

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MARK'S CE JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Robert Burn's Avenue, Cheltenham

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115712

Headteacher: Mr H. Bailey

Reporting inspector: Mr D. Collard  
OFSTED Inspector Number: 11122

Dates of inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 192353

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Robert Burns Avenue Benhall Cheltenham Gloucester
Postcode:	GL51 6NU
Telephone number:	01242 702280
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. R. Avery
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11122	Mr D. Collard	Registered inspector	mathematics; art and design; design and technology; physical education equal opportunities; English as a foreign language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements. How well are the pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9306	Mrs B. Moore	Lay inspector	None	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?
18344	Mr D. Earley	Team inspector	English; history; special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8851	Mrs L. Kelsey	Team inspector	science; information and communication technology; geography music	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Mark's C of E Junior School is situated in Cheltenham. It has 250 pupils on roll, which is an average size. The school shares a site with an infant school and although it has its own playground it shares the use of a grassed area. The area that serves the school is of mixed housing and pupils come from a variety of social circumstances. Most children join the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are above those of most children of their age. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is very low. There are few pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds and there no pupils are identified as being at an early stage of learning English. This is very low when compared with the national average. Twenty per cent of pupils are on the special needs register, which is in line with the national average. Three pupils have a statement of special educational need.

The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

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

This is a very effective school. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved rapidly over the last four years and are generally being maintained at high levels. The quality of teaching is very good, overall, as is the quality and range of the curriculum offered. The good leadership and management of the school have continued to improve and the school is highly regarded within the community. It provides very good value for money.

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

- Achieves well above average standards in English, mathematics, science and geography and above average standards in physical education.
- Good leadership by the headteacher and senior management team.
- Provides very good support for pupils with special educational needs so that they make very good progress
- Ensures that the moral and social aims of the school are shared amongst the school community.
- Very good relationships and attitudes that are reflected in the very good behaviour in and around the school.
- Provides a very well balanced, broad and relevant curriculum.
- Uses the very good academic monitoring systems to improve the quality and challenge of pupils' work.
- Has effective links with parents and ensures that they are fully informed about their children.

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

- The standards in information and communication technology (ICT.)
- The management role of all co-ordinators but especially in girls' welfare, design and technology, music and information and communication technology.
- The governors' strategic overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

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

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

Since the last inspection in 1997 the school has made good progress. The school has now set targets for pupils and teaching is more consistent. The individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are now good and the headteacher undertakes a good range of monitoring. Time is now used very well and this ensures that pupils get a very broad curriculum. Resources have improved in most subjects. In addition, the welfare and care of pupils have improved and the assessment of pupils is much better. In a few areas there has not been such good improvement. The co-ordinators are not yet fully involved in the monitoring and evaluation of their subjects and do not always have a good view about the standards being achieved across the whole school. Information and communication technology (ICT), whilst rapidly improving now, has not moved on fast enough. History now has a much lower profile in the curriculum. The school still does not take enough account of the diverse nature of our society by promoting other cultures and beliefs. Overall, the school has correctly set

priorities for the improvements that needed to be made and has the capacity and resources to make further improvements.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	A	B	C
mathematics	B	B	B	D
science	B	A	A	B

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

Standards have remained at high levels for the past three years. Over the last five years the school has rapidly improved its results from low levels. In 2000 the school attained above average standards in English and mathematics and well above standards in science when measured against all schools. When measured against similar schools results are average in English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. Standards in the present Year 6 show that pupils are attaining well above average standards in all three core subjects which is an improvement from last year. The targets set for this year are very high and exceed those set by the local education authority. The school is on line to achieve these.

