

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HILLSIDE FIRST SCHOOL**

Worle, Weston-super-Mare

LEA area: North Somerset

Unique reference number: 109106

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Bolt

Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey  
3764

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 March 2000

Inspection number: 191699

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First school
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 8
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Church Road Worle Weston - super - Mare Somerset
Postcode:	BS22 9EJ
Telephone number:	01934 512200
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ron Fowler
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	English, art, geography, history and special educational needs	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Derek Bowers	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils?
Anna Sims	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children under five, mathematics, music and religious education	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Ken Parry	Team inspector	Science, design technology, information technology, physical education and equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Office for Standards in Education  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hillside is a small first school with 149 boys and girls on roll between the ages of four and eight. It is a member of the Weston Education Achievement Zone (WEAZ), which was set up to support schools in the area. When they start school, children's skills and understanding are wide ranging, but slightly below average overall. Twenty-three per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is a little above the national average. One of these pupils has a statement of special educational need. Two pupils are learning English as an additional language. All other pupils have their cultural roots in the British Isles.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Hillside is a good school. A caring ethos underpins the good provision made for the pupils. The headteacher, supported well by staff and governors, gives a very clear lead. There is a continual striving to improve the provision for the pupils. Teaching is good and pupils do well in English, mathematics and science. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are high in reading, writing and science and very high in mathematics.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes.
- Teaching is good and so pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher is a strong and effective leader.
- The school is a very caring community, in which all are valued and supported.
- The school involves parents well in their children's learning.

#### **What could be improved**

- The use of records and assessments to set academic targets for individual pupils.
- The management and co-ordination of subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Resources for information technology, religious education and the library.
- The condition and internal decoration of the original building.

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

The school's many strengths far outweigh its weaknesses. The weaknesses noted have already been identified by the school as areas for improvement.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress since its last inspection three years ago. It has successfully tackled all the areas for improvement identified at that time. One of these was to raise the quality of the teaching. This is much improved and the thorough monitoring procedures now established help all staff to reflect on their practice. Another area for development was the use of assessment to establish priorities for improvement. Good assessment systems are now in place and the school has used these to help them to focus particularly on aspects of English and mathematics that need developing. The school now plans to use assessment to highlight individual pupils' needs. These improvements in teaching and assessment have contributed to the rise in standards. The school has also improved its financial planning and addressed the problems associated with the lavatories, which were noted by the previous inspection. Some new and enthusiastic staff have been appointed and with the additional contributions to the school's provision from WEAZ, the school is in a good position to move forward further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Reading	B	C	A	A
Writing	B	E	B	B
Mathematics	B	C	A*	A*

**Key**

very high                    A\*

well above average      A

above average            B

average                     C

below average            D

well below average      E

very low                    E\*

*Similar schools are those with between 8% and 20% per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals*

This table shows that in 1999 the attainment of pupils at Hillside was in the top five per cent of all schools in mathematics, was well above average in reading and above average in writing. This is in comparison both with all schools and with those similar to Hillside in relation to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Standards have risen over the last four years with a drift down in 1998, when there was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

The inspection found that standards are high at the end of Key Stage 1 and when they leave the school, with mathematics remaining the strongest area. Pupils' attainment is above average in reading, writing and science. In other subjects, including information technology and religious education, pupils' attainment is in line with standards expected for their age. This marks an improvement since the last inspection of the school. The school has set appropriate numerical targets for pupils' performance in this years' national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, which it is likely to meet.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall. Pupils enjoy school and are positive about their work. Sometimes they work a little noisily on the tasks set.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons, at playtimes and lunchtimes. They are polite and friendly to staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Pupils get on very well with each other and their teachers. They consider the feeling of others and are willing to take on responsibility
Attendance	Good and above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7- 8 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Satisfactory

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

The good overall quality of the teaching is a strength of the school and is much improved since the last inspection. In the lessons seen, 19 per cent of the teaching was very good, 44 per cent was good and the remaining 37 per cent was satisfactory. The teaching is strongest in the reception year and Key Stage 1. Mathematics is taught very well and teachers help pupils to develop their numeracy skills successfully. The teaching of English is good overall and teachers take care to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. Science is also taught well. Particular strengths in the teaching include good planning, especially in English and mathematics, the effective use of learning support assistants to work with individuals and small groups and very good relationships between staff and pupils, which underpin pupils' learning.

Teachers plan effectively for the needs of all pupils in lessons and this helps them to achieve well. Pupils participate fully in the introductory part of lessons, increasing their knowledge and understanding before working sensibly on appropriate tasks in the activity part of the session.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. A good range of experiences for children under five. Literacy and numeracy strategies effectively implemented. New planning frameworks recently introduced in many other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Very well managed with good provision made for these pupils. Sensitive extra support given by assistants and teachers. This area has improved since the last inspection.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Appropriate support is given by the class teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall and improved since the last inspection. An important contribution made by WEAZ to pupils' cultural development. Too little attention given to the wide range of cultural traditions represented in the British Isles.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The staff look after pupils well and make sure that they are safe. Good improvement in assessment procedures since the last inspection in English and mathematics. Areas for development include a whole school approach to using teachers' records of individual pupils' progress, in order to set targets for development, and assessment of progress in science and information technology.

The school has a good partnership with parents. They are involved well in their children's learning and are kept well informed about what happens in school.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher is a very effective leader and is supported well by the new deputy and all staff. Experienced staff lead developments in English and mathematics very well. Co-ordination of other subjects is less well developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Some are very involved in the life of the school and use their talents well to help the school. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Strategies for evaluating the success of new initiatives need developing.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school's strategic financial planning is very good and means that the school can expand the number of classes later this year. It applies the principles of best value well.

The staff team provides good support for pupils and there are plans to open a new class in September, which will bring down class sizes. The old building is in immediate need of repair and redecoration. Plans for this are in hand. Resources are generally adequate in most areas, except information technology, religious education, history, geography and the library.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school is helping children to become more mature.</li> <li>• Children are making good progress.</li> <li>• Staff are very approachable.</li> <li>• Children behave well.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• The amount of homework given.</li> <li>• The written reports on children's progress.</li> <li>• The playground climbing equipment.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees unreservedly with parents' positive views. It found that there is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities for older pupils, but no provision for younger ones. Overall this provision is appropriate and similar to that found in many first schools. The school's new homework policy is not yet fully in place. The school is aware that parents need to be kept clearly informed about homework arrangements. The amount of homework planned is again appropriate. Inspectors found that written reports about pupils' progress give a clear picture of what pupils know, understand and can do, but do not always state whether they are doing as well as they should be. Targets for individual pupils' improvement are not included, but this is planned for the reports in the summer term. Inspectors looked carefully at the playground climbing equipment and found that it was used safely. Pupils are always carefully supervised in the playground and play very sensibly. The school has consulted with the local authority, who confirm that the equipment meets all current safety requirements for pupils of school age.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1 Baseline assessment shows that when children start school in the September after their fourth birthdays their achievements are a little below average from year to year, especially in language development. They make good progress in the reception year. By the time they are five, most children have reached the recommended desirable learning outcomes in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, and their personal, social, physical and creative development. Many are already working at the early stages of the National Curriculum.

2 National tests and assessments for 1999 showed that in Year 2 pupils' attainment was above average in writing, well above average in reading and very high in mathematics. In mathematics pupils' attainment was in the top five per cent of all schools. Pupils' attainment in writing was better than the standards in schools similar to Hillside, in relation to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals. Pupils at Hillside did much better in reading than their peers in similar schools and very much better in mathematics. Pupils also did well in science. All pupils reached the expected level and a number did better. The school has set challenging targets for pupils' performance in this year's statutory tests, which are likely to be met.

3 Standards have risen since the previous inspection three years ago, with a slight fall back in 1998. In this particular year group there was a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The challenge for higher attaining pupils has improved in reading and mathematics and this is reflected in the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in these areas. However, in writing standards are not quite as high because no pupils reached the higher levels in 1999. Generally, over the last three years girls have done better than boys in reading, writing and mathematics. This was not much more than the national difference in reading and writing, but there was a larger gap in mathematics.

4 The inspection confirmed this picture of high standards indicated by statutory tests. In the current Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and science. They are well above average in mathematics. This represents an improvement from the last inspection, which found that attainment was average in all these subjects. However the present Year 2 is a small year group, with a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards in the current Year 2 are not quite so high as last year. Standards are high in the current Year 3 in English, mathematics and science.

5 Overall, pupils make good progress in English. They develop their speaking and listening skills well in all subjects, especially in class discussions where they participate confidently. They also progress well in the development of their literacy skills. This is because of the good focus on the teaching of phonics. Pupils enjoy reading and make good progress in this area. Standards are not so high in writing, nonetheless pupils are developing well as writers. There has been a focus on spelling this year and standards are improving. Most pupils use punctuation well. Pupils form their letters correctly, but sometimes their handwriting is untidy. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well in other curriculum areas, such as history and geography.

6 Pupils make very good progress in developing their numeracy skills in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. This good overall progress is fostered by clear teaching and

activities, which are appropriate for each pupil. Gifted and talented pupils do well at Hillside because they are challenged well by appropriate tasks. The school has successfully increased the challenge for higher attaining pupils since the last inspection.

7 Pupils make good progress overall in science because of the focus on helping them to acquire a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils are developing appropriate skills in investigative and experimental work, although these are not built on systematically from year to year.

