

INSPECTION REPORT

GRANGE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Letchworth

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117122

Head teacher: Mrs J Sandell

Reporting inspector: Geoff Jones
11816

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th July 2001

Inspection number: 192318

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 – 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sparhawke Letchworth Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Elliott
Date of previous inspection:	24 th – 28 th February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Geoff Jones 11816	Registered inspector	English Information and Communication Technology Physical Education	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Richard Barnard 13526	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Christine Canniff 18703	Team inspector	Science Art History Music Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
Peter Dexter 14976	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and Technology Geography Religious Education Special Educational Needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Grange Junior School is average in size and has 234 pupils aged seven to eleven years of age. When the present Year 6 pupils were admitted to the school in 1997 their attainments were below average. The area served by the school is predominantly local authority housing with a significant proportion of families living in purpose built flats. Since the last inspection two head teachers have left the school with a third head teacher being newly appointed in September 2000. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is 31 and the number speaking English as an additional language is 10. One pupil has a statement of special educational need and a further 76 pupils are on the special needs register. This accounts for 37 per cent of the school roll and this is above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a sound education for its pupils. Although the pupils' standards in English and mathematics are below national expectations the school is attempting successfully to improve standards. This task is made more difficult by the increasingly high percentage of pupils with special educational needs which has a detrimental effect on standards overall. Pupils' attainments in science and information and communication technology are above what is expected for eleven year olds. The quality of teaching is sound and pupils' learning is satisfactory. The leadership and management of the head teacher and other key members of staff is effective and ensures that the pace of change is suitable for the needs of the school. The governors support the school very well and are committed and very involved in its development. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The pupils' attainments in information and communication technology and science at the age of eleven are above the level expected at that age.
- There is good provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
- The contribution of the community to pupils' learning and the constructiveness of the relationships with the school's partner institutions.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is good.
- The good behaviour, personal development and good attendance of the pupils.
- The leadership and management of the head teacher, governors and key staff are good.

What could be improved

- Standards in English and mathematics are below national expectations.
- Procedures for assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory.
- The system of monitoring teaching could be developed further.
- The information provided for parents is unsatisfactory and could be improved.
- The role of the subject co-ordinators is not well developed and they are not as effective in managing development as they should be.
- The balance of time allocated to foundation subjects could be improved.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Since that time standards in English and mathematics have declined but this is mainly due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, the school copes well with providing the extra support necessary for these 77 pupils. Pupils' attainments in information and communication technology and in design and technology have improved. Teacher's personal skills in information and communication technology have improved since the last inspection and their skills in teaching design and technology have also advanced. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has decreased, but the percentage of very good or better teaching has diminished. The good provision for pupils with special educational needs has been maintained but the use of assessment to inform planning and develop the curriculum has deteriorated. There is now more emphasis on multicultural education and the governing body is more closely involved in decisions concerned with the school development plan and is more aware of the pupils' standards that are published annually. The governors' annual report now meets legal requirements.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	D	C	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	D	D	D	E	
Science	B	A	B	B	

The above table shows that the school's national test results in the year 2000 were well below average for English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. Compared with similar schools the results show that English and mathematics were well below average and science was above average. Standards of work seen during the inspection show that English and mathematics are at the level expected and that science is above national expectations. The school's test results in English and mathematics have remained almost consistently below average over the past four years. Conversely, the science results have either been above or well above average during this period. An analysis of the attainments of the eleven year olds compared with what they were like when they entered the school shows that their achievements are satisfactory because of the high proportion of special needs pupils. The school's targets set by the local authority have not been achieved, mainly because they were unrealistically high. The standards of other work seen during the inspection show that pupils' attainments are above national expectations in information and communication technology and are at the level expected in religious education. All other areas of the curriculum met with national expectations with the exception of music where there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to school and enjoy coming to school. They have sound concentration and show interest in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour throughout the school is good in lessons as well as in the playground and during assemblies. Pupils know the school rules well and recognise the effect their own behaviour has on others.
Personal development and relationships	Teachers provide very good role models for courtesy and fairness. Pupils take on responsibility willingly. Relationships among pupils and between adults and pupils are good.
Attendance	Attendance is above national averages and unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

Pupils' personal development is good. They undertake a wide range of duties and carry out them out with care. The School Council provides good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others. Older pupils are keen to help younger pupils. For example, Year 5 pupils help infants with reading.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	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 quality of teaching is sound throughout the school. Teaching was very good or better in four per cent of the 45 lessons seen, good in 40 per cent, satisfactory in 51 per cent and unsatisfactory in five per cent. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has decreased significantly since the last inspection and teaching is much more focused on the needs of pupils, particularly in English and to a lesser extent in mathematics. The quality of English teaching is sound. Pupils have opportunities to practise writing in a range of subjects across the curriculum. Mathematics teaching is also sound and pupils apply the mathematics they have learned by, for example, calculating averages of the length of jumps they have achieved in physical education lessons. Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily by teachers and pupils achieve soundly as a result. Numeracy skills are taught less effectively because a number of teachers are not using the National Numeracy Strategy to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily and are supported well in the classroom. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are provided with support when they need it. The strengths in the teaching were the good planning and the good management of pupils' behaviour, resulting in good concentration and heightened interest in the lesson. Weaknesses in the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons centre around the poor use of learning resources to assist pupils' learning and in not using agreed strategies to meet the needs of the pupils. Pupils' own knowledge of their learning is underdeveloped. Targets including those in the pupils' exercise books are not maintained throughout the school year and targets contained in the annual report on their progress are bland and focus on social issues. Teachers do not have a system of recording assessments of pupils' attainments and this results in a lack of sharing of information.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The range and quality are sound as well as the strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Although all the required subjects are provided there is an imbalance in the amount of time allocated to some of these. There is effective provision for sex education and education on drugs misuse.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is sound. Pupils are provided with carefully constructed individual educational plans. These are reviewed regularly and further targets set for pupils to attain. Pupils are well supported in the classrooms by classroom assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language require little extra support and are well provided for in their classes.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good. There are good opportunities for pupils to undertake responsibility, particularly in Year 6. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Provision for their spiritual development is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good. Monitoring of attendance is also good. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, progress and personal development are all unsatisfactory.

The school has not yet re-established effective links with its parents. They are not well informed about their children's curriculum or about progress made in school. The curriculum provided by the school contains all the required subjects. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is good. Too much time is allocated to physical education in comparison with other foundation subjects. For example, the amount of time allocated to physical education in Year 3 is equal to the combined time provided for history, geography,

design and technology, music, and religious education. As a result, some lessons in these subjects are too short for pupils to learn effectively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The recently appointed head teacher provides good leadership and is keen to improve the work of the school. The deputy head teacher and key subject co-ordinators work closely with the head teacher to develop the curriculum and improve pupils' standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and play an effective role in shaping its direction. They work hard and successfully fulfil their statutory duties.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Subject co-ordinators do not analyse annual national test results to identify strengths and weaknesses and to set targets. The criteria for judging the success of initiatives in the school improvement plan are not linked sufficiently to improvements in pupils' attainments for the school to be able to judge its performance.
The strategic use of resources	Classroom assistants work hard, are effective and work very closely with teachers. The office staff provide a good administration service for the school. The budget is used wisely. The grant for special educational needs and the standards fund are used effectively to raise standards in the school.

The school is well staffed with teachers. This has enabled the deputy head teacher to concentrate on improving the learning of pupils with special educational needs. The school's accommodation is spacious but the pupils' toilets are in need of renovation. The quality and quantity of learning resources are satisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. As yet, the school has not sought the opinions of parents and it has not yet challenged itself sufficiently to improve its provision in line with good similar schools.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best; • The school is well managed; • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with a problem; • Behaviour is good; • The school helps children become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework children are expected to do at home; • The way the school works closely with parents; • The information about how their children are getting on at school; • The activities provided for children outside of lessons.