Pupils are attaining levels well above the national expectation in geography, above average levels in physical education and average levels in design and technology, art and design, and history. In ICT pupils are performing below the national expectation. They do not have access to all aspects of the subject, especially those associated with simple programming.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic to learn and are proud of their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other and to adults. The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships between and among pupils in all age groups. Very good systems for personal development. Pupils undertake their tasks with quiet efficiency.
Attendance	Very good. The systems for registration are in the process of being amended in light of clearer guidelines for health and safety.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching overall is very good. During the inspection no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In 85 per cent of lessons observed the teaching was good or better and in 44 per cent was very good or better. One lesson seen was excellent. There are no significant differences between year groups or between the teaching of boys and girls. This very good teaching is the main reason why pupils make very good progress in their learning. Pupils make very good progress because of the high level of planning and conduct of lessons. Particular strengths include the teaching of literacy and numeracy, the management of pupils and the use of marking and assessment. Progress in ICT, design and technology and music, whilst satisfactory overall, are not as good because teachers are not as secure in their own knowledge of the subjects. Teaching, and especially planning, has greatly improved since the last inspection.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum is provided to all pupils except in some aspects of music and ICT. All statutory requirements are met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. This has greatly improved in recent years and the support provided is effective in addressing the individual needs of pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, good. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory although there are not enough opportunities to reflect on the beliefs and traditions of other cultures. It is very good for moral and social development because of the ethos that has been created.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. This is an improved area. Teachers know pupils well and are able to provide very effective support should it be needed. All staff are caring and respond as a team to new initiatives.

The school generally works very well with parents and its contribution to the local community is valued.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides a very strong educational direction to the school. An effective senior management team supports him although the co-ordination of girls' welfare is under-represented.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	While the governing body is conscientious and has very good intentions it is not fully effective. Their ability to analyse and evaluate information is restricted because there are a number of inexperienced governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and senior management team take the lead in this area. The governing body are kept informed but they do not yet fully understand or respond to the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Priorities for spending are analysed and the school has managed to ensure that the budget can be used appropriately. However, a large amount of funding has been allowed to accumulate. It is only now being used to develop ICT although these have been areas that have needed improvement for some time. The principles of best value are adopted when buying resources.

The school has a very good level of staffing including teachers, support staff and administrative assistants. The accommodation is good and there are adequate resources to fulfil the needs of the National Curriculum.



## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school and make good progress.</li><li>• The school expects their children to work hard</li><li>• Behaviour is good.</li><li>• Teaching is good and the school is led well.</li><li>• Children become mature and sensible.</li><li>• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.</li><li>• The school is generally approachable</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A better level of funding to enhance the provision for ICT and improve cloakroom and toilet facilities.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. The inspectors also agree that ICT provision needs to be improved. There are plans for its immediate development with the building of a new classroom with appropriate hardware. Recently, the toilets have been refurbished. The school is not under-resourced, although a large underspend has been allowed to accumulate. However, until recently, this was not sufficiently identified as a priority in the school development plan.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Attainment in English by the end of the key stage is well above national averages, including approximately 30 per cent of pupils achieving the higher Level 5. This is a significant improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The findings of this inspection indicate that attainment is better than that shown by the results of the 2000 National Curriculum tests, which were above national averages and in line with the attainment for similar schools. This is because in 2000 there was a relatively lower achieving cohort overall. Pupils' attainment at the higher Level 5 was well above the national average. The attainment of the present cohort of Year 6 pupils is in line with the better attainment indicated in the results of the National Curriculum tests for 1998 and 1999. This is part of an overall improvement that is higher than the national trend.
2. In mathematics, standards are well above the national average. In the Year 2000 National Curriculum tests pupils achieved standards above the national average when compared with all schools but below average standards when compared with schools of similar backgrounds. However 75 per cent of pupils achieved the national average (Level 4) and of those 35 per cent achieved the higher Level 5. Boys performed well above the national average and girls reached the average. This is against the national trend where both boys and girls achieve similar levels. Over the last four years standards have risen sharply from below average in 1997. In 2000 they did plateau but at significantly higher levels. The present Year 6 pupils are achieving standards that are well above average, especially in number work and in their understanding.
3. Attainment recorded in the 2000 National Curriculum tests in science by all pupils was well above average when compared both to national results and to those of similar schools. Standards overall are well above average for the pupils currently in Year 6. Most pupils in this year can use equipment very well to conduct a range of different experiments planned for them. Since the last inspection the results have improved each year because teaching and learning are much better throughout the school as a result of very good planning by teachers.
4. Pupils attain standards that are well above the national expectation in geography, are above in physical education and in line with it in design and technology, art and design and in history. Standards are below average in ICT because pupils do not get enough opportunity to use programming to control movements and there is not enough work combined with other subjects such as science and geography.
5. Most pupils at Stage 1 on the special educational needs register reach standards generally in line with or slightly below those expected for their ages. This is because the school has a relatively high achieving group of pupils. The high number at Stage 1 is a feature of the very good assessment procedures used by the school and the close monitoring it makes of pupils' progress. Despite the very good provision, the pupils at Stages 2 to 5 generally achieve levels below those expected for their ages. There are no differences between boys' achievements and girls. In the work seen within and between year groups pupils at all stages generally make very good progress. Evidence from the register of pupils with special educational needs and the statements of special educational need support this view.