8 Attainment is broadly average in information technology. Standards in this subject have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils have opportunities to develop their skills in information technology across the curriculum, but the number of computers means that individual pupils' time on the computer is fairly limited.

9 Standards are also broadly average in religious education, art, design technology, history, geography, music and physical education and pupils make sound progress in these areas. Sometimes pupils' achievements are lifted by special projects, such as the recent artist's placement funded by WEAZ, when pupils worked together to make a wooden sculpture for the playground. A similarly-funded project related to dance has also had a very positive impact on pupils' achievements. Pupils do not do so well in these subjects as they do in English, mathematics and science. This is because the school has concentrated on raising standards in English, mathematics and science in recent years.

10 Pupils with special educational needs, including a pupil with a statement of special educational need, make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans because of the good support given to them by learning assistants and teachers. They are sometimes withdrawn for extra help and benefit especially from this targeted support. Most of these pupils have particular problems with reading and writing.

11 The very few pupils with English as an additional language are making good progress through the sensitive input of staff and do not require additional support.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

12 High standards of behaviour and relationships have been maintained well since the previous inspection. Good standards are established when children start school. They settle quickly into the routines of the reception classes and are confident in their new surroundings because of the sensitive support given by staff. Children are encouraged to share with each other and take turns and they manage this well. All are quite clear about the difference between right and wrong.

13 In almost all lessons the attitudes of pupils to learning are satisfactory and often good. They respond with great enthusiasm to the teachers and are generally keen to answer questions. Sometimes pupils work rather noisily in the activity part of the lessons. Occasionally some of the older pupils become a little restless towards the end of long discussions, but they settle again quickly when requested by the staff.

14 Behaviour is good throughout the day and this contributes to an effective environment for learning. Pupils follow the well-established routines at playtimes and lunchtimes and there is a pleasant, friendly atmosphere. Staff very rarely need to apply any sanctions for misbehaviour and these are never more serious than the occasional loss of a playtime. There have been no exclusions from the school. There is no evidence of bullying.

15 Pupils get on extremely well together. Older ones keep an eye on the younger ones and often play with them at playtimes. In lessons, the effective collaboration between the pupils helps to ensure effective learning. There are very good relationships between pupils and all staff and pupils are polite and friendly to staff and visitors.

16 Pupils respond well to the encouragement of the staff for them to take on specific tasks in their classes, such as delivering messages, registers and dinner money. They prepare for lessons responsibly and clear away well at the end. The older pupils take initiatives to help younger pupils in the playground.

17 Attendance is good and has improved since the previous inspection. It is above the national average and there are very few unauthorised absences. Parents are very supportive and mostly avoid term-time holidays with their children. They promptly inform the school of any absences. Pupils arrive promptly for school each day and lessons generally begin on time.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

18 The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is now good overall and is one of the strengths of the school. Out of every five lessons seen, one was very good, two were good and two were satisfactory. The strongest teaching seen was in the reception year and Key Stage 1. This good quality teaching has a direct and positive impact on the good achievements of pupils throughout the school and particularly in the reception classes and Years 1 and 2. In Year 3 the teaching is satisfactory and ensures that pupils make sound progress.

19 The school has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified by the last inspection related to teaching styles in Key Stage 1 and the challenge for higher attaining pupils. This has been achieved in part by careful monitoring and evaluation of practice by the headteacher and senior staff. A number of new and enthusiastic staff have also been appointed and all teachers are continually striving to improve further. The increase in monitoring has helped teachers to be more analytical about their own performance and to share in discussion with colleagues about effective teaching strategies.

20 The teaching of children under five is good. Work is planned well and the good team work between the teachers, nursery nurse and assistants means that children are well supported in their first terms in school. This helps them to settle into new routines easily and become confident learners.

21 With the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies, staff have focused particularly on improving their skills in these areas. This has been very effective. The quality of mathematics teaching is now very good overall and ensures that pupils achieve well in lessons and reach high standards. English is well taught and pupils also do well as a result. Staff pay particular attention to the teaching of phonic skills and pupils use these well when they read. Good opportunities are taken to develop pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum. In history, for example, pupils in Year 2 have developed their writing skills well in their work on the Great Fire of London. Science is also taught well. Staff have a good subject knowledge and explain new ideas clearly.

22 In other subjects teaching is at least satisfactory and ensures that pupils achieve average standards. Planning is not always so sharply focused in these lessons. In information technology some teachers have more limited subject understanding.

23 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including the pupil with a statement of special educational need, is now good and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers plan appropriate tasks for these pupils within lessons, which means that they build well on previous learning. Sometimes they receive extra help from learning support assistants and this helps them to focus clearly on the task. In some sessions assistants take specific groups, for additional literacy support, for example, and this regular input helps pupils to improve their skills. The headteacher also withdraws groups of pupils with special educational needs for extra help, especially in writing and this also has a positive impact on their progress.

24 There are some strengths that underpin all the teaching. One of these is the very good relationships between staff and pupils, which help pupils to feel that their efforts are valued. Another is the consistently good use made of the learning support assistants, who work closely with teachers to provide effective help for pupils. Planning is also generally good, most particularly in literacy and numeracy sessions. Generally the introductory parts of most lessons go well and so pupils build up a good knowledge and understanding in this part of the lesson. In the better lessons, teachers share the particular focus for the session with the pupils, writing the aims on the board, for example. This helps the pupils to understand the purpose of what they are doing. In most classes, the rooms are well organised and resources, books and equipment are stored neatly and attractively. This helps the pupils to select materials quickly and sets a good example to them for neat presentation of work.

25 In the very good lessons teachers' individual strengths are evident. One teacher, for example, has a sparkling enthusiasm and catches pupils up in her enjoyment of teaching. Consequently they listen very carefully and enjoy learning. This was evident in one dance lesson when pupils extended their earlier work on levels by introducing pace, speed and rhythm into their movements. Another teacher has particular strengths in the areas of planning and preparation. In one science lesson on plant growth, for example, this teacher planned in great detail, and prepared a very well timed computer simulation of plant growth to grasp pupils' imagination and hold their interest. Yet another teacher is very clear in her delivery and sets high expectations for children in terms of both behaviour and good work. This was clear in a numeracy session when young children were working with numbers up to fifteen, making great strides in their learning because they were challenged well.

26 Within in the context of the good quality teaching, there are some common areas for development across the school. One of these is the organisation of teachers' assessment files. At the moment there is no common practice for noting how well individual pupils have done in particular subjects, although general pointers are included on teachers' weekly evaluations. The school is looking towards setting individual targets for pupils in literacy and numeracy and more detailed records would help them to do this more effectively. The other area that teachers are working on is the implementation of the new homework policy. All pupils take home books to share with their parents or carers and these are used well by staff and parents to note progress made. Spelling and mathematics homework is sometimes given to pupils, but this is not as systematic and so sometimes parents do not know what their children have to do. A new approach to spelling homework is about to be implemented and the school is discussing ways of improving the arrangements for mathematics. In some of the satisfactory lessons pupils achieved satisfactorily rather than well because the working atmosphere during the activity part of the session was a little noisy and so pupils found it harder to concentrate.

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

27 The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which successfully promotes the all-round development of all its pupils, including the children under five. It is suitably structured to ensure that pupils make good progress and are prepared well for the next stage in their education and beyond. Good emphasis is placed on the teaching of English and mathematics and this results in the high standards seen in these subjects. A particular strength is the efficient way in which the National Literacy Strategy and more recently the National Numeracy Strategy have been successfully introduced throughout the school. These initiatives are proving to be effective in helping to ensure that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well applied across the curriculum. The school enriches its curriculum considerably through its membership of the Weston Education Achievement Zone and full advantage is taken of the opportunities provided by this involvement to establish strong links with the local community. Working with local artists, for example, has made a significant contribution not only to improvements in the quality of pupils' learning, but also to teachers' subject knowledge and skills and the school environment. In addition, the achievement zone provides a very effective forum for the sharing and exchange of ideas and the mutual support of other member schools. The school is also a member of a cluster of small schools, which organises very helpful curriculum training sessions for teachers.

28 There have been satisfactory improvements to curriculum planning since the previous inspection, although weaknesses remain in planning for art, physical and religious education, in which the school is working on long term planning documents. Religious education is taught according to the locally agreed syllabus and all statutory requirements are met. Weaknesses arise in physical education and in the curriculum for under-fives as a result of constraints imposed by the school's inadequate outdoor facilities. Limited numbers of computers mean that pupils have insufficient time to develop their skills in information technology. Improvements include the adoption of new nationally agreed schemes of work in the majority of subjects, which are currently being trialled successfully by all teachers. The school recognises that the next step is to tailor the documents to suit the particular needs of this school, for example in order to ensure that pupils in mixed age classes have access to similar experiences and enjoy full coverage of the curriculum without unnecessary repetition. In all other respects the school provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress. This includes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers plan appropriate tasks for these pupils who also have extra support in small groups both within and away from the classroom. Pupils learning English as an additional language follow the same curriculum as their peers.

29 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection when it was judged to be sound. The school's arrangements for personal, social and health education are good. Teaching is based on a very good scheme of work and is underpinned by the school's caring ethos. Suitable provision is made for sex education and the youngest pupils begin in science by looking at the life cycles of butterflies and plants. Good use is made of the local area in some subjects to extend pupils' learning and the curriculum is enriched by a good variety of visits and visitors. An appropriate range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including football, gymnastics and recorders enhances the curriculum for pupils in Year 3. There is no extra provision for younger pupils.