The inspection team agrees with all the positive views of parents. It agrees with all but one of the main negative points arising from an analysis of the parents' questionnaire. Inspectors feel that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. These include football, netball, rounders and badminton as well as providing opportunities to play in the school orchestra, playground games for Year 3 pupils, information and communication technology, science club and the chance to go on residential visits to places of educational interest. Annual written reports on pupils do not give appropriate information to parents and do not provide challenging targets for each pupil to work towards. The inspection team considers that arrangements for homework could be improved. Homework provision is inconsistent throughout the school. The team agrees with parents about the links the school has with them. On the one hand there are regular newsletters but they are not provided with information about the curriculum so they can support children at home if they so wish.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school is awaiting the results of the national tests taken by pupils this year. However, the most recent published test results for eleven year olds were for tests taken in the year 2000 and at that time the school's standards in English were well below average and in mathematics they were below the national average. The science test results were more successful and were above the national average.
2. When the present Year 6 pupils were admitted to the school in Year 3 their attainments were below average. As a result of sound teaching they achieve satisfactorily in English and mathematics and well in science. The inspection findings show that by the age of eleven pupils' attainments in English and mathematics are below national expectations. Attainment in science is above national expectations.
3. Standards in English and mathematics have declined since the last inspection when they were judged to be meeting national expectations in both subjects. This is mainly due to the higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. However, the present below average standards in English show an improvement over last year when test results showed they were well below average and the pupils' attainment in mathematics has remained the same. The improvement in current English standards is due to the introduction of a number of initiatives such as setting targets for attainment levels but more could be done in this respect by linking specific strategies concerned with how this can be accomplished.
4. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory but there is an imbalance between the two. Pupils listen carefully to others, including their teachers, and as a result they understand information given verbally to them and know what to do. Their speaking is weaker and is below the level expected for eleven year olds and they find it difficult to express what they clearly understand. Pupils' attainment in writing is also below the level expected but their attainment in reading is satisfactory. Pupils read confidently and with understanding. Higher attaining pupils read very fluently and use competent phrasing, demonstrating their ability to 'read ahead'. The eleven year olds write using structured sentences but do not use sufficient connecting words to make sentences more complex and interesting; this limits their capacity to use a range of ideas at a challenging level for them. Higher attaining pupils adapt the style to the purpose of the writing but few pupils use enough variety of words and expressions to make their work interesting and imaginative.
5. Judgements of pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding in mathematics show that many do not reach the level expected for those aged eleven. Most pupils use their sound knowledge of number bonds to calculate accurately and, for example, to convert fractions to percentages. They work with square numbers and measure angles precisely when drawing different shapes. More able pupils calculate the answers to mathematical problems using long multiplication and division. They work with perimeters, areas and volumes with good understanding and use negative numbers confidently. Teachers do not use the National Numeracy Strategy confidently or consistently throughout the school and this does not provide sufficiently for the needs of the lower attaining pupils. Often pupils work at an individual pace through the same mathematics textbook and do not get the opportunity to share ideas with other pupils or benefit from a teacher or classroom assistant supporting them as part of a small group.
6. The findings of the inspection show that attainments in science amongst the eleven year olds are above the level expected for their age. Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding in each key area of science in the National Curriculum, using a good balance between experimental and investigative science and knowledgebased components. For example, they

have carried out investigations involving paper and parachutes to gain understanding about how air resistance is a force that slows moving objects. It is through such an approach that pupils have gained a good understanding of different types of forces. They have a satisfactory knowledge of living organisms including their classification and ways in which they have adapted. They understand the nature of liquids, solids and gases and have a sound understanding of how some changes brought about by heating certain materials are irreversible and some are not.

7. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress and are supported well in their acquisition of reading and spelling skills. They work in small groups with classroom assistants and the activities provided are matched closely to their needs. Classroom assistants also support pupils effectively in science and this has a positive impact on their progress. Support for pupils with special educational needs is less effective in mathematics and pupils do not have the same rate of progress as in reading. Higher attaining pupils make sound progress in their learning in reading, writing, mathematics and science. However, the fact that there is a high percentage of pupils reaching higher levels in reading but no pupils reaching a higher level in writing and a low proportion in mathematics indicates that pupils are not being challenged sufficiently in some areas of the curriculum. There is an imbalance in the performances of all the boys and girls in English and mathematics. Boys have been out-performing girls for the past four years but the school has, as yet, not carried out an analysis to identify the specific curricular areas where girls are weaker in order to redress the balance. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are making good progress. All of these pupils speak English fluently and many of them are amongst the group of higher attaining pupils.
8. The inspection findings show that attainment in information and communication technology is above the level expected. They can use wordprocessing facilities competently, use a spreadsheet to calculate averages and to construct graphs using the results, and produce artistic designs. They are able to produce information packs including imported graphics and attractive borders as well as monitor the weather using external sensors connected to measuring equipment.
9. Attainment in religious education is satisfactory. The school has adapted the locally agreed syllabus so that Christianity is linked to other world religions. Pupils have successfully compared Christianity with Islam, Sikhism, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism in terms of the holy books, festivals and creation stories. They recognise religious words such as Ganesha, Allah, pulpit and menorah and link these specifically with different religions.
10. Pupils' attainments in other National Curriculum subjects are sound. However, there was insufficient evidence in music on which to make a judgement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupil's satisfactory attitudes to school, good behaviour, personal development and above average levels of attendance have a positive impact on their learning. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in activities. For example, the very keen approach of those who attend the badminton club contributes to their high levels of achievements. Attention and interest is satisfactory in most lessons. In a few lessons pupils find attention and concentration difficult and do not appear keen on learning whilst in other lessons they are far more interested. This was particularly evident in Year 5: when carrying out practical activities pupils show better interest than in lessons requiring more written work owing to a lack of confidence in their writing abilities. On the other hand, Year 6 pupils were totally absorbed in their task when working in the computer suite carrying out work on soil erosion, and Year 4 pupils' very keen approach in the environment area helped them learn about animals and their habitats.

12. Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, in collective acts of worship, around the school and in the playground. Pupils know the school rules thoroughly and know how to behave well. There have been no permanent or temporary exclusions over the last three years. A few pupils find behaving in a sociable manner difficult, but these are handled well by staff with little disruptive effects on others. There was no bullying, racist or sexist behaviour observed during the inspection and pupils and parents raised few concerns. Pupils recognise the effect their own behaviour has on their fellow pupils.
13. Relationships are good. Pupils play and work well together. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, pupils share their news well, showing good respect for others when listening to their news. Boys are very appreciative of girls who play football with them in the playground, saying of one of them "She is the next David Beckham!"
14. Pupils' personal development is good. They undertake a good range of duties with responsibility and care. The School Council enables them to put forward their views and views of their classmates. In particular, Year 5 pupils help Year 2 pupils in the infant school to develop their reading in regular paired reading sessions. Pupils show good attitudes to team games and are especially proud of their achievements in badminton.
15. Attendance levels are good and are above the national average. Unauthorised absences are well below the national average. There are no serious issues over lateness, enabling lessons to start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is sound throughout the school. Teaching is very good or better in four per cent of lessons, good in 40 per cent, satisfactory in 51 per cent and unsatisfactory in five per cent. There was good teaching in each of the year groups, and the teaching of pupils with special educational needs by the special needs coordinator was very good. In the presentation of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' by an adult not employed at the school the teaching was excellent. Although teaching was described as 'good' in the previous report there have nevertheless been important gains. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has decreased significantly from nearly 14 per cent to five per cent and teaching is much more focused on the needs of pupils, particularly in English and to a lesser extent in mathematics.
17. Literacy lessons have been implemented according to national guidelines and have enhanced pupils' learning. However, there is inconsistency among teachers concerning the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy because a number of teachers have not yet implemented the guidelines fully and pupils are not making sufficient progress. Pupils benefit to varying degrees and in some classes the needs of all the pupils are not met. The quality of teaching in English is sound and pupils have a good range of opportunities to practise writing in subjects such as religious education, geography history and science. This has a good impact on the pupils' progress and positive attitudes.
18. Examples of good or better teaching in the school have a number of factors in common. Firstly, teachers get on with pupils extremely well. As a result, a high level of respect between both teachers and pupils is mutual. This leads to hard work, real attempts from pupils to produce their best efforts and the security in knowing that they can always ask for support with their learning without fear of losing self-esteem. For example, in a good physical education lesson in Year 4 the good relationships between teacher and pupils resulted in seemingly effortless management of the pupils' behaviour because they wanted to please the teacher and to perform at their best. Secondly, the planning and research carried out initially ensure that lessons have a very clear focus, are well organised and the pace is brisk because the teacher knows exactly what the next step for the pupils will be. This is well exemplified in a good science lesson in Year 5 where the purpose was for pupils to understand the nature of evaporation and condensation. The teacher planned carefully and much research had gone into choosing the right demonstrations for the purpose of the lesson. The lesson proceeded at

a good pace due to the good organisation, well-prepared activities and planned references to pupils' learning in previous lessons on the water cycle. Pupils made good progress in developing knowledge and understanding, as a result of experiencing at first hand the changing states of water. Finally, teachers have good questioning skills to assess pupils' understanding. For instance, in a very good lesson for a small group of Year 3 pupils with special educational needs the teacher continually questioned them about their understanding of previous work on letter sounds and on their acquisition of new skills in the present lesson. The information gained from the questioning of pupils enabled the teacher to decide when to move on or whether to involve the pupils further.

19. In the few unsatisfactory lessons there were weaknesses due to a poor use of geography learning resources to enable pupils to understand and unsatisfactory organisation of a numeracy lesson. The aim of the geography lesson was for pupils to transfer knowledge of contours from a three-dimensional perception to a two-dimensional representation. Pupils worked mainly on pre-prepared work sheets and no maps were used. The main aim of the lesson was not met because at the end of the lesson most pupils had not understood the idea of contours on maps, principally because no maps were available for them to use. The unsatisfactory numeracy lesson meant that it did not meet the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy and failed to meet the needs of most of the most able pupils. All pupils worked at the same tasks drawn from a mathematics textbook, resulting in a significant number of pupils not being extended sufficiently. Furthermore, pupils' knowledge and understanding was not consolidated at the end of the lesson and the impact on their learning was considerably lessened.
20. In general almost all aspects of the teaching are sound. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach is satisfactory, especially in information and communication technology where their personal skills have improved greatly since the last inspection. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and this results in hard work and a good pace to the lessons. Planning of lessons is effective and the aims of the lesson are shared with the pupils so that they know exactly what they are expected to know, do or understand by the end of the lesson. It is clear from these aims that teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are satisfactory. However, although teachers assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding during lessons, they rarely record the information because, as yet, there is no whole-school system for doing this. The result is that pupils' needs are not taken into account sufficiently when lessons are being planned and pupils often are not provided with activities that would be beneficial to their learning. It also results in pupils having a poor knowledge of their own learning and progress. The provision of homework is inconsistent in the school. Some teachers provide homework diligently and link this closely to the learning in the classroom whilst others rarely plan activities for the pupils to do at home.
21. All teachers have a good knowledge of the pupils with special educational needs in their class. These pupils have good quality individual education plans and teachers ensure that the work planned relates to these plans and is matched to their ability and needs. Learning support assistants are effective in their work in small groups both when an extra programme of work to improve the reading and writing of pupils is followed or in mathematics. Good resources are available to support their learning, often from the local authority's learning service based in the school building. Pupils who speak English as an additional language do not require extra support with their learning but in the rare instance that a need arises assistance is provided quickly.