6. The school has set very high targets for pupils at the end of Year 6. These were higher than suggested by the local education authority but are based on a thorough analysis of past performance. There is every indication that these will be achieved by the pupils in Year 6, as was the case last year.

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

7. Since the last inspection this aspect has continued to improve and is now a strength of the school. Pupils' enthusiasm for their school is very good and this is reflected in the very strong support given to the many extra-curricular opportunities provided for pupils. Pupils behave very well in and around school; they work co-operatively and enjoy learning. There are occasional lapses of behaviour from a minority of pupils when classroom organisation and work are less challenging. This is usually well managed. Children form excellent relationships with one another and with adults; this starts early in their life in the school. They are courteous and polite and are very welcoming to visitors and eager to share their achievements with others.
8. The personal development of pupils is very good. Pupils take responsibility for some of the daily routines and they undertake their tasks with quiet efficiency. This ready involvement in the life of the school is highlighted by the house captains, vice-captains and prefects, who are eager to fulfil their roles and speak with confidence about their duties. They show initiative in these activities and take pride in the responsibility they have been given. Pupils have developed strong skills in working together as a team, listening to and respecting one another's views and ideas. This was clearly demonstrated in a group reading activity when a small group of girls showed initiative, taking responsibility for their own learning as they worked enthusiastically when acting and reading a play. Pupils have a good understanding of the needs of others; they raise money for charity and during the inspection were discussing council activities for Red-nose day. Pupils with special educational needs generally co-operate very well with teachers and peers and relationships are very good. They have the same opportunities for personal development as other pupils.
9. Attendance levels at the school are very good and above the national average. The levels of unauthorised absence are below the national average. Pupils are happy to come to school and the school day starts promptly.

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

10. Teaching overall is very good and has improved since the last inspection. During this inspection no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In 85 per cent of lessons seen the teaching was good or better and in 44 per cent was very good or better. One lesson seen was excellent. There are no significant differences between year groups or between the teaching of boys and girls. Effective use is made of setting in Year 6 for English and mathematics. This very good teaching is the main reason why pupils make very good progress in their learning.
11. Teachers have good subject understanding and know how to put across complicated ideas in an informative way. Only in design and technology, music and ICT is there some inadequacy. This issue is being addressed by intensive training during this year. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are used well in a variety of lessons. Pupils are expected to be able to transfer their thoughts both into the written and spoken word. In many different subjects there are good examples of extended writing and the transfer of concrete ideas into abstract thought.

Computers are not used well to enhance the learning across a range of subjects, such as by using spreadsheets in geography and science and research on the Internet for history.

12. Planning is particularly effective. Teachers meet regularly to share their ideas in year groups. This ensures that all pupils in that year receive the same range of curriculum. Plans are linked well to an overall plan and framework. Objectives and intentions are set for each lesson. While teachers are aware that pupils are performing above the levels expected of children of their age they do not always use sufficiently challenging tasks to ensure that the highest level of ability is fully stretched. Despite this, pupils are keen, eager and highly motivated in what they are doing. Often noise levels are very low because the class is concentrating on the problem that has been set. During discussions pupils get excited about their contributions but listen intently both to the teacher and to others in the class. The methods used in ICT, design and technology and music are not as effective. This is linked to teachers' lack of knowledge about these subjects and their insecurity in teaching it. However, from the scrutiny of work it is clear that this level of expertise is gradually improving as teachers begin to follow more closely the plans that have been agreed nationally.
13. Teachers manage pupils very well. There were no instances of misbehaviour during the inspection and from the discussion with pupils these occurrences are very rare anyway. Should pupils become excited, their energy is channelled very well by teachers who employ different strategies to interest and motivate them. This ensures that the pace of lessons is always brisk and a lot is achieved during each session. Time is generally used well. In literacy and numeracy lessons the teachers use the recognised format that allows for discussion, individual work and a concluding review. Support staff are prepared for the work that they have to do but are not always used as well as they could be. Their work tends to react to the need at the time rather than being planned in advance. Consequently, some staff sit for extended periods during the discussion when their time could be put to better use.
14. Teachers mark work well. This includes praise and evaluative comments. Where work is not right most teachers ask for some further practice. In the best cases, notice is taken of this in future comments. Homework is regularly set. Parents are aware of what is expected and many pupils say that they enjoy it. Classteachers value homework and make reference to it in later lessons.
15. The good teaching ensures that the pace of learning is good in the majority of work. Pupils have a very good understanding of their own strengths. In English, this includes targets that have been clearly defined in the front of the books. Many pupils are very independent and take responsibility for their own learning. This includes research at home and finding other resources to bring in to enhance lessons.
16. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator, class teachers and classroom support assistants work together very closely to ensure that all are aware of the needs and targets for improvement of pupils with special educational needs. Staff are very skilled at planning and teaching work which is suitable for pupils' abilities. This helps to enhance the very good progress these pupils make.