30 Assemblies and acts of collective worship take place daily and comply fully with statutory requirements. They are well planned with opportunities for pupils to reflect on

their own and others' experiences and feelings, making a major contribution to the promotion of pupils' spiritual awareness. Although not planned explicitly, pupils' spiritual development is also fostered in a variety of subjects across the curriculum. For example in a science session, pupils were fascinated by the array of seed types discovered when cucumbers, peppers, kiwi fruits and mangoes are sliced, and in a dance lesson younger pupils' imaginations were captured quite exceptionally as they responded to the moods of contrasting pieces of music.

31 A strong moral code is evident in all aspects of school life and forms the basis of the good behaviour evident in lessons and around the school. The school's values include respect, consideration and personal responsibility and clearly reject bullying, harassment and dishonesty. As a result pupils rapidly develop a clear understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable and they are consistently expected to consider the impact of their behaviour on others. Teachers are good role models, generally dealing with pupils in a calm and confident manner and therefore pupils respond in a similar way. Pupils' social development is firmly rooted in the headteacher's strong view of Hillside as a community in which everyone has responsibilities and commitments. From an early age pupils are encouraged to share and to look after each other well and this is clearly evident in the very good relationships formed across the age groups from four to eight. Teachers organise pupils to work and play together successfully and they are constantly reminded to be sensitive to the needs of others. Frequently this involves not only co-operation but also competition, for example in physical education and in adventure games on the computer involving the development of self-discipline and fair play.

32 Pupils' appreciation of their cultural traditions and therefore a deepening understanding of their own cultural roots is well promoted, especially through literacy, religious education, art and music. The work of the Weston Education Achievement Zone makes a significant contribution to this aspect of pupils' development, for example through the work of a visiting sculptor and dancer. Through its teaching in religious education the school ensures that pupils acquire knowledge of the key features of different faiths, and in assemblies and lessons festivals such as Diwali and the Chinese New Year are celebrated. However, there is little evidence of non-western art, multicultural displays and artefacts or suitable books in the library to broaden pupils' appreciation of the richness and diversity of society.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33 The good level of care and support for pupils, identified by the last inspection, has been maintained. All members of staff are very caring and vigilant throughout the school day. They have warm, effective relationships with the pupils, know them well and respond to their needs. The good, sensible policies which underpin their care for the pupils have been developed after full consultation and discussion by staff and governors.

34 The substantial policies for behaviour, discipline and for dealing with abuse and harassment provide a good framework for the consistent management of the pupils. There is stress on the creation of a caring environment with mutual respect and understanding. There are clear guidelines on staged responses to any incidents that arise. Parents and pupils are encouraged to raise any concerns promptly with staff. Teachers and support staff manage pupils very consistently. They are friendly and engage with them well at playtimes. There was no evidence during the inspection of the tendency of some adults to control the pupils oppressively at lunchtime, which was reported previously. Pupils' attendance is monitored well and the headteacher discourages parents from taking their holidays during term time.

35 The thorough policies and guidelines on aspects of health and safety provide good guidance to staff on safety in lessons and at playtimes. They include clear information and advice on the management of illness, accidents and medicines. The very active health and safety governor and staff representatives conduct regular, thorough inspections. All of their findings and actions are reported regularly to the governing body. Good use is made of local authority advice and inspections and all alarms, physical education equipment, electrical equipment and fire appliances are tested regularly. Some parents have expressed concern about the use of some of the playground equipment. During the inspection this was well supervised and the children played responsibly. The height above the ground is within the local authority current guidelines and there have been no accidents on this apparatus.

36 There is a clearly stated rationale and aims and procedures in the thorough child protection policy. The guidelines stress the building of pupils' self-esteem and raising the awareness of staff of potential issues and situations. The headteacher attends a child protection training session each year and briefs all other members of staff at a subsequent staff meeting.

37 The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are currently satisfactory and developing strongly. Staff have produced a clear and well-written policy which shows a good understanding of the purposes and uses of assessment and provides a clear direction for its future development within the school. There is also a marking policy, which does not currently reflect the good practice in the classrooms. Assessment was identified as a weakness in the last inspection and sound progress has been made since then to address this key issue. However, many of the procedures are recent initiatives and therefore there has been insufficient time for them to become firmly embedded as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. When children first enter the school they are carefully assessed and the information is used to form groups and to plan teaching programmes. In addition to the statutory tests and assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, a useful range of non-statutory tests in reading, spelling, and mathematics are administered in each year. Assessment of pupils' attainment in other subjects remains an area that requires further development, especially in science and information technology, in order to ensure that pupils acquire important subject specific skills in a progressive and systematic manner.

38 Teachers summarise pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science in a pupil portfolio, which gives a clear picture of their progress in these subjects as they move through the school. This practice is helpful to current and future teachers, manageable and easy to interpret. However, it is not used to monitor aspects of personal development such as attitudes, approaches to learning and behaviour in order to give teachers a fuller picture of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

39 The school makes good use of the information gathered through its assessment procedures to guide developments in the curriculum and to improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards further. The careful analysis of the end of Key Stage 1 test results in English, for example, identified weaknesses in writing, which the headteacher is addressing by providing regular additional support for particular groups of pupils. In addition, aspects of science teaching such as those concerning physical processes are being addressed through the school's programme of staff development. The school has recently installed a computerised assessment management system to improve its procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' attainment and progress. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to try their best but there has been no agreement about how this is to be achieved. There is no current guidance on ways in which individuals can be



supported once assessment data has been gathered and analysed, for example by setting targets for pupils so that they can begin to share responsibility for extending their own learning. The exception to this is the monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Useful notes are kept of their progress in special support sessions and these are used to help set targets for them to work towards in the future. Staff are planning to extend the practice of setting targets for English and mathematics to all pupils.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

40 The satisfactory partnership with parents at the time of the previous inspection has been developed very effectively and is now a strength of the school. The majority of parents have confidence in the school and are pleased with their children's progress. They believe that their children like school and that teaching is good. They are happy with their children's behaviour and feel that the welcoming environment encourages them to approach the school with any concerns. The headteacher takes a lead in establishing this welcoming atmosphere and makes a special point of being available in the playground at the beginning and end of school to talk to parents informally.

41 At the meeting held for parents before the inspection and in the parents' responses on the questionnaire sent out to seek their views it was apparent that there were a few minor concerns. Some parents felt that the range of activities taking place outside school hours was limited. The inspection found that there are appropriate activities organised for the older pupils during the lunchtime and after school, but none for younger pupils. A few were concerned with the physical aspect of the site, the playground and the play equipment. The inspection found that pupils are well supervised and use the climbing equipment sensibly. They show care and courtesy to each other as they walk or play outside. There were no issues concerning the safety of children in the playground during the inspection. A few raised queries about the homework given. The inspection found that the amount is appropriate and that the new homework policy is being established. Staff are aware of the need to be clear in each class about the homework given. Some parents felt that the written reports could be improved. The inspection found that written reports describe what pupils know, understand and can do well, but do not always give a clear picture of whether they are doing well for their age. They do not always explain what particular aspect pupils need to work on to improve further. These minor points should be considered within the high overall regard that most parents have for the school.

42 Parents are very involved in the life of the school. They accompany pupils on visits and work in classrooms. There is to be a particular focus on encouraging more support in classrooms during the summer term. The Parent Teacher Association supports the school very well. It has recently funded the attractive pergola in the playground and some new mathematics equipment. It is currently trying to get a Millennium grant to develop the playground further.

43 Parents are kept very well informed about school events with a half-termly newsletter. In addition, each class has its own termly letter with details of special events, topics and homework, in readiness for the implementation of the recently discussed homework policy. The prospectus is clear. There are many opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress and to be informed about current issues. There are termly curriculum evenings, a subject-based '*work-along*', where pupils accompany their parents and an '*open classroom evening*' where they can see the whole range of work throughout the school. Formal interviews take place during the summer term. Parents are always welcome to visit the teachers and the headteacher targets particular parents who do not normally attend.

44 A very effective home-school agreement has been implemented, after full consultation with parents. It sets a standard for what the school is trying to achieve, with a focus on shared learning. It is explained in detail to new parents. There are consultations with parents on all important issues. In order to facilitate the transition from pre-school, the deputy head will visit the local playgroups next term to talk about the school and speak to individual parents. The governor with responsibility for numeracy is setting up a weekly mathematical games library, and parents are encouraged to play these games with their children. The headteacher particularly hopes that parents will support home learning in further interesting activities, rather than just a repetition of the classroom work that day.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

45 The headteacher both leads and manages Hillside very well. She is clear about the educational direction for the school and her vision is shared effectively with staff and governors. Consequently there is a constant striving to improve provision and practice in order to raise standards higher and enrich pupils' lives.

46 The school has built well on the areas identified for improvement by the last inspection. These included improving the overall quality of the teaching, the monitoring of teaching and use of assessment. Teaching is much improved and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The monitoring of teaching is now a strength and good work in this area has been a key factor in helping teachers to improve. The headteacher undertakes most of this monitoring, but she is supported increasingly by senior staff. The focus of the work has been on literacy and numeracy and teachers have found the feedback very useful. The school has also made good progress in the use of assessment to pin point areas for improvement. Teachers and governors have a clear view, for example, of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment in English and mathematics.