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

22. The school curriculum contains all the legally required subjects and meets statutory requirements. Although the total amount of curriculum time meets the recommended minimum for pupils in Key Stage 2 nationally, there is an imbalance in some Year groups because of the high proportion allocated to physical education. This results in it not being fully relevant to the age and experience of the pupils. For example the amount of time spent on

physical education lessons in Year 3 is equivalent to that allowed for music, history, geography, design and technology and religious education combined. As a result, some lessons in some years are short and too hurried for effective learning. Policies and whole school plans are effectively structured so that learning is progressive from year to year. They are now being updated to include national guidance.

23. Pupils with special educational needs are provided for well. Sometimes they are withdrawn for teaching in the literacy and numeracy hours when they work with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) or with learning support assistants. At other times the assistants work in the classrooms helping small groups, sometimes in other subjects too. Effective work is set with reference to pupils' individual plans particularly well when they work with the SENCO. Good resources are always readily available to support their learning. The SENCO assesses pupils very carefully and keeps full details of all assessments to monitor progress towards their individual targets.
24. The National Literacy Strategy is organised to a satisfactory standard in all classrooms. There is a suitable balance of the teaching of reading, writing and speaking skills. Teachers plan together well so that the pupils in both classes in each year group have the same experiences.
25. The school responded very slowly to the National Numeracy Strategy and as a consequence it has fallen behind the great majority of other schools. It has begun to respond with considerable urgency since the appointment of the new head teacher and the new numeracy co-ordinator. There are a number of initiatives in the current school improvement plan. These include a more consistent approach to numeracy in all classes, better planning, improved resources and higher challenge for all pupils. However, there is no analysis of test results and therefore assessments in support of pupils' progress are insufficient. The school has recognised this and has made a start on improving the situation. The teaching of the numeracy hour is not consistent throughout the school and more able pupils do not make sufficient progress.
26. Extra curricular provision is good. It includes sport, some of it competitive against nearby schools, an orchestra, playground games for Year 3, information and communication technology and a very successful lunchtime badminton club, which continues to produce players of a very high standard. Residential trips extend the curriculum in some subjects well and the school welcomes visitors such as poets and authors.
27. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Health education is covered comprehensively through topics in science and through the good links with the school nurse and the community policeman. Sex education and drugs misuse are included effectively in this programme. In some lessons or in assemblies there are good opportunities for pupils to explain their views, to discuss responsible choices and to follow or make rules and to discuss relationships. However, there is no wholeschool plan so that it is covered in every classroom in a similar way. The school has already recognised this by including the development of a policy for personal, social health and citizenship education in the current school improvement plan.
28. The provision for spiritual education is satisfactory. There are some opportunities to explore the values of others in lessons, or to talk about special moments, but sometimes those are curtailed because lessons are short. For example, in a religious education lesson when the pupils were talking about 'special symbols' the discussions were cut short so that writing could begin. The opportunity to reflect on who we are, or our place in the world, which was developing in depth, was lost. Worship encourages pupils to explore values and different beliefs and to recognise the existence of higher beings through such themes as 'The Importance of Love' or 'Trusting God when you don't feel brave'.

29. The provision for moral education is good. It is relevant to pupils' age and experience. The Code of Conduct, displayed throughout the school, is emphasised by all adults who work there. Team points are awarded for moral behaviour such as acting considerately or helping other pupils in the class. Rules for life such as truthfulness, fairness and honesty are discussed in assemblies. These moral values are emphasised when teachers are discussing incidents in the classroom or disputes on the playground. They are firm and consistent in their approach and pupils are in no doubt about the standards the school expects.
30. The school is aware that some pupils have underdeveloped social skills and works hard to ensure that provision for pupils' social development is good. Teachers work very patiently to promote pupils' understanding of living in a community. There are group rules to emphasise correct behaviour in every classroom and, as pupils grow older, teachers promote self-discipline during group tasks in lessons such as physical education so that pupils cooperate and play fairly. Older pupils go on two residential visits in order to have a planned experience of living and working with different people in an unfamiliar environment and this has a good impact on their social development. Each class has representatives on the School Council which works very well with the deputy head teacher to discuss ideas from pupils on a regular basis. All adults are courteous in their approach to pupils at all times, setting a clear example of the best way to behave toward others.
31. Cultural provision is good. In art, pupils' experiences of using paint in the style of other artists, such as William Morris, are good. In English they read a range of interesting literature, which includes myth, fable and stories from significant authors. Younger pupils are taught traditional playground games. Visitors are welcomed. A recent visitor dressed all of the pupils in Hindu costume and led them in a traditional Hindu gathering. During the inspection Year 5 pupils hugely enjoyed a Shakespearean day. The school has reorganised its religious education policy and interwoven strands of the major faiths of our society. It looks at the ways of life of our ethnic diverse groups well, so that pupils recognise and value not only the difference but also the similarities.
32. The school sees itself as part of a community. It maintains links with its immediate partner schools well. There are regular planned visits between the secondary and infant schools so that pupils enter and leave confidently. It takes part successfully in competitions and festivals with other schools in sport or music. There are good links with local churches; pupils visit them or ministers come to the school. The Heritage Trust supported the development of the computer suite by contributing half of the cost. The school is now part of the wide community of the Internet. As the result of these carefully maintained links the school has a good partnership with other schools and productive links with the wider community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school provides good care for its pupils, which enables them to feel secure and valued. The quality of care has been sustained and in some areas improved since the previous inspection. The classrooms are clean, tidy and secure. Health and safety procedures are effective. The school has rightly identified the children's toilets as a potential hazard. They are unpleasant and smelly, in urgent need of refurbishment and constitute a health and safety issue for the school. The head teacher has attempted to remedy the situation through the appropriate channels but, as yet, has had no success. Fire precautions and first aid arrangements are good.
34. The school maintains good standards of behaviour through a good behaviour policy which all members of staff work hard to implement. Procedures for monitoring and discouraging bullying, racist or sexist behaviour are successful. Potential issues are dealt with promptly and effectively. The lack of exclusions demonstrates the school's positive attitude towards the inclusion of all pupils.

35. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and have helped towards the maintenance and slight improvement overall of good levels of attendance. Parents are reminded regularly about absence procedures and the importance of not taking holidays in term time. Child protection procedures are good; they are implemented well by all staff. Members of staff are well briefed on all issues and local guidelines are followed closely.
36. Whole-school systems for measuring pupils' attainment in English and mathematics are in place. They include Key Stage 2 statutory tests, as well as optional National Curriculum tests taken by pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 and other standardised tests taken by pupils midway through the school year. These are suitable processes and procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Information gained from these is used to set targets for each pupil and for improving the work. However, targets for pupils are only monitored at the end of the school year when it is too late to take any remedial action, if necessary. However, the learning targets set out in individual learning plans for pupils with special educational needs are clear and precise and serve as a good focus for pupils' learning. Teachers make ongoing assessments of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding during lessons and act on these if pupils need support in their learning. However, they do not make assessments from marking pupils' work or record overall assessments of how pupils progressed in their learning at the end of the lesson. This makes it difficult for teachers to remember the information they carry in their head and to use it to plan work that meets the needs of pupils in future lessons.
37. Similarly, targets set for whole school or key stage improvement are too broad. Because of their breadth, it is difficult for teachers to translate them into planning to ensure that they match pupils' needs accurately. For these reasons the use of assessment information to guide the school's curricular planning is unsatisfactory. The English, mathematics and science co-ordinators have not analysed pupils' answers in the annual and interim tests so that they can identify strengths and specific weaknesses. There is insufficient information to frame precise whole-school targets that would help to improve and raise standards.
38. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. There are no systems currently in use for teachers to make judgements on the levels of attainment achieved by pupils in their work. There are no portfolios of different pupils' work where each item has been thoroughly discussed and collective decisions made about the attainment levels of each example of work. There are no systems of recording pupils' attainments on a day-to-day basis to check what pupils have learned. Once teachers can judge the attainment levels of pupils' work accurately, they can then use this knowledge to set specific targets for pupils that will enable them systematically to make better progress in developing the knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve higher levels of attainment.
39. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory and result in good outcomes. Teachers know the pupils in their class well and parents are happy to discuss any problems with them. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for a range of tasks, especially in Year 6 where all pupils have specific jobs allocated to them. However, the school has no system of monitoring pupils' personal development and no recording system to assist in this process.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory and many parents do not make a satisfactory contribution to their children's learning at school or at home. The previous management of the school allowed the partnership to deteriorate and the school now wants to improve the situation. In relation to this, standards have fallen since the previous inspection. Parents now provide a limited level of help in the classroom; some parents felt that the school does not work closely with them. The 'Friends of Grange Junior School' no longer exists and an avenue for communication has broken down. Although newsletters are regular there is no information about what pupils are to learn. Annual written reports do not give sufficient detail

or accurate information on progress and achievements. The weaknesses in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding need to be reported as well as the strengths. The written targets included are not specific in relation to areas for future development. For example, many reports state "Continue to work hard!" as a target instead of specific targets related to improvement in the pupil's work. The school is aware that parents need to assist their children at home but, as yet, there has been no information or support in this respect.