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

17. The school is very successful in providing a very broad range of rich and stimulating learning opportunities both within and beyond school. These meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The school meets the statutory requirements for teaching all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Overall, it provides a well-balanced curriculum although opportunities are limited for pupils to develop some music and ICT skills. The school is aware of this and is increasing resources and extending staff expertise in order to make improvements. The school has responded to criticisms from the previous inspection by making improvements in its provision for design and technology and ICT although further improvements are still needed in the latter.
18. Since the previous inspection the school has increased the amount of teaching time, although it is still less than the recommended national minimum. However, the school has organised the school day effectively and makes good use of the time available. The school is successfully implementing the personal, social and health education and citizenship framework. It makes good use of the guidance provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in its planning of the curriculum. The school works very hard to ensure that all pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum and have equal opportunities to succeed in them.
19. The school has very effective strategies in place for teaching literacy and good strategies for teaching numeracy. The National Strategies for teaching Literacy and Numeracy have been implemented very thoroughly and are helping the school to achieve high standards. The school makes very good provision for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, pupils research life in Tudor Britain using reference books in history. In geography they clearly compare features of the great rivers and produce a form of news report when writing about the life of Daniel in religious education. In science pupils make very good use of their writing and speaking and listening skills in their study of habitats. Word-processing in a wide range of forms is used in pupils' writing. Similarly, the school works well to enable pupils to use their numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, in history they use time lines and produce and interpret graphs indicating death rates during the reign of Victoria. They use mathematical skills in traffic surveys as part of work in geography and make accurate measurements in their work in design technology. However, the school has not yet sufficiently developed the use of information and communication technology in mathematics.
20. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The school liaises very closely with the local infants' school and provides very thorough and detailed assessments in order to give early identification of pupils so that support can be continued or begun promptly. Individual education plans set very clear targets for improvement. The close involvement of parents, class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator in the writing and implementation of these ensures that they are aware of the support needed. Class teachers are very skilled in carefully providing work which is suited to pupils of all abilities, including higher achieving pupils. There is an appropriate balance, reflecting the needs of pupils, between support in class and withdrawal for specialised support. The school provides very good support for pupils with statements of special educational need, including the work of support assistants where necessary. A manageable number of targets for improvement are set and these relate very closely to work in class. Higher achieving pupils receive additional support in English. The room allocated for the teacher and pupils with special educational needs is small and used for other purposes such as the library and mathematics and music teaching. This limits the amount of time and space devoted to special needs. However, there are plans to improve the situation in the immediate future. There is a very good link with agencies such as the psychological, medical and occupational therapy services.

21. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities in order to enrich the curriculum. This includes such activities as, gymnastics, netball, choir, dance, rounders, football, chess, rugby, athletics, Christian Union, recorders, library and mathematics clubs. In this, they are very well supported by teachers, parents and members of the local community. In order to extend pupils' work in the curriculum they make many visits out of school. These include such places as Chedworth Roman Villa, Oldbury Power Station, West Midlands Safari Park, Cotswold Farm Park, and Cheltenham Museum. They also make residential visits where they participate in outdoor activities and learn about living together. In a similar way visitors come into the school in order to support pupils' work. For example, historical specialists come into school and adopt the roles of characters from history. Science is presented in a dramatic way when a theatre group uses drama to explain scientific principles. The school nurse, police, road safety and fire departments visit school in order to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding.
22. The school makes good provision for personal, social and health education. It has a clear policy for teaching sex education, linked with the science curriculum. The school makes good use of staff expertise in teaching about the use and misuse of drugs within a healthy lifestyle. The school is very successful in promoting opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility and take the initiative. The system of house captains, prefects, monitors and school and class council membership enables pupils to develop qualities of leadership, responsibility and caring for others. The school council regularly discusses everyday issues perceived by pupils. For example they initiated changes in the wearing of school uniform. Older pupils take the initiative in funding and organising activities to help the school. Pupils regularly contribute to those less fortunate than themselves such as Barnardo's, Help the Aged and local hospices.
23. The school has established very good links with the local community in order to enhance pupils' learning. For example, local football clubs help with football training and the school made use of the expertise of a senior citizen to guide pupils around the stained glass windows in the local church. The school choir sings for local community groups and performs in local churches at times of special celebration such as harvest and Christmas. Local clergy visit school as part of the school's regular pattern of worship and the school is involved in local festivals such as Cheltenham in Bloom. The school has very strong links with businesses in the community which help to enhance the school's resources and participate in school business links. These projects involve such subjects as English, mathematics, geography and design and technology. They enhance pupils' understanding of business and the adult world and extend their knowledge and understanding in subjects of the curriculum. As part of its work in the curriculum the school makes very good use of such aspects of the local community as nearby shops and churches in geography, history and religious education. In its work with Birdlip, the school has useful links with other communities.
24. The school has very effective links with partner institutions, including the local college of higher education, whose students work in school. The smooth transfer of most pupils from infant and to secondary school includes opportunities for pupils to make pre-visits and for the efficient transfer of pupils' records, including those for pupils with special educational needs. There are very strong links with the local infants' school. Teachers from both schools spend time in each other's classes in order to get to know children well and to ensure that their transfer to the junior school is a smooth one. This includes occasions when teachers teach in each other's schools. They ensure that teachers build on pupils' previous work, for example, in handwriting and spelling. There are similar very good staff and curricular links with the local secondary school which help to ensure that the progress of most pupils is continued when they move school. Secondary teachers come into the junior school to teach specialist subjects. This helps to

enhance pupils' learning and strengthens the links between the schools. This helps to ensure that most pupils are well prepared for their move to a new school.

25. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Spirituality is fostered through assemblies and in some lessons such as history and geography. During the inspection an example of the groups that are invited into the school was seen. Here, the story was told through the use of puppets and dialogue. The pupils responded well and could answer most questions posed to them. Social and moral development is also fostered well. Pupils know right from wrong and are encouraged to feel part of the whole school community. There is a strong sense of doing one's best and this is evident in all lessons and in discussions. It is also developed through the high expectations that teachers have. Pupils are expected to become involved in school life and participate in what the school offers. There are a good number of trips that expound the traditions of many cultures. It is not exploited so well in relation to multi-cultural links.

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

26. There has been a strong improvement in this aspect since the last inspection. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are now very good. Teachers know and understand their pupils very well; procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development are very good. The care of pupils through the educational and personal support and guidance is also very good. Overall, effective procedures are in place to ensure that all the related matters of health, safety, security and first aid are dealt with to a high standard. Staff are very caring and respond well to pupils' needs. There are strong links with the infant school, which help to provide a strong base for pupils' future life in school.
27. The successful implementation of the carefully monitored behaviour policy results in generally well-behaved pupils. The school is aware that this also needs to be reflected in pupils' care of the building, which is good overall, but mud in some areas detracts from an otherwise pleasant environment. The monitoring of pupils' attendance is satisfactory; the school dealt with some weaknesses in this area promptly and efficiently. The very effective support provided by staff makes a positive contribution to pupils' well being, and enables pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered.
28. Individual education plans and statements of special educational need are very well focused on pupils' needs and meet statutory requirements. Staff ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive their full entitlement to the curriculum. Assessment, monitoring and recording procedures are very efficient and thorough. They enable the school to oversee and evaluate pupils' learning and enhance the very good progress pupils make. The school very carefully monitors the progress of pupils at Stage 1. The school maintains very close links with the infant and secondary schools in order to ensure continuity in provision.