47 The headteacher is very well organised and this enables her to spend as much time as possible supporting pupils and teachers in the classroom. She is strong and resilient and this helps her to rise above every day routines and challenges in order to steer the staff team in their pursuit of excellence. The last twelve months have been a difficult time, for example, because of staff changes and the lack of a deputy head, but the headteacher has successfully ensured that the good provision for the pupils has been maintained during this period.

48 Staff work well together under the sensitive direction of the headteacher. She has a clear view of individual strengths and enables staff to use their talents well. She is supported well by the newly appointed deputy headteacher, who has been in post since the beginning of the calendar year. The role of subject co-ordinators is developing effectively. A strong lead is being given by the English and mathematics co-ordinators, who are both experienced teachers. As a result of their work, teachers have been helped to implement both the literacy and numeracy strategies well. Some co-ordinators have very recently taken on specific subject responsibilities and are currently evaluating current provision and identifying what needs to be done. Co-ordination of subjects other than English and mathematics is currently under-developed.

49 The headteacher manages and co-ordinates the support for pupils with special educational needs and undertakes this very well. Support is planned appropriately, parents are involved well, records are kept up to date and all statutory requirements are met. The support for pupils learning English as an additional language is managed well by class teachers.

50 Governors are supportive of the work of the school. Some are very involved and use their talents very well to help move the school forward. The chair, for example, is very experienced in school governance and provides wise and sensitive guidance to the headteacher and governing body. The literacy and numeracy governors give very good practical help in classrooms and are well informed about the every day running of the school. Some other governors do not have the opportunity to visit the school during the working day and so do not have such a clear understanding of how the school functions. Overall governors fulfil their role well. All statutory policies are in place and information, such as the annual report to parents, is interestingly presented. This year the governors have begun to set performance targets for the headteacher. These are appropriate and useful.

51 Governors plan well for the school's future development. The school has built well on the sound short-term planning that was in place during the previous inspection. Planning is based on a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Parents' views are taken into account and they are kept well informed of the progress that the school is making to its yearly targets. These are appropriate, but the plan lacks detail about how the success of new initiatives will be measured. This makes it more difficult for staff and governors to monitor the work of the school.

52 Good financial planning over recent years has enabled the school to maintain good provision while steadily building a significant reserve. This reserve will enable the school to establish an additional class this year in response to a continuing rise in pupil numbers. It is also earmarked for redecoration of the main building. The cost-effective finance service agreement with the local authority provides very good support for the school's financial planning. The school has addressed the budgeting weakness identified by the last inspection.

53 The school applies the principles of best value well in its planning, purchasing and use of resources. Active use is made of the local authority's benchmarking analysis. The school's costs are in line with those of similar schools and the standards compare favourably. The governors and staff review their contracts carefully to secure value for money. For example, they have purchased more cost-effective staff cover insurance arrangements than offered by the previous contract. The governors and staff monitor the effectiveness of their expenditure. The positive contribution of the support staff to improving standards has been evaluated in classroom observations by the subject co-ordinators, for example.

54 The most recent audit of the main accounts in June 1999 found the records and procedures to be sound. The school has implemented the minor changes in practices, which were proposed in the report. Financial procedures are well documented and followed closely by the administrative staff, managers and governors. The records of the main account and school fund are in good order. The administration gives good support to other staff and to pupils, parents and governors. Effective use is made of the specialist financial advice under the service contract each term. The headteacher is given weekly reports of expenditure and the finance governors receive monthly reports. All decisions are recorded properly and reported to the full governing body.

55 The expenditure of the money received in the additional grants for special needs and for raising standards is accounted for fully. These funds are used effectively for the purposes intended.

56 Taking into account the average costs and below average attainment on entry and setting these against the above average standards of achievement, the good learning, teaching and personal development of the pupils, the school is giving good value for money.

57 The school has entered a phase of stability after a period of change. There has been an almost complete change of staff, and restructuring the school, from six to five classes, has meant the loss of another teacher. The school has an adequate number of staff who are appropriately qualified. The nursery nurse and learning support assistants make an effective contribution and together with the teaching staff, form a successful team. Staff appointed to work with pupils with special educational needs are also well qualified. The recent appointment of the deputy head will enable the development of a management team to address curriculum issues and subject co-ordination. Lunchtime supervisors maintain appropriate levels of care during the midday break.

58 There is very good mentoring support for the newly qualified and recently appointed teachers. There have been appropriate training courses and opportunities to visit other schools. All members of staff have attended training for the literacy and numeracy strategies, and a course for physical education. Training is chosen appropriately to support the school's areas for development and staff's personal needs. This reflects the needs of the whole school, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection.

59 The school is housed in an attractive building and there are two new classrooms. However, extensive damp penetration to the main building has resulted in difficulties in maintaining its aesthetic appearance. Parts of the floor appear weak. Roof repairs and damp proofing have delayed the planned programme. The school has improved the state of the lavatories. Otherwise there has been little visible improvement in the main building since the last inspection. Extensive damp treatment is planned by the local education authority, which awaits approval of funding. Following this essential work, the school has a phased plan for extensive internal redecoration and has made suitable provision within its delegated budget. Despite these problems, the caretaker keeps the school in very good order and is happy to complete any extra small tasks that may be needed.

60 The library is situated in the main building and also needs redecorating. It is well organised but some of the books are well worn and need replacing. There are insufficient challenging fiction books for pupils in Year 3. The Weston Education Achievement Zone has funded a computer linked to the Internet, which is located here.

61 The site is rather limited, as there is no field for games activities, and no designated area for children under five to use during the working day. A pergola has been built in the playground to provide shade for the pupils. This was funded by the parents' association and a small grant. Future plans include the development of an environmental area with a pond.

62 The school uses its resources effectively to enhance the quality of learning experiences in literacy and numeracy, and is committed to the ongoing purchase of teaching materials and books identified in the recent mathematics audit. Resources in other areas are satisfactory, apart from information technology, religious education, history and geography. There are few reference books for teachers or children, and few artefacts to complement the learning about faiths identified in the locally agreed syllabus. In the majority of classrooms, there is only one computer, which is now insufficient for classes of thirty pupils. Most resources used for regular activities are kept in individual classrooms and are easily accessible to the children.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63 In order to build on the many strengths of the school, the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

- Improve assessment procedures further by:
  - Establishing systematic whole school procedures to record pupils' progress in the short term;
  - Using assessment to set targets for individual improvement in literacy and numeracy;
  - Revising the marking policy to include current practice;*(Reference paragraphs: 26, 37, 39 and 92)*
- Improve the level of resourcing for information technology and staff expertise in order to raise standards further;  
*(Reference paragraphs: 22, 28, 62, 111 and 113))*
- Improve the quality and range of books in the library and Year 3 and resources in religious education;  
*(Reference paragraphs: 60, 62, 76 and 127)*
- Improve the accommodation in the main building by:
  - Undertaking remedial action to alleviate the damp problems;
  - Redecorating damaged walls;*(Reference paragraph: 59)*
- Develop the roles of co-ordinators in all other subjects by building on the good practice in English and mathematics;  
*(Reference paragraphs: 48, 92, 100, 105, 110, 114, 122 and 127)*

The following minor points for improvement should be considered by the headteacher, staff and governors for inclusion in the action plan:

Handwriting and presentation; *(Reference paragraphs: 5 and 77)*

Planning for religious education and art; *(Reference paragraphs: 28, 96 and 122)*

Systematic planning for work about the rich range of cultures represented in the British Isles; *(Reference paragraph: 32)*

Tracking of the curriculum coverage by pupils in mixed aged classes; *(Reference paragraph: 28)*

Implementation of the new homework policy; *(Reference paragraphs: 26)*

Written reports to parents; *(Reference paragraphs: 41)*

Inclusion of clear success criteria within the school development plan; *(Reference paragraphs: 51)*

Resources for history and geography; *(Reference paragraphs: 62, 105 and 110)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	32
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
0	19%	44%	37%	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	YR- Y3
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) <i>FTE means full-time equivalent</i>	149
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	19
<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR- Y3
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	34
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	18	17	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	15	16	16
	Total	32	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (82)	94 (59)	94 (84)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	18
	Girls	17	17	17
	Total	34	34	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	97 (76)	97 (86)	100 (90)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y3**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	30

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y3**

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	69

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	270,460
Total expenditure	267,728
Expenditure per pupil	1,822
Balance brought forward from previous year	38,628
Balance carried forward to next year	41,360



## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	149
Number of questionnaires returned	53

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	6	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	43	0	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	38	0	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	49	15	2	8
The teaching is good.	72	23	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	47	13	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	28	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	45	4	2	0
The school works closely with parents.	47	42	9	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	42	53	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	53	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	11	40	23	6	21

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

64 Children attend school part-time from September of the school year in which they become five. By half term, all children are in school full-time. They are organised into two classes, according to their age. The older children work in the mixed-age class of reception and Year 1 children, and the younger children work in the reception class. At the time of the inspection, eighteen children in the reception class were still not yet five years of age.

65 Baseline assessments show that there is a wide range of attainment on entry, particularly amongst the older children. Overall it is a little below the local authority average. Some children have particular problems with language. Teachers in both classes use these assessments to plan appropriate activities for the children. The children make good progress in all areas of learning and by the time they are five most children have reached the desirable learning outcomes and are working within the early stages of the National Curriculum. A similar picture of good progress was identified by the last inspection.