41. Eight parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and about one third replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Most indicated that their children liked coming to school, were making good progress and felt the school was well led and managed. About a quarter felt that the school does not provide the right amount of homework, and that it does not work closely with parents. About one fifth felt that they do not receive sufficient information on their children's progress; one third felt that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Inspectors found that children do like coming to school and parents support their children's attendance well, that progress is satisfactory, and that the leadership and management of the head teacher is good. Homework is not used consistently and the school does not have an up-to-date homework policy that informs parents about the quantity, nature and frequency of the work the school intends pupils to do at home. Home-school reading records vary in quality and do not consistently support parents in helping their children read at home. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. Consultation evenings are held in the autumn and spring terms, but the lack of accurate assessment information limits the value of the information given to parents about progress. The great majority of parents ensure their children attend school regularly and promptly.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. Since her appointment at the beginning of the year the head teacher has shown good leadership and is keen to improve the work of the school. Planning of lessons is now based consistently on the same format throughout the school. This has made it easier for teachers to adopt a new framework to literacy lessons. The introduction of this new approach to the school has been beneficial to pupils' learning and has been particularly helpful to pupils in Years 3 and 4 whose attainment has improved over that of previous pupils of the same age. However, unlike most other schools, the National Numeracy Strategy has not yet been adopted fully. The head teacher has attempted to improve the quality of teaching by frequent monitoring of lessons and this has had a positive effect. However, these are informal, there is no clear focus to these and there is no written feedback to inform teachers about their strengths and areas for development. Areas for development do not form the starting point for the next monitoring and this does not provide a good basis for improvement.
43. The head teacher has ensured that changes are understood and discussed fully by all teachers. This has necessitated a pace governed by consensus. The decision to proceed more slowly has been successful because members of staff have understood fully the need for change and improvement and have implemented new approaches enthusiastically. Discussions begin with the senior management team consisting of the head teacher, deputy head teacher, and literacy and mathematics co-ordinators. Agreement from this group leads to further discussion at staff meetings followed by trials of initiatives new to the school.
44. The school has not yet established satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment. The school relies heavily on the results of the annual tests for making judgements about the levels of attainment.
45. The deputy head teacher has recently agreed to co-ordinate work concerned with pupils who have special educational needs, instead of teaching a class on a full time basis. She is undertaking this very ably and efficiently and the provision is now good. However, there has been insufficient time for this to have an impact on pupils' learning. Subject co-ordinators support colleagues well and provide helpful advice on teaching and learning in the subject they manage. However, almost all monitor samples of pupils' work but they do not interview

different groups of pupils in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding.

46. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties well and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Governors work hard and meet regularly to discuss issues, to make decisions and to consider strategies for improving the school. They work closely with the head teacher and are kept well informed of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are closely involved in deciding the priorities of the school improvement plan and in monitoring the outcomes of the various initiatives involved. Governors have a very clear idea of the educational direction the school should take and are determined to ensure that the school continues to improve. The finance committee monitors the budget regularly and carefully with the assistance of the school's financial secretary. The school secretary works hard to ensure that the administration of the school is efficient.
47. The school improvement plan is a good working document that sets out clearly the school's priorities for improvement over the next year. It covers the action to be taken within each initiative, personnel responsible, costs and success criteria. Great care has been taken to ensure that the initiatives are linked closely to the budget so that at all times there is adequate funding to cover the various priorities. The success criteria attached to each element of the plan are not linked to measurable improvements in pupil progress whenever this is possible. This is a significant omission because the school has no real way of identifying whether the initiative has had a positive impact on standards or not.
48. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. Although it does not approach parents for their views on how the school could be improved. It employs a service provider to seek and select quotations that give the best value for money when maintenance of the school building is required. The school challenges itself to improve its provision in line with similar schools.
49. The school's use of new technology is good. The school's systems are computerised so that information can be located easily and quickly. E-mails can be sent and received and pupils have access to the local authority's Internet system. A digital camera is used by staff and pupils and pictures are printed using computers.
50. The grant used for pupils with special educational needs is used wisely and has resulted in pupils making sound progress in their learning. The money allocated for professional training of the staff is used sensibly to improve the work of the school. Teachers attend relevant courses that are linked with the needs of the school and classroom. The school's strategy for staff appraisal and performance management is satisfactory. Each teacher has been set objectives relating to the progress of pupils in the class, leadership and management of a subject and an aspect of personal teaching skills. As yet, no monitoring has taken place because the team leaders are awaiting training from a performance management consultant.
51. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. Classrooms, hall and sports facilities are all good. The field is large and provides more than enough space for outdoor activities. However, the pupils' toilets are in an unsatisfactory condition due to the pipe work underneath the flooring. This results in a foul-smelling environment and a health and safety problem. The resources provided in the playground and field provide extra opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills. The quality of the learning resources in the classrooms is sound and these are used effectively to enable pupils to gain knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers are deployed well and classroom assistants support pupils effectively in their learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

52. In order to raise standards further and ensure good progress for all pupils, the head teacher, staff and governors should:

Improve standards in English and mathematics by:

- ensuring that all pupils in the class have regular opportunities to speak and express their views in front of others; (55)
- identifying specific weaknesses in the knowledge and understanding of the girls so that these can be improved and attainments brought up to the same standard as the boys; (53)
- identifying specific weaknesses in pupils' writing skills and taking action so these can be improved; (59)
- setting realistic yet challenging targets in English and mathematics and deciding on strategies for achieving them; (37)
- arrange in-service training to ensure that all teachers are familiar with the National Numeracy Strategy and how to implement it in the classroom; (19, 64)

Improve procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and the use of the resulting information to guide curricular planning and support pupils' progress by:

- analysing pupils' answers in the annual national and other tests to identify weaker areas in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding; (37)
- using the above information as a focus for improving standards throughout the school; (37)
- devising a system for assessing and recording pupils' achievements regularly and using the information as a basis for planning lessons; (38)
- ensuring that samples of pupils' work are discussed and judged collectively by teachers and used as a basis for judging pupils' attainment levels at least twice per year; (38)
- analysing the relative performances of boys and girls and take effective action to redress the balance, if necessary. (7,53)

Develop further a system of monitoring teaching that includes:

- a clear focus to the monitoring; (42)
- a written formal feedback that contains strengths and areas for development; (42)
- provision for monitoring to focus on the main weak areas identified during the previous monitoring. (42)

Improve the school's partnership with parents as a further avenue of improving standards by:

- providing parents with information about the curriculum for each year group; (40)
- improving the quality of annual written reports on pupils' progress by including weaknesses as well as strengths in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and incorporating challenging and specific targets for improving pupils' attainments; (40)
- ensuring that parents have information about how they can help their children at home; (40)
- publishing a homework policy that informs parents about the quantity, nature and frequency of the work the school intends pupils to do at home. (41)

Develop the role of the subject co-ordinator to include the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the subject they lead. (45)

Improve the balance of time allocated to foundation subjects. (22, 88, 92)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	2	40	51	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	234
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31
<i>FTE means full-time equivalent</i>	
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.2

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 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	32	21	53

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	23	32
	Girls	11	10	21
	Total	36	33	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (71)	62 (64)	98 (93)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	23	24	29
	Girls	14	9	15
	Total	37	33	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (71)	62 (72)	83 (75)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	10
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	215
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: Y3—Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	113

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	493009
Total expenditure	458121
Expenditure per pupil	1958
Balance brought forward from previous year	5159
Balance carried forward to next year	40047

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	234
Number of questionnaires returned	80

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	32	6	5	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	38	11	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	56	6	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	54	16	8	0
The teaching is good.	42	44	11	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	40	12	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	39	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	40	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	29	45	15	9	2
The school is well led and managed.	39	46	6	0	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	50	5	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	42	11	12	5