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

29. The school's partnership with parents is good, overall, and the majority of parents have a very positive view of the school. The quality of information provided for parents is good. Parents appreciate the opportunity to come into school and share in the life of the school through assemblies, concerts and meetings with teachers. The parental response to the pre-inspection questionnaires gave a positive picture of the school, with a very high percentage of parents

expressing appreciation of the range of activities provided for their children. They feel their children make good progress and that their children enjoy school.

30. Home-school agreements are in place. Reports about children's progress are good and parents find them very informative. Newsletters provide a valuable link between school and home; they are clearly written and keep parents informed about the life of the school. Consultation evenings and information about the curriculum are available for parents, who appreciate their opportunity to be involved. The school governors take further opportunities to involve parents by seeking their opinion through questionnaires, which also asked for the opinions of staff and pupils. Parents speak highly of the staff, who are always welcoming and helpful. A thriving and active group of parents, the Supporters of St. Mark's raise valuable funds to support children's education. The links with the infant school are very positive and parents appreciate this. Parents are appropriately involved in the drawing up of individual education plans and statements of special educational needs, including reviews.

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

31. The headteacher's strong leadership qualities identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. The priorities to promote effective teaching and learning have been very successful and have raised the standards of attainment to a high level. Standards, which have been the main focus of attention, have been on a rising trend since his appointment. However, the governing body is not yet fully effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Key members of the board are inexperienced and have yet to fully develop their understanding of their role to recognise the school's strengths and weaknesses. The uses of resources, including specific grants, are good and the school has applied the principles of best value when considering how to move the school forward.
32. The headteacher, together with his senior management team provides an educational direction for the school that very clearly reflects the school's aims. These include raising standards in core subjects, although there are still weaknesses to rectify in ICT, music, design and technology and cultural education. Responsibilities have been shared between all staff; the co-ordinators are aware of their roles. However, at the time of the inspection, a senior female member of staff was absent as a result of a secondment to a nearby school. This led to a temporary weakness in senior management and the representation of girls' welfare and needs. Co-ordinators' roles in monitoring teaching and learning are not strong enough. Some good teaching seen during the inspection, in ICT and music, is not being shared with all staff so that they can develop their expertise in these areas.
33. Governors are fulfilling statutory responsibilities and through their sub-committees monitor the school's overall progress towards its aims. However, they have not fully developed their skills in questioning and challenging decisions made by the senior management. This has led to some misunderstanding and tensions between some members of the governing body and some staff at the school. These have often taken time to resolve and detracted from the recognition of the very good work being accomplished at the school. Governors have not been involved in monitoring teaching in school and as result do not fully understand the strengths of the school.
34. Priorities for future development are good but the school development plan does not forecast costs ahead for more than one year. As a result, a large amount of money has been allowed to accumulate which is now allocated to a building project to improve resources for ICT, the library and special educational needs. However, there are weaknesses in ICT resources and music



that have been apparent for some time and were highlighted at the time of the last inspection. This has contributed to standards being lower in these subjects as aspects of these subjects cannot be fully taught. The action taken to meet the school's targets in literacy and numeracy are good and there is a good commitment among the majority of staff for the school to succeed. New staff members appointed to the school are given good support and the school offers very effective support to the development of teachers' skills and knowledge.

35. The work of the co-ordinator for special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable and experienced. She works closely with teachers so that they are aware of and understand the needs of pupils with special educational needs. She provides very good support to teachers in relating targets for improvement to the planning and work of the class. She manages individual education plans and statements very efficiently. She has a very good oversight of the provision for and progress of pupils with special educational needs throughout the school.
36. The school has a well-qualified and experienced teaching staff. Assistants and lunchtime staff support them well in classrooms and at lunchtime. The caretaker is committed to improving and securing the accommodation and school grounds. The school building has large classrooms; the hall used for assemblies, lunch and physical education is spacious. However, some classes have large numbers of pupils and best use is not always made of the space they have. The small cloakrooms get crowded and untidy. They and hallways quickly get dirty when mud spreads in from the playing fields, giving an unjustified sense of disorganisation.
37. Resources for learning are adequate overall. However, in ICT and music the level of resources limits the standards that can be achieved by pupils. The number of computers in the present specialist room is low for the large class sizes that use it. At times three or four pupils are crushed together to share a computer. The new ICT room being built has enough room to alleviate the problem. The computers in other classrooms were hardly used during the inspection week because staff do not have expertise with some of the older software. The lack of tuned musical instruments limits the quality of musical composition that the pupils can undertake.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