#### **Personal and social development**

66 Children develop their personal and social skills well during their first year in school. Teachers have a good understanding of how children learn, and use praise and encouragement to reinforce good learning skills and behaviour. They set high standards of good behaviour and children learn to take turns. They put up their hands, for example, to respond to teacher's questions. During group activities, they share toys and equipment fairly. They clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. The majority of children listen well with sustained concentration to the staff and other children.

#### **Language and Literacy**

67 Teachers feel it is very important to develop good speaking and listening skills from the start. In discussions, for example, children are reminded to put up their hands to answer questions and to listen to their friends. They take home reading books with no text initially so that they can talk about the pictures. This focus on spoken language skills helps them to extend their vocabulary and their understanding of the stories. It also forms a good basis for telling and writing their own stories at a later stage. Staff use good quality books to help children to develop a love of story. In one session, for example, children looked at an enlarged text of '*Each Peach, Pear, Plum,*' to search for hidden characters within the illustrations and identify rhyming words. Teachers combine this focus on story with phonic teaching. In one session, for example, higher attaining pupils showed a good awareness of some of the initial sounds and developed dictionary skills as they used a picture dictionary to help them draw and label their pictures. The teaching of reading is well structured. All children read individually to their teachers and those with older brothers or sisters at the school already know the main characters from the reading scheme. They take home word cards, taken from their book, to match the words onto a picture, a fish, a house or a teddy, for example, and share these with their parents. The very wide range of attainment on entry is particularly noticeable in the children's writing; some children cannot yet make marks on paper, whilst some can write their names. They learn to write their own sentences independently, and these are corrected and over-copied. Higher attaining children can make lists of words from specific initial letters. Handwriting is practised well in preparation for joining letters. The reception team provides very good support and the

children make good progress in developing their language and literacy skills.

### **Mathematics**

68 Children develop their numeracy skills well through practical activities. Their classroom walls reflect their enjoyment of numbers through stories and rhyme, for example '*The Three Little Pigs*' and '*Five Speckled Frogs*'. These reinforce their skills in counting and recognising numbers to ten. Children use handprints to record numbers to ten and count further than this. They develop an understanding of simple number bonds. Lessons are structured very carefully, starting with a shared activity involving all children, followed by well-supported group activities. Consequently much is achieved. In one session, for example, children started by clapping the numbers to fifteen; they then shared an enlarged text and counted the different toys on the page. All children concentrated very well and counted accurately. Children use mathematical language with good understanding. In one session, they worked with floor tiles to show a number more than ten and less than twelve. Another group compared lengths of string to find the shorter and longer piece. Children used number puzzles and play-dough to help their number recognition. For example, they threaded twelve beads on a lace and recorded the pattern. The planning and preparation of resources, the assessment opportunities and the very good liaison between the reception team, enable the children to make good progress in their mathematical understanding.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

69 A topic-based approach is in place throughout the school and the theme this term is *Stories*. Stories are very well used to support the children's learning in their knowledge and understanding of the world. In one session, for example, the story of '*Jasper's Beanstalk*' was used to introduce to work on plants. There were good opportunities for children to discuss how Jasper cared for his plants. Recently children planted sunflower seeds in response to the story '*Daisy's Giant Sunflower*'. They observed plant growth and talked about changes. They have looked at seeds in fruits and have just started a wall frieze of '*Jack and the Beanstalk*'. Children are developing an understanding of place. They have discussed the importance of maps, for example. They are establishing an understanding of their own place in history. Based on the story '*Grandpa Bodley and the Photographs*' they discussed past and present events, relating those to milestones in their lives, for example, their birthdays and starting school. The well-labelled computer helps children to identify the keyboard and monitor and they work confidently on a range of programs which extend their numeracy and literacy skills.

### **Physical development**

70 Children are developing good physical control. They move confidently around the school and playground. Sometimes they work in the school hall and use the space well. In one session, the story of the '*Ugly Duckling*' was the basis of the work. The children practised a range of dance movements, culminating in a complete performance. They used the theme of reflections to copy each other's movements and moved in a sad and lonely way until they transformed into graceful swans. The teaching in this session concentrated on the development of children's spatial awareness, following instructions and moving around safely. The teacher used directional language to enhance learning and extend children's knowledge of *over*, *under*, *through* using the apparatus. There is no designated enclosed outdoor space for children to use during the working day. This was identified by the last inspection as a weakness in provision, but it is hard to see where the school could provide such an opportunity on the present site. Children are developing their

fine motor skills well. A few children have very limited pencil control when they start school, but all children develop their manipulative skills well with the range of appropriate equipment provided. For example, they use paints and brushes, felt pens and scissors well. They make good progress in all aspects of their physical development despite the lack of an outside area.

### **Creative development**

71 Staff provide good opportunities to develop pupils artistic skills. All children contribute to the brightly coloured friezes, which enliven the classroom walls, for example. Their latest work on '*Jack and the Beanstalk*' encouraged them to use fabrics to explore texture. Recently they have worked on printing techniques. They printed the borders on their picture of the *Ugly Duckling* and used sponge printing for the background, for example. They also used a range of techniques, bubble prints, tracing, painting and sticking with tissue paper and foil for a display of fish in the hall. Good attention is paid to developing drawing skills. Children drew and painted pictures of daffodils, after very careful observations of the daffodils on their table. They are also given good opportunities to develop musical skills. In the session seen, they learnt to distinguish between long and short sounds; they identified a range of sounds and sorted instruments into those that made long and short sounds. The children have limited scope for imaginative play and this is an area for further development.

72 Since the time of the previous inspection, the children have continued to make good progress in all areas of learning. The overall quality of the teaching is good. There is very good liaison between the staff and they have already considered the implementation of the early learning goals when planning the curriculum. They use assessment effectively each half term, recording children's phonic skills, knowledge of key words, shapes, number recognition and counting objects. They maintain good contact with parents, who are encouraged to support their children's learning.

### **ENGLISH**

73 National tests and assessments in 1999 show that pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 was well above average in reading and above average in writing. Pupils at Hillside did better than their peers in similar schools in writing and much better in reading. The inspection found that standards are still above average in reading and writing in Year 2. However, the current Year 2 is a small year group with a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs and standards are not quite so high as last year. Pupils' attainment in Year 3 is well above average.

74 Standards in national tests have risen overall since the last inspection, with a slight dip in 1998, when there was a higher than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The school has analysed the relative weakness in writing carefully. Staff have identified the need to improve pupils' spelling and handwriting skills in order to raise standards. The extra focus on these areas is having a positive effect on pupils' work. Over the last four years girls have generally done better than boys in both reading and writing. This reflects the national difference in these subjects, although at Hillside the gap is very slightly wider. The school is aware that they need to monitor this carefully. The school has adopted the national literacy strategy in order to drive up standards further. This is proving an effective decision.

75 Pupils are developing good speaking and listening skills. These are fostered particularly in the introductory part of lessons, when teachers engage pupils in discussion

about the work. Most pupils contribute confidently at these times. They use increasingly complex language as they move through the school. Most teachers manage these sessions well, making sure that as many pupils as possible have the opportunity to contribute and insisting that pupils listen to their friends carefully. Pupils also have the opportunity to develop skills by working collaboratively. In one Year 3 session, for example, pupils worked in pairs to punctuate a text, negotiating the answer between them. Opportunities to speak to a larger audience are less frequent, but when they do occur pupils speak clearly and confidently. In a Year 3 class assembly, for example, all pupils read out a piece on the theme of caring. Drama is not timetabled on a regular basis, but teachers sometimes incorporate drama activities into work on other subjects. Pupils in Year 2 re-enacted the Fire of London, for example, in their history topic. Teachers incorporate the development of speaking and listening skills well into English and other subjects.

76 Pupils' good progress in developing appropriate reading skills goes hand in hand with their growing enjoyment of books and stories. There is a firm structure in place for the teaching of reading. Teachers have a good understanding of phonics and convey this well to the pupils. In one session, for example, younger pupils were building up three-letter words from consonants and vowels and clearly understood what they were doing. They transfer their phonic understanding to reading and explain how they work out new words by 'sounding out' the letters and 'breaking up' the words. Within literacy sessions pupils have frequent opportunities to practise reading, both when they read the class text and when they read in small groups with the teacher. Alongside work in the literacy hour pupils improve their skills by reading independently. Staff base this work on a published scheme and pupils take their books home regularly to share with their parents or carers. This has a positive effect on their progress and their home school diaries provide an effective dialogue between home and school. Staff also place a good emphasis on the use of good quality literature in school, especially in the literacy hour, and this helps pupils to see models of good writing. This ranged from *'Each peach pear plum'* by Allan Ahlberg in the youngest class to a poem by WH Auden in Year 3. Pupils are developing a good understanding of how books work. In the reception and Year 1, for example, pupils know the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 went on to discuss how a text could be both, when they looked at a story based on Van Gogh's work in the South of France. Some older pupils are clear about the importance of contents and index pages in non-fiction books. Pupils are building up firm preferences for the work of different authors. In Year 2 and 3 this is fostered well by a lively display on the work of Roald Dahl. In some classes space is rather limited and book trolleys are only opened during reading sessions. These are usually kept tidily, but in some areas the books are not stored well and this does not encourage pupils to browse or select books. There are currently insufficient fiction books for higher attaining pupils in Year 3. Good use is made of the local library to encourage pupils to read widely. The school's own library is also potentially a useful resource, but many of the books are well used and worn. Book weeks and book fairs are also used well by the school to enrich the teaching in this area.