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

ENGLISH

53. Pupils' standards in the latest published national English tests taken in 2000 were well below the national average at the age of eleven. Whilst the boys' results were close to the national average, the girls' results were considerably below. This demonstrates very well the extent to which the girls were under-performing compared with the boys. Boys have performed better in the annual national English tests for the last four years. The results also show that the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels was also well below the national average in 2000. The attainments of boys and girls in English have been compared very recently and the school verified that girls have not been performing as well as boys for the past four years. However, as yet, no action has been taken to identify specific weaknesses that girls may have in order to redress the imbalance between the girls' and the boys' attainments in order to improve standards overall.
54. An analysis of pupils' work, lesson observations and discussions with pupils show that standards in English are below national expectations. Their speaking skills do not give a sufficiently strong foundation on which to build satisfactory writing attainments and both of these are below average. However, reading standards are close to the level expected for eleven year olds with nearly one in three pupils achieving higher levels. When the school's present eleven year olds were admitted to the school in 1996 their attainment was below average for seven year olds so their achievement is satisfactory. Nearly 37 per cent of the pupils in the school have special educational needs and these two factors show that they are also achieving satisfactorily.
55. Speaking and listening skills are below what is expected for eleven year olds. There is, though, an imbalance between the two. The pupils are good listeners. They listen carefully to what teachers and other adults have to say and pay close attention to the contributions of their peers. When teachers are telling stories, explaining ideas or giving instructions they listen well. As a result they understand the information and know exactly what they have to do. Speaking is weaker and is below the level expected for Year 6 pupils and many pupils find it difficult to express what they clearly understand. Often there is a struggle to find the right words. Pupils are confident in speaking in front of the whole class but they have difficulties with formal language. Although teachers are aware of these shortcomings they do not provide opportunities for all pupils to express themselves in different situations. In other subjects as well as English, pupils learn to use correct technical terms and steadily broaden their vocabulary. For example, pupils use confidently terms such as 'coastal erosion' or 'causal connectives' in geography and English lessons respectively. A minority of pupils are very articulate. They express their ideas clearly and confidently. Some younger pupils can explain how they used alliteration in their writing as a tool for persuading others of their views.
56. Standards in reading are sound. Pupils read confidently and with understanding. Higher attaining pupils are fluent readers. They use appropriate phrasing, demonstrating an ability to 'read ahead'. They are also developing higher order skills, for example changing their tone of voice when a character in a story is speaking. Most pupils have acquired a range of skills in dealing with unfamiliar words. They draw on their knowledge of letter sounds to break down and rebuild words that are not quickly recognisable and consider whether it makes sense or is grammatically correct. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs quickly acquire knowledge of letter sounds as a result of additional literacy provision and good support from classroom assistants. The majority are capable readers by the end of the key stage. They can recall what they have read and retell a story, relating the events in the right order. However, they are less skilled in answering questions about the texts or predicting what might happen next.

57. Pupils' attainment in writing is below the level expected for eleven year olds. By the time they are eleven, most pupils write soundly in structured sentences but they do not use enough connecting words to make sentences more complex and interesting for the reader. This limits their capacity to handle ideas in writing at a suitable level. Teachers are seeking to improve this, for example, by teaching pupils a range of connecting words, but so far pupils have not built these features into their own writing. Pupils sequence ideas, for instance, when writing factually and use full stops or capital letters correctly. They cover a broad range of writing including, for example, stories, letters, factual accounts, poems and descriptions. More able pupils show suitable adaptation of style to the purpose of the writing and most pupils sequence ideas logically in their writing. However, few pupils use a sufficient variety of words and expressions. As a result, their descriptive and imaginative writing is underdeveloped. Teachers work hard to enrich pupils' vocabulary and range of expression, for example, through shared reading.
58. The quality of teaching is sound. Lessons are prepared well and teachers who teach pupils of a similar age work very closely together when deciding the content of lessons. Pupils are provided with individual targets for improvement that are written on the front of their exercise books but this approach is not consistently used and some teachers are less conscientious than others in this respect. A small number of teachers set targets that focus on improving aspects that will really develop pupils' work strongly, others concentrate on more trivial items and some set no targets at all after the first few weeks of the term. For example, one teacher set targets aimed at improving the pupil's complexity of sentences whilst another concentrated solely on the way a specific capital letter should be formed. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and this leads to hard work and good concentration in the classrooms. The teaching methods used are sound. The National Literacy Strategy has been adapted successfully to the school's needs and this is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. During lessons pupils are encouraged to use a thesaurus to find alternative words in their writing and this helps to improve the quality, but most pupils do not do this independently and their work is not as good as it might be. Pupils' work is not assessed properly. There are no up-to-date examples of pupils' work readily available that have had their levels of attainment judged and agreed by teachers collectively. Consequently, pupils' writing is not assessed accurately and, furthermore, no day-to-day assessments are recorded in order to plan work that might overcome pupils' specific difficulties. Basic skills are taught effectively, especially to pupils with special educational needs. Special needs assistants provide good support in teaching letter sounds to small groups of pupils who are withdrawn from part of the English lessons for this purpose. This helps pupils to make sound progress with their learning. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported well during the rare instance that they need assistance.
59. The school has identified writing as an area for development and has included this as a priority in the school's improvement plan. However, it has not attempted to identify specific common weaknesses in pupils' writing in order to address these and improve them throughout the school. Instead, the issue of underdeveloped writing skills has been dealt with by suggesting that the purchase of new resources will help inspire pupils to write. Teachers, therefore, have no real specific focus on what needs improving. Annual targets are set for individual pupils but these are not monitored mid-year so that teachers can find out if pupils are on course to succeed by the end of the year and to take further action if necessary. The English co-ordinator has worked closely with the local authority's literacy consultant and provides sound leadership. There is now a uniform approach to planning literacy lessons, and, together with a satisfactory understanding of the National Literacy Strategy, has had a positive effect on pupils' learning of literacy.

MATHEMATICS

60. The results of the year 2000 national tests show that the percentage of pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected level for their age is below the national average. Results for the higher attaining pupils are also well below average. Over the last three years results have been

below average and are lower than at the time of the last inspection. Boys achieve higher standards than girls. When these results are compared to similar schools they are found to be well below average, mainly because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

61. The last report found that the majority of pupils attained national average levels, with some pupils above. The school has not maintained these standards. Although the school has more pupils with special educational needs than most schools, these pupils do not improve their comparative attainments as they get older. The extra work with learning assistants has not raised their attainments further to an average level. This is because the school's approaches to the National Numeracy Strategy, or the use of government funding to raise standards, have not been rigorous in the past. The recently appointed head teacher and the new numeracy co-ordinator have recognised this and are working hard to raise standards. The current school improvement plan contains a number of initiatives on planning, resources and challenge for all pupils, but all are in the early stages of development. Analysis of test results, to identify weaker areas to find the reasons for the difference in performance between boys and girls and to use the information to raise standards, has been underdeveloped in the past. The marking and assessment of pupils' work by all teachers and using the results to set targets for improvement again have also been underdeveloped. The teaching of the numeracy hour is inconsistent from year to year. The school is working closely with the local authority to raise standards. Nevertheless, in spite of the commitment to improve, much remains to be done. Standards for the present Year 6 pupils remain unchanged from previous years, apart from some small improvement for the higher attaining pupils. Attainments remain below the national average.
62. Pupils are organised into different ability groups for each year, usually with the higher attaining pupils in the same group as pupils with special educational needs. This slows the progress of the more able pupils because more time has to be spent by the teacher in supporting the work of the pupils with special educational needs. In Year 5 the age group is divided so that the more able pupils work together, whilst the lower average and the pupils with special educational needs are in the same class. The school has yet to evaluate which is the more effective organisation. Within the ability groups some teachers plan and follow the numeracy hour as it is suggested. Others follow a different pattern. For example in some lessons the ability groups are not divided so the teacher can focus on challenging the thinking of a particular group further. Sometimes pupils work at an individual pace through the same textbook, rather than in groups at a different level. Teachers are still exploring the best ways to use whiteboards and other resources. These approaches reflect the uncertainties that have arisen because of an initial slow response to the numeracy hour. It is important that all teachers now share the same understanding of the numeracy hour so that there is a consistency in the approach throughout the school.
63. By the time the pupils leave, higher attaining pupils have made good progress. They work confidently with numbers, adding or subtracting numbers to two decimal places and use long multiplication or division with such numbers as 81×34 or $9750 \div 15$. They work with perimeters, areas and volumes; they calculate percentages, work in negative numbers such as $5^{\circ}\text{C} - 8^{\circ}\text{C} = -3^{\circ}\text{C}$ confidently, and apply their number skills in everyday problems. They reach an above average standard in attainment and presentation. Middle ability pupils reach an average standard following a similar programme of work, but at a slightly lower level. They work confidently with numbers, know their multiplication facts to 10×10 and use them to convert fractions to percentages such as $19/25 = 76\%$. They explore number patterns such as square numbers, or patterns in shapes, drawing angles accurately using a protractor. However, some pupils at the lower end of this middle ability range are not achieving a national average level because they are not fully challenged. A large percentage of pupils, close to four out of every ten, attain below the national average. For example these pupils are still working with numbers such as 195×5 or $63 + 63$ in the summer term, or interpreting graphs and charts which are based on the addition of simple numbers. Many know their tables, but are not given the fullest opportunity to use their mathematical skills.

