a good level of prior knowledge and understanding.

133. Pupils achieve well and make good progress, demonstrating clear progression in the acquisition of skills, seen, for example, in two games lessons. In a well-taught Year 4 lesson pupils learned basic skills and demonstrated average competence in throwing, catching and hitting a tennis ball. During the lesson there was evidence of an increased appreciation of catching and fielding techniques and improving competence. In a Year 6 lesson pupils had progressed from working at close quarters, as previously, to more extended distances and a significant number of pupils were well practised and skilful. Standards in this lesson were good overall.

134. Pupils co-operate well and work purposefully, for example in a dance lesson in Year 5. During this lesson the pupils developed a good awareness of the importance of dance in the PE curriculum, the need for a warm-up and warm-down and they increased their skills and understanding. Working in groups they produced a short performance which was of a good standard and which they shared in turn with the rest of the class.

135. The teaching of physical education is good overall and some lessons are very good. Lessons are well planned and organised and pupils engage in vigorous activity, skills development exercises, group and individual work. Plenary activities are varied and provide opportunities to practise skills developed in the lesson. Teachers assess individual performance in lessons and give focused encouragement and advice to which the pupils respond well. Expectations of behaviour are high, a very good pace to the lessons is maintained and the good range of activities centre on key learning objectives. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, for example, in demonstrating striking skills in games lessons. Appropriate methods, including demonstration, contribute to increased understanding of, for example, how to send and receive a ball.

136. Pupils are taught the six areas of activity required by the National Curriculum Programmes of Study although during the inspection only games, gymnastics and dance lessons were observed. Pupils receive regular opportunities to go swimming and achieve high standards, evidenced by the ASA awards they receive. They also work towards accredited awards in gymnastics and basketball. School awards are given in football. These awards motivate pupils, encourage them to take part and contribute to effective skills progression.

137. Good progress has been made since the last report when standards and teaching were described as satisfactory. There has been particularly good progress in developing teaching and learning of dance, as pupils were not on course at that time to achieve national expectations in this component. Recently dance has been highlighted in the co-ordinator's action plan and she has attended courses. The insights gained on the course have been effectively communicated to other members of staff and were seen in practice during the inspection. Observations of a dance lesson and discussions with teachers confirmed that subject knowledge, which had been unsatisfactory, has much improved. Expertise on the staff is also enhanced by the appointment of a teacher who is PE trained. Co-ordination of the subject is sound. Teachers know what they are expected to cover in the year and plans are monitored to ensure compliance with the statutory curriculum. There is no time available to monitor teaching in PE and the only form of target-setting and assessment is through the award schemes. Pupils benefit from a wide choice of extra-curricular activities and clubs, including netball, basketball, cricket, gymnastics and football, and pupils take part in local competitions and leagues. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' learning as, for example, was evident in the Year 3 gymnastics lesson.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

138. Standards in religious education (RE) are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, as they were in the last inspection. Children are stronger on knowledge about religions than on explaining and reflecting on the influences of religion on believers. In all year groups except the youngest, attainment in writing is weaker than children's oral achievements. Orally, children can recall key ideas appropriately and have a good understanding of symbols used. Children with special educational needs attain well for their ability because of the focused support provided.

139. The last inspection report criticised lack of guidance on continuity of coverage but this has been addressed, and each year group now has a focus religion which is taught as a topic and alongside Christianity during the year. There are plans to review the curriculum and its assessment in the light of the new agreed syllabus.

140. Teachers work hard to bring the subject alive through videos, artefacts, visits from parents who are members of faith communities, and visits to places of worship. Year 4 visit a mosque and a church, Year 5 a Hindu temple and Year 6 a Gurdwara and a Hare Krishna temple.

141. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen. Features of the good teaching include good subject knowledge, good pace, an imaginative approach, clear objectives shared with children and reviewed at the end, and links made with children's own experiences and feelings as well as to their existing knowledge and understanding. Effective links are made with other aspects of the curriculum, for example literacy, art and in particular Personal Social and Health Education, as when children discussed ideas of friendship linked to the story of the road to Emmaus. On some occasions, however, there is insufficient focus on Religious Education within a lesson.

142. The management of pupils is good, and there is effective use of support staff. Children concentrate well, engage in the tasks and are able to stop and reflect when asked to do so, for example, when focusing on the story of the calming of the storm and the feelings of the disciples. They take an active part in lessons, working well together and volunteering information and suggestions.

143. The quality of written work, however, is generally unsatisfactory; not all work is marked, and children do not make corrections. Too much work is left unfinished. There is an overdependence on worksheets and much of the written work seen, kept in folders, is poorly organised.

144. The new co-ordinator has a view of standards through attending INSET and ensures that plans cover the locally agreed syllabus, but her monitoring role is not yet fully developed. Resources are well organised but the stock of bibles is rather dilapidated and there are few books in the school library on religious education.