77 The school has concentrated on improving writing skills for the last two years. Most pupils write at levels expected for their age, but few do better. Staff have identified both spelling and handwriting as skills which need improving. There has been a good focus on spelling and staff are developing a new homework pack for parents, so that they can help their children at home. Pupils use appropriate spelling strategies in their writing and try to build up words phonetically. Most pupils in Year 1, for example, spell monosyllabic words correctly or use an understandable phonic equivalent. Older pupils are building up polysyllabic words in a similar way. Staff mark pupils' work conscientiously and give them good pointers for improvement, so that pupils realise the errors that they have made. In the

literacy hour staff find that they have less time to mark work with the pupils than was previously the case and are developing a colourful marking system to help pupils progress. Handwriting remains untidy in some pupils' work and few older pupils are joining consistently. Most pupils form their letters correctly but many press very heavily with their pencils. The co-ordinator is piloting whole class handwriting sessions to see if these have a positive impact on standards. Punctuation is taught well and pupils generally apply what they know well in their writing. Teachers plan a reasonable range of writing activities and use other subjects, such as history well to develop pupils writing skills. Pupils also have regular opportunities to work on computers to word process their work. Sometimes, when pupils are asked to write for a specific purpose, such as to accompany a display or make their own books, the overall quality of the work is lifted.

78 Pupils with special educational needs in the area of English are taught well. They are well supported in lessons, with appropriate activities planned for them. During the week some of these pupils receive extra help both within lessons and in small groups in the resources room. Some pupils work on an additional literacy support programme with a support assistant and some have extra writing sessions with the headteacher. Pupils achieve well in these sessions and make good progress.

79 The overall teaching of English is good and this is a significant contributory factor to the good progress that pupils make as they move through the school. Staff have worked hard to implement the literacy strategy and the planning for sessions is very detailed. Resources are well prepared and the school has invested wisely in a range of books to support work in lessons. Support assistants are particularly well deployed and provide very effective help for individuals and groups of pupils. In some lessons pupils are a little noisy in the group work part of the session and this is sometimes distracting for others. Teachers usually manage the plenary well at the end of each session to reinforce the main points of the lesson.

80 The experienced co-ordinator has a clear picture of the strengths and areas for improvement within English. She is involved, with the headteacher, in monitoring teaching and has a good understanding of standards throughout the school. She is supportive to colleagues and has co-ordinated the recent staff training effectively. The literacy governor knows the school well and has been fully involved with staff in the literacy training. She helps in classrooms and so has a good understanding of how the literacy strategy is being implemented.

## **MATHEMATICS**

81 Pupils' attainment in test results in Key Stage 1 in 1999 was very high in relation to the national average and in the top five per cent of all schools. Higher attaining pupils did particularly well. On average, over the last four years, girls did better than boys. The school has not yet fully analysed the reasons for this. Overall standards have risen considerably in national tests since the time of the last inspection.

82 The inspection found that standards are still well above average at the end of Year 2 and when pupils leave the school. Standards in mathematics throughout the school have risen since the previous inspection, when they were in line with national standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Year 3.

83 The school has worked hard to implement the national numeracy strategy. Because of the mixed-age classes, teachers plan very carefully together, considering both the age and ability of the pupils. Numeracy skills are well taught. All lessons start with an oral activity,

when pupils concentrate on their mental mathematics. In one session, for example, the younger pupils counted in tens forwards and backwards to one hundred. They discussed strategies for adding six to five, where some doubled five and added one, some doubled six and subtracted one, and some pupils counted on from six. Tasks set are appropriate for pupils of different levels of attainment. Pupils learnt to combine numbers through practical activities, for example, and made *trains* of five, when counting beyond ten. In another session pupils worked well independently. They looked for numbers that totalled ten for quick calculations. They counted, ordered, added and subtracted, with apparatus. In a second session seen, pupils were learning to estimate without counting. They took a handful of cubes and guessed how many they held. They then counted accurately to confirm their estimate. In these sessions additional adult support had a positive impact on pupils' learning.

84 Work is very well matched to pupils' needs in Year 2. In their oral activities, for example, they used patterns of ten for adding and knew that if seven add three make ten, seventy and thirty make one hundred and seven hundred and three hundred total one thousand. They know that *estimation* means a sensible guess and in practical tasks, they use a range of resources, candles, potatoes, coins and cubes, which they estimate and then total accurately. They use cube sticks, number lines and hundred squares for further practice of estimation. Activities are well planned for the higher attaining pupils. In one session Year 2 pupils used completely blank squares and were given specific numbers to insert. Pupils discuss their work using mathematical language; they recall addition and subtraction facts well and are beginning to understand place value. Pupils respond with enthusiasm in the plenary sessions and these are used very effectively to assess pupils' understanding.

85 Pupils in Key Stage 2 also have very carefully structured lessons. In one introductory activity, pupils had to find different ways of making twenty using all four rules, first with two numbers, and then with three numbers. They used a range of strategies correctly. The main part of the lesson centred on the teaching of vertical addition and pupils formulated their own examples. There was insufficient focus on presentation, so that the higher attaining pupils, who chose to use numbers totalling over one thousand and did not take enough care with setting out their work properly, recorded the total incorrectly. Lower attaining pupils had good support from the class teacher and the work was appropriately matched to their needs.

86 The quality of teaching is very good overall, mainly due to the careful planning, preparation of resources and liaison with the support staff. Lessons are well structured and work is well matched for the differing abilities and age groups. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to raise pupils' self-confidence. Their very good subject knowledge enables pupils to understand and use mathematical vocabulary correctly, for example, when estimating or combining and partitioning numbers to find ten. The older pupils' attention is drawn to the targets for the lesson which are written on the board. Careful explanations of independent activities enable pupils to start work immediately without wasting time and a brisk pace ensures that these activities are completed. The plenary is used well to assess pupils' understanding and achievement. A new assessment scheme is in place, but activities do not always focus on previous teaching, so results may be misinterpreted; nor is the information used to set individual targets for pupils. Presentation of work in both Key Stages needs attention. Some of the younger pupils' worksheets are untidily attached; the older pupils do not record their work neatly or use rulers to mark off answers.

87 The subject is very well managed, although the co-ordinator has only been in post since

January. She has a very clear picture of her role. She has already observed all staff teaching, ensuring the three-part lesson structure is in place. She has planned a training session for teachers, supply teachers and governors. She ensures that teachers' planning sheets focus on learning objectives, coverage for the mixed age groups and progression. An audit of mathematical resources has been undertaken and all teachers have an appropriate range of resources in their classrooms. A central collection of clearly labelled apparatus includes enlarged texts for the younger children. The governor with responsibility for numeracy has worked closely with parents to prepare extra resources. She has helped in all classrooms, to sharpen her knowledge of the numeracy strategy, and has attended training days and a curriculum evening. She is extremely enthusiastic about the new structure and the pupils' attainment.

88 Future areas for development include assessment, homework, purchase of computer software and the encouragement of parental support. An annotated file of work is currently being prepared and a games club, where pupils can borrow mathematical games to share with parents, is to start shortly.

## **SCIENCE**

89 The results of national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that in 1999 all pupils attained the expected Level 2. This is very high in comparison with the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was average. Compared to schools of similar background, standards were very high for Level 2 and average for Level 3. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 3 the majority of pupils are in line to attain standards that are above national expectations. Substantial minorities in both year groups are attaining standards that are considerably higher than expected, although smaller numbers in Year 2 than in Year 3. Better teaching and improved planning have resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be satisfactory. Standards now are consistently good throughout the school.

90 Thorough planning by teachers ensures that pupils make good gains in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Overall, they make good progress. Almost all pupils currently nearing the end of Key Stage 1 are working at least at expected levels. They describe the basic conditions needed by plants and animals for survival and recognise that different living things are found in different places such as the playground and grassy areas. Higher attaining pupils successfully use their knowledge of life processes to describe the differences between living and non-living things and identify ways in which animals are suited to their environments. In their study of materials and of physical processes, almost all pupils are again attaining at least expected levels although progress is slower in these aspects of the science curriculum. It is clear from pupils' past work that greater attention is given to the study of life processes and living things. In addition, advantage is taken of opportunities in physical education, for example, to discuss health related exercise and this enhances pupils' learning in this area. Pupils continue to make good progress in Year 3 and good standards are maintained. Throughout the school there is an appropriate focus on experimental and investigative work in lessons. However, these skills are not being developed systematically in order to ensure, for example, that pupils move progressively from describing events to explaining them, developing more sophisticated methods of recording their observations and communicating information.

91 Overall the quality of teaching is good. It ranges from satisfactory to very good in lessons, although there are a small number of weaknesses. Good teaching, combined successfully with pupils' good attitudes and behaviour, makes a significant contribution to



the good quality of pupils' learning throughout the school. Teachers' good knowledge of science is a particular strength, which is effectively supported by the recent adoption of a nationally recommended scheme of work. It is clearly evident in the skilful questioning and clear explanations, which are features of all successful lessons. While setting up an investigation into the conditions for plant growth, for example, pupils responded quickly and confidently because they knew exactly what was expected of them. Teachers select and manage resources thoughtfully. Often this results in great interest and well-channelled enthusiasm, and therefore more effective learning, as for example with younger pupils in their exploration of the similarities and differences between a variety of seeds. Weaknesses in teaching and learning occur when teachers' strategies for gaining and holding the attention of pupils are not effective. When this happens pupils lose concentration and this affects the continuity of the lesson. In some classes, and particularly among the older pupils, the presentation of pupils' work is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not always insist that pupils pay due care and attention to the conventions of neatly and accurately presented writing and diagrams when recording the results of their practical investigations. Pupils, therefore, do not always develop a sense of pride in their achievements.