64. The majority of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers follow a standard school format for their weekly and daily plans, which are soundly structured. But they vary in the way they plan for the group activities so they do not make best use of the middle section of the numeracy hour. Relationships are always good because teachers work very hard to maintain good behaviour in a courteous way, even when the pupils' behaviour is challenging. Year 5 is a particular example where pupils' attitude to work is reluctant at times. In lessons with these pupils and in numeracy lessons in other years, teachers ask questions to make sure pupils are involved. They direct questions to individuals effectively to promote quick mental calculations, but at the same time give sufficient time for pupils to be successful when they answer. All answers are respected so that self-esteem is raised. Judicious use of praise means pupils are usually willing to try again. Resources such as whiteboards for pupils, whiteboards for teachers and mathematical apparatus are accessible in all classrooms but teachers are still exploring the best way to use them. Learning support assistants are confident when they work with groups. They explain things clearly so pupils with special needs understand what they are doing. All books are marked, but mainly with ticks so that although work is well presented, advice or targets for improvement are missing. Teachers are working very hard in all lessons to make sure pupils are learning. They are committed to improvement. Not all teachers have received training on how to implement the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and their understanding of the best ways to use the numeracy hour is underdeveloped and is affecting their ability to move forward as a whole staff.
65. The numeracy co-ordinator is new to the post. She is working closely with the senior management team, the head teacher and the local authority's numeracy consultant to move the teaching of the subject forward, but she is recently trained and relatively inexperienced in her role. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported well but the need for this is rare.

SCIENCE

66. By the age of eleven years pupils achieve standards in science that are above those in most other primary schools. This is better than the findings of the last inspection when standards were found to be close to the average level. The results of the national tests in 2000 showed that pupils' performance was above average. Compared to schools of a similar background pupils do well. Pupils' work is not quite as good as last year owing to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
67. Most pupils make good progress. As a result of the well-planned programme of work, they build on their scientific knowledge and understanding from year to year. Standards seen during the inspection show that pupils are gaining a good knowledge and understanding of each of the key areas of science studied. The extra help provided for pupils with special educational needs is effective and they make satisfactory progress.
68. Throughout the school there is a balance of practical and investigative science and the knowledge-based components of the curriculum. By the age of eleven most pupils understand how different environmental conditions give rise to different organisms and some of the ways in which animals and plants adapt. They describe in simple terms some properties of solids, liquids and gases, and have a good knowledge of reversible and irreversible change. Through investigation pupils have developed a secure understanding of different types of forces. They know that it is gravitational attraction which pulls objects down to earth, and that weight is a force that can be measured in Newtons. They can describe how forces such as friction and gravity affect motion and, through reference to experiments with paper and parachutes, show that they understand the idea of air resistance as a force which slows objects. Pupils enjoy the practical investigations, which motivate most to become involved in the lessons and show interest in the subject. Eleven year olds are gaining satisfactory skills in investigative and experimental science but have some difficulty in explaining how to carry out a fair test, as they are not familiar with the term 'variable'. They

have experience of making predictions but these are not always recorded so that comparisons can be made between what they thought and what they found out.

69. The teaching of science is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and provide a good range of experiences for pupils. They make good use of the science curriculum guidance to plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. Teachers explain the purpose of the lesson at the beginning of a session so that pupils know what they are about to do and learn by the end of the lesson. They know their pupils well and try to plan activities that are stimulating and will excite pupils' curiosity. For example, good use was made of the environmental area to help develop Year 4 pupils' understanding of habitats. They were delighted when they discovered a frog. In spite of teachers' efforts, pupils are sometimes inattentive and rather noisy, particularly when working independently. Teachers use scientific vocabulary confidently but do not always ensure that pupils have fully understood the technical terms or use them when explaining or describing what they have learned. Teachers make good use of questions and demonstration to encourage pupils to discuss their ideas and expand their scientific understanding. They try, where possible, to match ways of recording work to the needs of the different ability groups within the class and give extra help to pupils with special educational needs so that they can progress in their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to record their results and findings clearly. The presentation of some pupils' written work, however, is rather untidy. Pupils work is marked but there is not enough constructive comment to help pupils know what they can do well or to move their learning forward.
70. The curriculum guidance for teachers on what should be taught in each year group ensures that each area of the subject is revisited to consolidate previous learning and move pupils on to a higher level. However, the lack of opportunities for pupils to choose resources, plan and carry out their own simple tests and experiments limits the potential for pupils to achieve at a higher level. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a satisfactory overview of attainment provided by the results of assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding at the end of each science topic. However, there is no analysis of areas of strength or weakness so that teachers can plan the content of future teaching accordingly. Although an established part of the co-ordinator's role, there has been no opportunity to monitor pupils' work this year and there is no way that coverage of the National Curriculum can be tracked or evaluate the quality of teachers' marking.

ART AND DESIGN

71. Standards in art and design reflect those expected for eleven year olds. Although only one art lesson was observed during the inspection, examining collections of pupils' work, sketchbooks and art displays throughout the school has informed judgements about standards. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have similar opportunities to achieve in class work. They make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in the development of their art skills, particularly in painting in which there are examples of good achievement. The current attainment in art and design has maintained those found during the previous inspection.
72. As they move through the school, pupils develop an increasing control over the media, in which they are working and pay greater attention to detail. Pupils have opportunities to develop their skills across a range of media, including paint, pencil, textiles and clay. They receive a suitably balanced curriculum and in all year groups pupils study the ideas and techniques of well-known artists such as Van Gogh, Canaletto, Constable and William Morris. By eleven years old, pupils have developed a good awareness of perspective and apply this to good effect when painting representations of watercolour paintings by famous artists from the 18th and 19th century. They are taught to look carefully at the style and techniques used by these artists. As a result they successfully mix their own paints to reproduce the range of colours and tones used and pay careful attention to the brush techniques employed by the artists.

73. Pupils in Year 5 show an increasing awareness of the expressive qualities of line and tone and this is reflected in their work on landscapes. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their drawing skills, although these need to be more systematically developed so that the standard of drawings that illustrate work in other subjects more accurately reflects what pupils are capable of achieving. However, Year 4 pupils are making sound progress in the development of their drawing skills. Their drawings of houses built in Letchworth shows that they have carefully observed details and make good use of line and tone to achieve an impression of the three-dimensional view of the buildings.
74. Although only one lesson was observed, judgements on teaching have also been made scrutinising the pupils' work around the school. It is clear from the work produced, particularly the good standard of painting, that teaching is at least satisfactory and well focused. Teaching in the lesson seen was good; it was well planned and engaged pupils in thinking about how they see a clay model. The theme of 'space' linked well to their work in science and pupils were keen to share their ideas and ask questions. Clear explanations helped pupils to make good progress in planning their designs for a mobile, as they knew what they wanted to achieve. Pupils enjoyed the experience and tried hard. However, the outcomes were not quite so successful as pupils were not familiar enough with the techniques required when working with clay.
75. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides pupils with the opportunity to develop the full range of art and design skills. Although pupils experience an interesting range of activities they do not have enough opportunities to work on a large scale or to experiment with and explore their own creative ideas. The school scheme of work provides teachers with useful guidance but the termly planning is not sufficiently detailed and does not clearly set out what the pupils are to learn and the skills they are to develop over the course of the project. Throughout the school sketchbooks are not used regularly. There are only a few entries and pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to see skills, techniques and ideas develop over time. The school has yet to establish assessment arrangements for tracking how well pupils are doing in art. There is no subject portfolio to help inform teacher's' judgements on pupils' attainment and, as yet no opportunity for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching. This makes it difficult for her to share with teachers what is working well and what needs further development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

76. The attainments of pupils in design and technology are in line with expectations for their age by the time they leave in Year 6. Their progress through the school is satisfactory. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
77. Design and technology was a key issue for improvement in the last report. It lacked a planned scheme of work, resources were limited, teachers were uncertain in their approach, and progress and attainment were unsatisfactory as a result. No assessments were made to monitor pupils' developments during each year. The school has made satisfactory progress since then. A suitable whole-school plan is now organised so that each class has an investigation, a practical task and a 'design and make' assignment each term. It is progressive. Skills are included and matched to the task and the resources used. Teachers have improved their knowledge of both the subject and its technical skills so that pupils learn the right skills from year to year.
78. Resources are accessible and sufficient. Storage has been improved. A new, well set out area next to the dining room means food technology is provided for effectively. The co-ordinator is introducing National Curriculum guidance selectively to improve the whole-school plan further. Training for staff, linked to this national guidance, begins in September. Some staff have already had training in the use of control models using information and communication technology, which has led to some above average work. Designs at the moment are included in topic books for history, geography and science, but the co-ordinator

intends to introduce design books in each year so that pupils' progress can be better monitored and evaluated. From this, a portfolio of work, matched to national standards, will be started. However, this has yet to begin so the development of assessment procedures is the one item still outstanding from the last report and as a result standards could have been higher.

79. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection, but a scrutiny of displays, pupils' previous designs and models, photographs and school planning confirms design and technology is part of the curriculum in all classrooms. Year 3 pupils make bread, construct a Palestinian house with an electrically switched circuit, and design and make space stations. All work is satisfactory and some of the designs and models of space stations are imaginative, detailed and above average when completed. Each subsequent year builds on this work suitably tackling a different task each term. By Year 6 pupils make Victorian samplers linked to their work in history. They construct a fairground ride with a worm gear from wood using construction kits such as Gear-Go as part of their evaluation. During the inspection pupils designed a 'new health biscuit' and the packaging to 'market' their product. The range of packaging materials for the pupils to choose from was extensive and well prepared. All pupils' work is mainly at the level expected for eleven year olds.
80. Although only two lessons were seen in the course of the inspection all teachers approach the subject in a similar way and further judgements have been made by examining the quality of pupils' work. There has been progress in the quality of teaching since the last report and it is now satisfactory. Planning includes both the design and the making of products. As pupils get older they are taught skills in an increasing range of tools and materials. Design, practical tasks and safety factors are taught carefully, with an emphasis on the importance of a good quality product, safely made. Pupils' work is displayed attractively, showing that it is valued. Pupils enjoy technology. Teachers work hard to maintain good relationships, use praise to reward pupils' efforts, and remain calm when pupils are sometimes difficult. They are successful when they encourage pupils to work together on tasks. All year groups have higher than usual numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers and learning assistants support and manage these pupils well. However, in all years there is only a limited amount of time allocated to design and technology, which is just sufficient to cover the National Curriculum. This means some aspects of the subject are rushed or missing. For example it is difficult to monitor progress in designs because they are scattered in different books in different years. Evaluations are sometimes very brief. Teacher assessments are not matched to national standards so that they are able to measure progress or to challenge all pupils fully.
81. The co-ordinator is new to the post. She has made a number of improvements since her appointment and has clear plans for the year ahead. However, although these plans address some of the weaknesses in the subject, she has yet to identify fully the balance of strengths and weaknesses for different aspects of design and technology in each year.

GEOGRAPHY

82. The standards achieved by the time pupils reach Year 6 are at the level expected for eleven year olds. Progress from year to year is satisfactory. Both progress and the standards achieved are the same as at the time of the last report.
83. This report identified weaknesses in the subject. There was no scheme of work to teach places, themes and skills systematically. Resources were limited. Practical geographical skills, with the exception of map work, were underdeveloped.
84. The school has made satisfactory progress in most of these areas. For example resources have improved. More atlases and globes have been ordered; videos to support learning about rivers and settlements are now used; masks, pots and wood sculptures from Kenya help pupils' understanding of their way of life; there are good local maps. There is a satisfactory

scheme of work, but the co-ordinator has recognised that it needs further improvement. She is working with colleagues to introduce national guidance to each year to extend the present plans. The co-ordinator monitors plans and looks at work from different year groups to check geographical skills are developing. However, there is no systematic process to collect pupils' work together to assess the standards reached and then to use it to raise standards further.

85. There is a planned series of geographical topics throughout the school, sufficient to cover the National Curriculum programme of study, but Year 6 has the least amount of time allocated which makes it difficult to challenge pupils fully. All classes use field studies well. Year 3 pupils walk round the local area using their map skills to follow the route; Year 4 has a well planned residential week at Hudnall Park when they study rivers, follow maps of the local area and identify geographical features. Year 5 pupils follow a route to nearby Radwell, use a compass, study a local river and link all this to an Ordnance Survey map. In Year 6, pupils spend a week on the Isle of Wight studying erosion and other coastal features. Pupils' books confirm that work resulting from these field studies is of an average standard.
86. Although there is a suitable range of geography skills and knowledge taught in the school, pupils in Year 6 spend the least amount of time on the subject of any year, which limits their experiences compared to younger pupils. Most of the geography teaching in Year 6 is based on a field study of the Isle of Wight, although there is some map work to identify British, European and World countries, cities, mountains, oceans, seas and rivers. All pupils complete these maps accurately for the main features, but lower attaining pupils complete less and some of it is inaccurate, particularly when they have to identify rivers such as the Seine or cities such as Rome. Higher attaining and average pupils are much more successful and reach at least an average level. The pupils enjoy the Isle of Wight experience. However, their writings on return are a diary rather than a geographical record. Pupils still are not using their literacy skills to record geographical knowledge they have learned. Too much is about the coach they have travelled on and the food they have eaten. Because of the short time available to follow up the work sometimes lessons are hurried. For example, although the class had explored geographical features of the Isle of Wight, the follow-up work on these geographical features, using maps, was not sufficiently matched to pupils' field experiences for good learning to take place. This was partly because there were not enough maps for pupils to use and partly because the lesson was only 30 minutes long. However, most pupils reach a standard expected for eleven year olds in the limited amount of work planned for Year 6.
87. The teaching of geography is satisfactory. It is clear that pupils enjoy the carefully organised field trips and learn well as a result. The whole-school plan, with supportive guidance for each year, is sufficient for teachers to plan learning systematically. Teachers have good geographical knowledge so pupils are learning the right geographical skills for their age. They are able to motivate and manage pupils skilfully through a judicious mixture of questions, praise, reward and encouragement, so that even the most difficult pupils, or pupils with special educational needs, respond positively. There are just sufficient resources to match the curriculum, but for pupils to learn fully from the re-organised geography programme, care must be taken to ensure resources are always effectively matched in quality and quantity to the planning. Although teachers usually judge the time to move forward in lessons well, assessments at other times are not as good. Marking is minimal, mainly ticks or simple praise. There is no whole-school assessment process so the standards set for pupils to achieve are still a matter of individual judgement rather than a considered whole-school agreement based on national standards.
88. The geography co-ordinator is new to the post and is inexperienced. She has made a sound beginning to further developments in the subject but she is still finding out about the strengths and weaknesses of the subject in different year groups. For full success in her role she will need the careful guidance of the senior management team. The limited amount of time allocated to geography does not allow pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.

HISTORY

89. No history lessons took place during the inspection. However, it is clear from looking at pupils' previous work, teachers' planning and discussion with pupils that standards are similar to those achieved by most eleven year olds. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory gains in their knowledge of events people and changes in the past. These judgements are similar to those made at the time of the last inspection.
90. Pupils learn about history from a range of different information sources including books, searching the Internet, visits to local places of historical interest, museums, and role-play in drama workshops. By the age of eleven pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of life in Victorian times. They talk enthusiastically about their visit to a Victorian school and are able to make comparisons between the teaching and learning methods then and life in their own school. Pupils recognise the changes that have been brought about by developments in science and technology during this period, for example, inventions such as the camera, the steam engine and the first flushing toilet. They show understanding of the difficult and unhygienic conditions under which the majority of people had to live. Year 6 pupils recall key features of other periods in history that they have studied. They are able to describe the clothing worn by the more wealthy people in Tudor times and how these restricted activity.
91. There are satisfactory links between history and other subjects such as English, information and communication technology, art, and geography. Pupils reinforce and communicate their understanding of history in different ways, including writing, drama, pictures and maps. The Tudor workshop led by a visiting actor helped to give pupils a feel for life in Tudor times. The stimulating presentation and interesting activities motivated pupils who greatly enjoyed this approach to learning. As a result they consolidated and built on their knowledge as they revisited different events, such as the Battle of Bosworth and learned about the laws and rules of the period.
92. History is planned satisfactorily and the historical topics are based on the national guidelines. The time allocated to the teaching of history varies significantly across the different year groups, but in most tends to restrict the depth of work that pupils are involved in. They present their information in a very limited range of writing styles and this affects the quality of their work. There are no consistent approaches to assessing pupils' progress as they move through the school and teachers do not have the necessary information to plan work that builds on pupils' previous skills and knowledge. The new subject leader has made a start on monitoring teachers' planning and pupils' work, but he has not had the opportunity to observe teaching of history for himself. There are suitable plans for the subject's development, such as adapting the national guidelines to meet the needs of the school and the development of assessment procedures.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

93. The standards achieved by pupils aged eleven in information and communication technology (ICT) are above those expected for their ages. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when standards were in line with national expectations. There is now a clear focus on the acquisition and application of information and communication technology skills.
94. Attainments of eleven year old pupils are good. They make good quality short documentary articles by producing individual pages using computers. They have sufficient skills to be able to produce decorative borders around the text they have produced. They can download stored illustrations to make the pages more interesting. Pupils are able to construct block graphs to illustrate their findings concerned with a variety of investigations, including a graph to show the distances they have thrown a ball and how far they have jumped. Pupils have become skilful at using spread sheets. They use these for calculating the averages of attempts they have made in a number of different events in athletics lessons. This provides a good link with other subjects of the curriculum and enables pupils to apply the skills they have

learned. Pupils are able to use information and communication technology to monitor the weather using external sensors and to frame written instruction to enable different shapes to be drawn on the computer screen and printed out. Almost all pupils have good skills in desktop publishing and are independent in loading programs, saving their work, and selecting the style and size of the font to be used in their writing. They also have well-developed skills in using the Internet for researching information.

95. There has been much improvement in the personal skills of teachers in information and communication technology since the last inspection. At that time teachers were judged to have insufficient expertise in teaching information and communication technology and in enabling pupils to acquire and apply the subject's skills. Most teachers now show a good understanding of the subject. For instance, they provide very clear demonstrations of how to load programs so that pupils successfully become independent in using information and communication technology. Pupils acquire good understanding, knowledge and skills through good planning by teachers. Teachers ensure that pupils develop new skills systematically and are provided with sufficient opportunities to practise and use these skills in their learning of other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils were introduced carefully to constructing graphs through careful step-by-step demonstrations of how to enter the data, how to change the colour and how to rotate the graph. This good systematic teaching, followed by positive support for the pupils when they were using the program, enabled them to acquire all the necessary skills to accomplish the task. The teacher related the task well to the pupils' own lives and pupils were asked to produce a graph showing the number of pupils in the class that owned different types of pet. Teachers have good confidence and are able to teach basic and even more advanced skills well. All teachers have very good relationships with the pupils in their class and this helps very much to enthuse and motivate pupils to want to learn about information and communication technology.
96. The school has recently installed 16 computers in an information and communication technology suite. This is used extensively and has simultaneously enabled teachers to demonstrate new techniques and pupils to practise the skills taught, resulting in much faster progress in pupils acquiring new skills. The quality of information and communication technology teaching in each year group has been monitored to ensure that skills are being taught satisfactorily and this, together with regular in-service training from an external consultant, has contributed positively to the improvement in pupils' attainments. Each pupil's work is stored on the hard disk of the computer and this enables it to be monitored easily. However, assessments of pupils' work are not recorded so the information can assist teachers to plan relevant lessons. The coordinator has worked hard to ensure that the whole range of the required National Curriculum programme is covered. She also supports colleagues effectively with technical assistance and has provided demonstrations of how to use peripheral information and communication technology equipment such as a digital camera or scanner.