38. In order to improve standards further the headteacher, governors and staff should:
- ❑ Raise the standards and learning opportunities in information and communication technology by:
    - Improving the skills and competence of all teachers
    - Improving the use of hardware and software
    - Devising ways of assessing the present capability of pupils
    - Developing the scheme of work to continuously build upon specific information technology skills and ensuring that all aspects of the subject are addressed
    - Developing an effective learning environment

*(See particularly paragraphs 4, 11-12, 17, 32, and 72 - 76 of the main report)*
  
  - ❑ Improve the role of all co-ordinators but especially those involved with girls' welfare, design and technology, music and information and communication technology by:
    - Involving them in the monitoring and evaluation of their areas
    - Improving the ways that they can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their areas and develop a cohesive improvement plan
    - Assessing the effectiveness of the plans

*(See particularly paragraphs 32 of the main report)*
  
  - ❑ Improve the role of governors by:
    - Undertaking a comprehensive training programme
    - Allowing them to take a more proactive role in the management of the school
    - Developing ways of assessing their effectiveness

*(See particularly paragraphs 31-37 of the main report)*

In addition to the key issues above the governors should also consider the following minor points:-

- Reviewing the teaching objectives within lessons *(Para. 12)*
- Reviewing the work of the classroom assistants *(Para. 13)*
- Enhancing the opportunities to develop multi-cultural awareness *(Para. 25)*
- Enhancing the appearance of the cloakrooms and corridors *(Para. 36)*
- Upgrading the range of tuned instruments *(Para. 37)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	40	38	18	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	N/A	250
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A	4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	N/A	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	N/A	46

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
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***

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	33	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	24	30
	Girls	27	25	31
	Total	53	49	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (93)	75 (87)	94 (95)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	22	24	28
	Girls	24	25	27
	Total	46	49	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (87)	75 (80)	85 (83)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	3
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	243
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25
Average class size	31

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	60

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	398045
Total expenditure	390776
Expenditure per pupil	1557
Balance brought forward from previous year	27933
Balance carried forward to next year	35202

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	250
Number of questionnaires returned	68

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	38	1	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	53	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	57	3	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	59	13	1	1
The teaching is good.	48	48	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	50	19	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	41	10	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	38	1	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	18	65	15	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	46	41	7	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	51	6	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	32	3	0	0

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

### **ENGLISH**

39. The attainment of the present cohort of Year 6 pupils is well above average. This is in line with the attainment levels indicated in the results of the National Curriculum tests for 1998 and 1999 and is part of an overall improvement, which is higher than the national trend.
40. The very high standards achieved by the school are a consequence of the very hard work by staff and the very effective strategies the school has in place for teaching English. The National Literacy Strategy has been very thoughtfully implemented. The school has in place very thorough and comprehensive systems for assessing pupils' work. They use these very skilfully to set clear group and individual targets for improvement for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. A further significant factor in the high standards achieved by the school is the quality of teaching. This has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The overall quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. This is mirrored in the quality of learning, which is overall very good and occasionally excellent.
41. Attainment in speaking and listening throughout the school is well above the standards expected for pupils of this age. This is helped because teachers listen carefully to what pupils have to say and provide many opportunities in English and other subjects of the curriculum for pupils to express themselves. As they move through the school most pupils learn to speak with confidence, organise their ideas carefully and extend their vocabularies in conversations and discussions. For example, pupils in Year 3 clearly explained the difference between writing a character portrait and a story, and referred to themes, compound words and adjectives accurately. Year 6 pupils confidently sequenced ideas and expressed cogent opinions in their consideration of different points of view on the exploitation of the Antarctic. Higher achieving pupils consistently take into account the views of others in their discussions. Most pupils listen attentively so that their responses are based on what has gone before. For example, lower achieving pupils in Year 5 listened very closely and enthusiastically when they were discussing homophones. A feature of the school's focus on work in this area is underlined by the annual speaking out competition.
42. Standards in reading are very high throughout the school. Most pupils read fluently, accurately and enjoy reading. This is enhanced by the teachers' very good understanding of the basic skills of reading. For example, pupils in Year 3 are reminded that "reading on" in a sentence may help their understanding of a difficult word. Teachers throughout the school ensure that less able pupils have a good grasp of letter sounds. The very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs is closely related to the useful targets included in their individual education plans which give them and their teachers a clear understanding of how they might improve. Teachers ensure that pupils' reading is suitably matched to their abilities. For example, higher achieving Year 6 pupils confidently compare the work of different authors and use inference and deduction skilfully when referring to key points in the plot. The very high standards achieved in reading are enhanced by the well-organised provision of reading schemes and fiction books. Most pupils confidently use information retrieval skills such as consulting an index, skimming and scanning and are familiar with the school's reference library system. Many pupils belong to the library club, which is run by pupils during lunch times.