92 Following the introduction of the newly adopted scheme of work, teachers' planning effectively covers all of the programmes of study. However, the ongoing assessment of pupils' attainment in science remains underdeveloped. The co-ordinator is an experienced teacher who has only recently taken on this additional responsibility. His role, and particularly his monitoring of standards and quality of teaching, has not yet been systematically addressed.

## **ART**

93 Only one lesson was seen during the inspection and judgements are also based on pupils' work and teachers' planning. On this fairly limited evidence, it is evident that standards are broadly average and that pupils make steady progress through the school. This is a similar picture to that painted by the last inspection and the school has maintained, rather than developed teaching and learning in the subject since that time.

94 However there have been some exciting initiatives that have lifted the experiences for the pupils and helped them to appreciate the joy of creativity. Last summer, for example, WEAZ funded an artist to work with pupils, teachers and parents for one day a week, for an eight week period, to create a wooden sculpture in the playground based on the birds found in the area. Pupils benefited from the opportunity to work with a real artist and began to appreciate what it was like to work as a craftsman. They planned their work very carefully, for example, and worked well together to produce a lively playground 'wall' of colourful birds. The experience of working on a joint project has been carried over well into the recent hall display. In this, each class has contributed a mural to depict a scene in the life of 'The little mermaid'. Paint and paper collage are used to portray the scenes and these are colourful and lively.

95 In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching was very good and great care was taken to help pupils in the reception and Year 1 develop their colour mixing skills. Consequently pupils achieved good standards. They all clearly understood how to make different shades of green and were very involved in experimenting with the paint on paper. Work on display around the school does not give such a clear indication of progression in the skills of drawing, painting, printing, collage, fabric and three-dimensional work. This is largely because the current scheme does not clearly identify how pupils build on skills as they move from one year to another, with much of the work linked to current topics. The school

is aware of this and intends to address the issue soon. Currently there is a strong emphasis on paper collage, but less attention given to printing and fabric work. At the moment there is little work related to the work of famous artists in the school and again this is because the scheme of work is not sufficiently structured. This was an area highlighted for improvement by the last inspection. However, in one class the teacher has made good use of the literacy hour to extend pupils' knowledge about Vincent Van Gogh.

96 The co-ordinator has taken on responsibility for the subject this term and has identified appropriate areas for development, including planning and the development of textile work. Resources are kept in classrooms and in the practical area outside Year 3 and are accessible to the pupils. Some special resources and supplies of paper are stored centrally. Overall these resources are adequate.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

97 The school has maintained the standards in design and technology that were reported by the previous inspection. The majority of pupils throughout the school attain standards which are broadly in line with those normally expected of pupils of similar ages. They acquire a basic knowledge of the designing and making processes and develop sound skills within the range of opportunities provided by the school. However, teachers do not provide sufficient support to enable pupils to develop increasingly effective methods of recording their design processes, for example by providing prompts and headings to encourage pupils to organise their views and to consider improvements more systematically.

98 From the outset, teachers create a learning environment in which the youngest pupils are effectively introduced to the particular skills of design and technology. Pupils experience a satisfactory variety of media including paper, card, textiles, food, reclaimed materials and construction kits. They follow instructions while exploring and producing a number of mechanisms such as sliding, rotating and hinged to create interesting moving models of flowers and butterflies. By the end of Key Stage 1, teachers effectively extend these early skills by using the computer to add a further dimension to the process as pupils design and then sew a coat for Joseph. In their writing, they demonstrate a good understanding of how things work as they investigate and evaluate the quality of movement in finger, stick and string puppets. They begin to draw successfully on their own experiences of materials and techniques and to reflect on their own ideas. In Year 3, teachers continue to build on these early skills. They provide pupils with opportunities to consider the structure of existing products before designing their own photograph frames. The majority of pupils come to appreciate the importance of the triangle in ensuring strength and stability.

99 Observation of group activities, teachers' plans and pupils' work shows that teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the distinctive requirements of the subject and they plan interesting and challenging tasks. Teaching is particularly effective when staff establish links with other subjects. In Year 3, for example, arising from their current science topic, pupils investigate the possibilities of using pneumatics to lift objects and successfully incorporate their knowledge and understanding into their designs of moving monsters. This successful strategy has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning, ensuring that it is meaningful and purposeful. It also enhances their progress in science. In Years 2 and 3, pupils usefully discuss their plans and support each other's learning by sharing ideas as a result of the co-operative attitudes promoted by the teacher. Weaknesses in teaching and learning occur when some teachers accept pupils' work, especially in their design books, which is poorly presented.

On these occasions, there is too little emphasis, for example, on accurately labelled diagrams and clearly written descriptions. On other occasions, when the management of behaviour is not firm enough, pupils lose concentration and fail to complete tasks satisfactorily.

100 Design and technology is managed by a teacher who has only recently joined the school. She has had few opportunities, therefore, to exercise her leadership responsibilities. In common with other foundation subjects, the role of the co-ordinator is underdeveloped throughout the school. Resources for the subject are just adequate.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

101 Two lessons were seen during the inspection and inspectors also looked at pupils' work and teachers' planning. It is evident that pupils make sound progress and that their achievements are broadly in line with levels expected for their age. This is a similar picture to that found at the time of the last inspection.

102 The school has recently adopted a published national scheme, which clearly sets out the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across all geographical themes. The school has yet to adapt the scheme in order to make sure that pupils in mixed aged classes do not repeat or miss work.

103 In the lessons seen, teachers planned well and there was a clear focus on the development of geographical skills. In one session with reception and Year 1 pupils, for example, the pupils looked at photographs of a recent trip to describe features of their local community. They successfully identified places such as the library and the church and built up an understanding of the meaning of near and far. In Years 2 and 3, pupils considered how weather conditions affected the choice of clothes to take on holiday and thought carefully about the weather in a range of places.

104 Pupils' work shows that there is reasonable coverage of studies of places as well as work on developing skills such as mapwork. Pupils in Year 2, for example have looked at the differences between India and England and pupils in Year 3 have looked at maps of the local area and used one figure co-ordinates to locate places. There are one or two displays in classrooms to remind pupils of people and places around the world.

105 The quality of the teaching in the lessons seen was sound and pupils' work indicates that this is normally the case. Planning is generally good and teachers prepare well for lessons, although the resources available are fairly limited. The co-ordinator is also responsible for history. There has been a high focus on developments in literacy and numeracy recently and the co-ordinator has had little opportunity to monitor standards and provision. Consequently he does not have a clear overview of work in the school.

## **HISTORY**

106 Pupils achieved well in the two lessons seen during the inspection and their knowledge and understanding of chronology is in line with levels expected for their age. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about pupils' attainment in other key skills, such as historical enquiry.

107 The last inspection did not collect sufficient evidence to make a judgement about standards, but identified the need for a long term planning document. The school has recently adopted a published national scheme. As in geography, this has yet to be adapted

so that pupils in mixed-aged classes do not repeat or miss work as they move through the school.

108 Pupils are developing a sense of the passing of time. In Year 1, for example, the pupils are led towards this by comparing old toys with new. They have a clear concept of a period existing before they were born, when life was different. The teacher developed this theme well in her interesting discussion on the comparison between old and new toys. This was brought alive by a very good collection of old toys. In Year 2, pupils often work on a time line related to their topic to help them to set their work in the past. This is true for their work on the Great Fire of London and Florence Nightingale. Pupils in Year 3 are using dates more precisely in their study of Tudor times. They have a clear understanding of the sequence of Henry VIII's wives, for example.

109 Teachers plan well to develop pupils' understanding of past events and as a result they are building up a bank of information about the past. Pupils in Year 2 are fascinated, for example, by the Great Fire of London. They understand how it spread so quickly and how it was contained. They appreciate that some of our present understanding of past events is based on contemporary information, such as Pepys' diary. Little incidents stick in their minds, which help to bring the past alive. Several pupils, for example, were fascinated by Pepys' buried cheese. Pupils in Year 3 were similarly caught up by detail. Anne Boleyn's sixth finger was a source of wonder in this year group. In their planning teachers do not always make sufficient reference to historical skills relating to enquiry and interpretation. Consequently some pupils are unsure about how to find out about the past.

110 At the moment a new co-ordinator is preparing to take on the subject. There has not been a developmental focus on history recently and there is little overview of standards through the school. Resources are barely adequate. Opportunities to use the school building and local area to develop historical awareness are not fully developed.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

111 The previous inspection found standards of attainment to be in line with national expectations in Key Stage 1 and better than expected in Key Stage 2. Currently, at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Year 3, the majority of pupils attain standards which broadly match those expected nationally. The school has correctly identified weaknesses in subject knowledge among both teachers and classroom assistants. This clearly has a negative impact on their confidence in the teaching and use of information technology. As a result of recent national developments the school recognises that it has to work more rigorously to bring standards in information technology more closely in line with those seen in English, mathematics and science. The school is well supported by the Weston Education Achievement Zone in its plans to address this issue. Although there have been recent improvements to the level, range and quality of resources available, the ratio of one computer to more than 25 pupils limits pupils' access and therefore the development of higher order skills.