MUSIC

97. Only two lessons took place during the inspection. Apart from singing in assembly and a short video of Year 5's work, there was no other evidence to support judgements. There was insufficient evidence available to judge standards or pupils' progress across all aspects of the subject. No comparison with standards reported at the time of the last inspection is possible. However, by the age of eleven pupils achieve standards in singing that are in line with expectations for pupils of this age.
98. At the age of eleven pupils sing confidently in tune, with attention to phrasing and diction. They are accustomed to singing unaccompanied and demonstrate a good sense of pulse as they listen carefully to each other to keep in time. They are able to maintain an independent part when singing two-part rounds such as 'Shalom'. However, the tone quality tends to suffer as they concentrate on holding their line of music. Pupils are able to communicate the mood

of the songs. When singing in two parts there is little variation in the dynamics to show that pupils are able to control their voices when singing quietly or loudly.

99. A number of pupils receive tuition on keyboard, brass, woodwind and violin from peripatetic instrumental teachers. They are able to use and further develop their skills in the school orchestra. The orchestra meets regularly throughout the year and pupils are developing good ensemble skills. Opportunities for pupils to take part in musical events in the local community, such as the Letchworth schools' voices project, and recitals from visiting instrumental groups, enhance the curriculum for all pupils.
100. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed were sound. The lessons had a clear focus and pupils enjoyed the extracts of music chosen by the teacher. However, the emphasis on developing understanding through listening did not give pupils enough opportunities to demonstrate what they knew and understand through practical activity. This is of particular importance as pupils do not find it easy to communicate their ideas verbally. Year 4 pupils identify the musical instruments heard and show an awareness of how the musical elements of speed and dynamics are used to create different moods. When given the opportunity to respond to the music through movement, pupils join in enthusiastically. They are able to keep time with the beat and accurately clap the rhythmic pattern of the melody.
101. Talking with a small group of Year 5 pupils indicated that they have insufficient opportunities to compose their own music and much of their music curriculum revolves around learning the recorder. The plans outlining what pupils are to learn each year have yet to be updated in order to reflect accurately changes to the National Curriculum in music. The school has plans to do this and recognises that the present plans do not provide sufficient guidance for non-specialist teachers. An annual test on musical knowledge and understanding enables teachers to track progression in pupils' learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

102. Owing to the arrangement of the school timetable it was not possible to observe any gymnastics, athletics or dance lessons. Pupils' attainments are close to the level expected for eleven year olds in games and above in swimming. Their levels of attainment in physical education have been maintained since the last inspection.
103. By the age of eleven almost all pupils can swim 25 metres without the use of swimming aids and are able to perform a surface dive. Higher attaining pupils can swim well over 50 metres and all of these have passed their personal survival award. They swim using a front crawl style and less successfully using breaststroke. Lower attaining pupils are making good progress towards swimming independently. They take their feet off the bottom of the pool and can swim on their back using a float. Year 5 pupils work in pairs sensibly and throw accurately as well as catch a rounders ball properly. Their striking of a ball is less successful, mainly because most pupils hold the bat incorrectly, grasping it using a cross-handed grip and more often than not missing the ball when it is bowled. Year 6 pupils have developed their throwing and catching skills further and can throw and catch at speed in groups of threes. Year 4 pupils have satisfactory hand-eye co-ordination and control a tennis ball when repeatedly hitting it with a tennis racquet whilst moving in and out of obstacles. They throw beanbags into hoops accurately from a distance of at least five metres and bounce balls successfully whilst zigzagging between plastic cones.
104. The quality of teaching is sound and basic skills are taught effectively. For example, teachers use sound strategies to improve the pupils' speed of throwing and catching by challenging groups of three pupils to throw and catch along a line faster than a fourth pupil can run the same distance. This heightened the pupils' speed of reaction and improved their accuracy in throwing. Lesson planning is also sound and in lessons where it is necessary to provide activities for different levels of attainment, this is done very carefully. For instance, the swimming lesson observed had well-planned activities that met the needs of pupils with three

different levels of ability. Confidence building activities were provided for nonswimmers, the intermediate group were given tasks that improved their competence in swimming and the higher attaining group practised a style in which they were less skilled. Some teachers have high expectations of pupils and provide good challenges to motivate pupils to improve. One good lesson provided for Year 4 pupils involved pupils in continually competing against their own personal performances. The distance between pairs of pupils working in partnership was increased steadily so that the length of throw and the difficulty in catching became greater. This not only provided a good medium for pupils to develop their skills but also gave them a sound knowledge of their own learning. Teachers manage pupils well and this results in good behaviour, good concentration and interest. Time is occasionally used inefficiently. For example, in one games lesson the length of time for acquiring skills was too short and the length of time allocated to playing a rounders game was too long. Once the game had started this meant that the total amount of time available for practising hitting, fielding, throwing or catching was minimal.

105. The school's learning resources for physical education are satisfactory in quality and good in quantity. There are sufficient items of equipment for individual pupils to have enough practice for them to improve their skills. The co-ordinator works hard, particularly in providing extra-curricular activities for pupils to improve their skills. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in competitive sport. For example, there is a range of chances for pupils to represent the school as a member of the football, netball, badminton and athletics teams. Some of the school teams have been highly successful. For example, the boys' team won the Hertfordshire Badminton Association's tournament, the school athletics teams won the girls' shield for the Letchworth and Baldock District Sports and the boys were runnersup in their section. In addition, there is a wide variety of extra-curricular sporting activities such as rounders, rugby, football and netball. Skills acquired in these sessions improve pupils' progress. Finally, the school was selected to perform a thematic dance at the East of England Millennium Dance Festival.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

106. By the time pupils transfer to their secondary schools, standards match the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' progress through the school is satisfactory. These findings match those from the last report.
107. The school has followed a planned programme based on the locally agreed syllabus for some time, but it has now decided to adopt this syllabus in its entirety from September 2001. This will improve the structure within the school as it has been increasingly difficult to match the school's approach to the revised Hertfordshire syllabus and scheme of work. The school has always had an approach which linked Christianity to the main world religions reflected in our society, but the proposed change in September will develop this further. The co-ordinator has completed some good work recently linking religious education in more detail to these faiths, particularly with the introduction of artefacts supported by good quality photographs of worship, so that pupils can see clearly how Christians have holy books, festivals and stories of creation in a similar way to Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists.
108. During the inspection there were good examples of this. For example pupils in Year 3 looked at the reasons why Jews wear the kippah and tallit; Year 4 pupils discuss this in more depth and are now introducing symbols from their own lives such as "I don't have anything which reminds me of God but I do have a shell which reminds me of my granddad who died". They understand the symbolism of a cross and recognise the Bible and the Torah are both holy books. By the time pupils are eleven they complete a substantial amount of work on Christianity and other faiths. They learn about places of worship knowing words such as font, pulpit, menorah, Jesus, Allah and Ganesha, together with who or what they are. A scrutiny of pupils' work in all classes confirms it is of a consistent satisfactory standard. It covers Christianity well.

109. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. The planning for the whole school, for acts of collective worship in support of religious education and for lessons, is good, making sure pupils build on their experiences during the lesson and over longer periods of time. When artefacts are used pupils are particularly responsive as this gives them more understanding of what they are learning. Pupils would benefit more if they could handle or wear these artefacts. Teachers are particularly adept with questions so that pupils readily give answers, sometimes at length. Relationships are very secure and as a result pupils talk openly about their feelings about life. Teachers establish a very good learning atmosphere in these discussions because of their confident, open teaching style. However, it is the constraints of time and sometimes the use of photocopied sheets which reduces the quality of learning. For example in Years 3, 4 and 5 lessons, discussions were cut short to complete a worksheet even though the depth of the discussion was far superior to the learning which resulted from the photocopied task. Although all pupils respond at different levels to the text on the sheet, often they are the same for all pupils. Assessments both in the shorter term, through marking the pupils' books in more detail, or through collecting samples of work from different years to compare attainments, are missing. But there are good real links of religion to real life situations. The pupils visit local churches to learn about their history or to take part in festivals such as harvest or carol services. Ministers such as a Baptist minister visit the school. Pupils recently took part in celebrations with a Hindu visitor and their subsequent writings showed how much they had learned. Good details of Christianity and other faiths, linked to pupils' age and experience, are part of every act of collective worship.
110. The co-ordinator has led the subject effectively for several years. When the locally agreed syllabus is adopted in September it will be an ideal time to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the subject so that the introduction of a modified scheme of work is fully successful.