112 In Key Stage 1, the quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory and teachers maintain this provision in Year 3. Pupils enjoy their work using the computers and are enthused and motivated by the activities to which they have access, for example in Years 2 and 3 when using the computer to design a hand puppet. As a result they make satisfactory progress, making clear gains in the use of a range of drawing tools and saving their finished and unfinished work. Teachers introduce younger pupils to word processing. They produce simple unedited work or final drafts with word processing programs, carrying out basic editing such as back delete and using the arrow to position the cursor. They use the

keyboard and mouse confidently and select from simple menu options, for example when using Maths Workshop to enhance their learning of addition and subtraction facts to ten and beyond. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 3, pupils will have experienced a satisfactory range of information technology applications. They handle data on means of transport, pets and favourite foods and have accessed a CD-ROM to carry out research as part of their current study of the Tudors. They have used the Internet to seek information on the weather although they have not yet used the school's recently installed e-mail facility.

113 Although there was little evidence of pupils being directly supported or taught during the inspection, the quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory. Teachers in all classes plan appropriately for the use of classroom-based computers to support pupils' learning, and they provide opportunities for pupils to experience a reasonably balanced programme of experiences. The shared use of computers is an important factor in developing pupils' abilities to work collaboratively, and therefore makes a significant contribution to their personal and social development. While these opportunities in lessons contribute satisfactorily to pupils' learning in information technology they considerably enhance their learning in other subjects. This is particularly evident in literacy and numeracy, making an effective contribution to the high standards seen in English and mathematics. Weaknesses in teaching are concerned mainly with teachers' lack of subject knowledge. As a result, they do not give enough emphasis to the focused and developmental teaching of basic skills within the different strands of information technology itself to raise standards in the use, for example, of modelling, measurement and control.

114 The curriculum is broad and well balanced although it is not yet being fully implemented in order to ensure that pupils' learning develops in a planned and progressive way. Although teachers use the newly adopted scheme of work to make day to day judgements about pupils' progress, assessment procedures are unsatisfactory. The newly appointed deputy headteacher, in addition to her other responsibilities, has taken on the co-ordinator's role on a temporary basis pending the appointment of a permanent post-holder. She provides satisfactory leadership. The subject is included in the school development plan as a major priority for the year 2000, which will be necessary to raise both its status within the school and the standards attained by pupils.

## **MUSIC**

115 Standards of attainment in music are in line with national expectations. A published music scheme with taped resources provides a structured approach and encourages continuity and progression. Observations are limited to only one lesson but attendance at assemblies and music practice, and discussions with the co-ordinator confirm these findings. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and pupils, particularly those in Year 3, show an awareness of pulse and dynamics in their singing.

116 Pupils are very enthusiastic about their music lessons and are well controlled during their sessions, an improvement since the previous inspection. They differentiate between loud and quiet sounds. They gave examples such as breathing, rustling, purring, clocks ticking and a gentle breeze. In contrast they suggested stamping, doors slamming, shouting and an alarm clock. They then represented these sounds as symbols, a good introduction to graphic notation. Some imaginative pupils depicted cymbals with sound waves and a fire engine to show examples of loud sounds. They listen well to the taped music and identify the loud and quiet sounds they hear.

117 In the lesson and music practice seen, teaching was good, with high expectations of

good behaviour and excellent control, so that pupils stop practising their sounds immediately and are ready to listen. An introductory discussion assesses pupils' understanding and the good organisation of resources and support staff enables pupils to start their drawing without wasting time. The brisk pace ensures all pupils complete the planned activities. Singing, in the practice session, was good. Pupils learned all the hymns by rote and there was a focus on posture, good breathing and diction. The lively piano accompaniment encouraged all pupils to join in, although even better results would have been achieved if pupils had stood up for their final performance.

118 Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. There was a real reluctance to teach music and so the published music scheme was introduced, which was accessible to all members of staff, particularly non-specialists, and was simple to use. The profile of the subject has been raised. There has been some monitoring of teaching and confidence has improved with the use of the scheme's explicit learning objectives. Music is chosen for assembly to link with the planned topic. There is a range of well-known classical music but very little music from other cultures; this is an area for development as records are gradually being replaced with CDs. Music in assembly is well chosen to link with the planned theme and offers good opportunities for quiet reflection. Simple explanations help the pupils to understand more about the composer or the instruments. Because of the difficult access to percussion instruments in the main building, teachers keep their own selection of instruments in the classroom. This gives pupils the opportunity for further practice of skills during the week. Some pupils have the opportunity to learn a tuned instrument and there are two recorder groups, one for beginners and one for intermediate pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

119 Throughout the school, standards of attainment are in line with those expected nationally, and are similar to those in the previous inspection. The range of activities within the curriculum is limited by inadequacies in the school's accommodation. Within these constraints, however, teachers try hard to ensure that they provide a balanced programme of worthwhile physical activities including dance, games, gymnastics and athletics, with the addition of swimming in Year 3. Nevertheless, pupils have no regular access to a playing field and the small playground slopes quite steeply. Unavoidably, these factors adversely affect the quality of pupils' learning in athletics and games. During the inspection, dance and gymnastics were taught and observed in Key Stage 1. No lessons were seen in Key Stage 2 because these were timetabled later in the week, after the inspection had finished.

120 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils clearly recognise the changes occurring in their bodies during exercise and teachers provide them with good opportunities to talk about the effects on their hearts, breathing and muscles. This makes a major contribution to the good attitudes pupils are developing towards a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' learning about this aspect of physical education is considerably enhanced by the effective links which teachers establish with health education and the science curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a good response in dance to varied musical stimuli exploring a range of imaginative movements at high and low levels. In gymnastics, they show a good awareness of space and others, while performing a sound range of balance and travel skills both on and off the apparatus.

121 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are good role models. They have the full respect of pupils who listen attentively and follow instructions quickly and safely. This is particularly relevant in lessons in the hall where there are a number of potential hazards including a television, chairs and tables. On a day to day basis, teachers deal effectively with this issue by setting out markers around the hall to separate the safe working area

from the surrounding swamp, which is inhabited by the pupil-eating crocodiles. Pupils respond positively to this approach, although a more permanent solution would ensure a safer and larger workspace. In the most successful lesson, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent. Their natural enthusiasm and exuberance were channelled effectively into learning by the teacher, who was secure in her knowledge of dance and therefore confident in her skilful interactions with pupils. Her regular interventions to make helpful suggestions enabled pupils to make good progress. A weakness in teaching occurs when there is insufficient emphasis on the cycle of pupils planning, performing and evaluating their own and others' actions in order to help them improve.

122 The recently appointed co-ordinator is also relatively new to the school. She has had few opportunities to develop her leadership role. At present there is insufficient guidance for teachers to ensure that pupils' skills are developed progressively, building systematically on their earlier experiences. Overall, therefore, despite the good quality of teaching observed, pupils do not attain standards that are any better than those expected for their ages. However, the good capacity for improvement is clearly evident in both pupils' and teachers' very positive responses to the work of a visiting dance specialist. The project, funded by the Weston Education Achievement Zone has had a marked and lasting impact on teaching and learning. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils in Year 3 to take part in extra-curricular activities including football and gymnastics, and this makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

123 The school has maintained the satisfactory standards seen in the previous inspection and pupils' attainment meets the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. Two lessons were seen during the inspection, one at Key Stage 1 and one for pupils in Years 2 and 3. Judgements have also been based on pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with the co-ordinator. The concern from the previous inspection, the lack of a school scheme to support a coherent programme of work, has been addressed, and a comprehensive scheme of work has been completed. However, a new locally agreed syllabus has been published and the school is to take advice on re-writing their existing schemes.

124 The main school topic on '*Stories*' is the focus for lessons at Key Stage 1. Pupils learn that stories are very important in all faiths and especially to the Hindu people in order to pass on religious knowledge and teaching. All pupils were involved in sharing a well-illustrated enlarged text, '*My Hindu Faith*', in one session and learnt that Hindus worship at home or in a '*mandir*', a temple. They learnt about *Ganesh*, who is very wise and is believed to bring good luck, and the meaning of some of the particular vocabulary used in the Hindu faith, for example, Brahman, who hears prayers. Pupils understand that different beliefs are to be respected.

125 Older pupils also learn about the Hindu faith, but concentrate on the festival of '*Holi*'. They understand the term festival and are able to give other examples of celebrations, for example, Hallowe'en. They know that mainly Indian people believe in the Hindu faith and '*Holi*' is a spring festival.

126 Teaching is good at Key Stage 1. Sensitive questioning assessed pupils' understanding and clear aims for the lesson ensured that pupils understood the importance of stories. There were opportunities for pupils' own reflections and questions were answered appropriately, due to the good subject knowledge of the teacher. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. Limited resources restricted pupils' learning, and they found it

difficult to empathise without the support of illustrations of this colourful festival. Pupils were seated on the carpet for the entire lesson; there was no opportunity for written work. They had already been sitting there for the plenary session of the previous lesson, and so behaviour was poor and pupils were at times inattentive.

127 The subject co-ordination is limited because the co-ordinator has only been in post since January. The school is aware of the areas for development. These include, the problems associated with planning for mixed ages and key stages; the amount of time given to religious education as a subject in its own right, as distinct from personal, health and social education; written recording and implementing a scheme of work based on the locally agreed syllabus. Although there are some resources in school, these are very limited and other teachers do not know exactly what there is. There are few reference books for staff or children, and a very small box of artefacts for all three faiths studied. The school uses visitors well and one visitor to the school talked about the Muslim faith and the style of dress and artefacts used to celebrate her faith, for example.