43. Standards in writing are well above national expectations. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities for writing for a wide variety of audiences and purposes. This ranges from, for example, book evaluations and note taking in Year 4, to poetry and persuasive writing in Year 6. The quality of story writing throughout the school is very high. This has been enhanced by the very successful emphasis the school has placed on the development of writing frameworks. As they move through the school pupils increase their skills in bringing such factors as suspense, climax and the resolution of problems into their writing. This adds significantly to the impact of their stories. As they move through the school most pupils extend their vocabularies and show a growing awareness of how to use words imaginatively and aptly. The very good example teachers set in their own choice of words enhances this. By the end of Year 6 most pupils can spell difficult words accurately and writing is clear and fluent. However, throughout the school some pupils do not consistently join their writing. By the age of 11 most pupils show a firm grasp of the uses of punctuation and use complex sentences carefully organised into paragraphs. For example, in Year 6 most pupils write dialogue, using speech marks accurately and use connectives skilfully to increase the affect of their writing.
44. A significant factor in the very high standards pupils achieve in English is the very high quality of teachers' marking. This is very supportive and includes detailed comments so that pupils know clearly what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve. This is complemented by the care teachers take in the assessment of pupils' progress during lessons. For example, a teacher in Year 4 uses white boards effectively in order to assess pupils' skills in spelling. Teachers plan their work very carefully and share what they have planned with pupils. This ensures that pupils build firmly on what has gone before and know clearly what is expected. For example, a teacher in Year 6 carefully revises previous work and shares her lesson objectives with pupils. This helps to increase their understanding of how to develop their points of view using connectives in complex sentences. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is used well to incorporate literacy within other subjects. They use it in careful explanations so that, for example, pupils in Year 4 increase their understanding of how to obtain information from reference books, using scanning. The very high expectations shared by most teachers ensure that pupils make very good progress. For example, in Year 5 less able pupils are challenged to work collaboratively to write a short story within a given time limit, showing their understanding of homophones.
45. Throughout the school teachers ensure that pupils' tasks, including homework, are suitable for their abilities. In Year 3 work on compound words, for example, lower achieving pupils use a simple function format. This is sufficiently challenging to help them to increase their understanding. Pupils of average ability use cards and word searches to extend their knowledge. Higher achieving pupils are expected to use written instructions to construct compound words from base words used in descriptive phrases. Homework on adjectives is similarly prepared according to pupils' abilities. In Year 5, pupils are grouped in English classes according to their ability. In Year 6 pupils are grouped in classes according to their gender. These groups help ensure that pupils are appropriately challenged in relation to their abilities and learning styles and has helped to raise attainment. Throughout the school provision for pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special educational needs, is very good. This ensures that these pupils make very good progress. Pupils are assessed very thoroughly and where necessary individual education plans relate clearly to pupils' work in English. This may, for example, be concerned with letter sounds, spelling or handwriting skills. Class teachers, support assistants and the special educational needs co-ordinator work very closely with pupils and parents. This ensures that all concerned, including the pupils themselves, are clearly aware of the targets for improvement. The school also provides extra support for older pupils of higher ability.



46. Relationships are excellent. Teachers encourage and value pupils' contributions. This gives Year 4 pupils, for example, the confidence to take part in the discussion on clauses and this helps to deepen their understanding. Pupils work very well together and, as in Year 6, increase their understanding of how to develop cogent arguments and to understand the advantages of collaborative learning. Teachers control pupils very well and present work in lively and interesting ways. This ensures that pupils are very well behaved, work hard and lessons move at a brisk pace. For example, in a Year 3 class pupils move smoothly from whole-class to group work and settle to their tasks quickly. As part of the excellent teaching in a Year 5 class, the teacher uses humour and challenging questions to encourage pupils to apply considerable intellectual effort in their work on similar sounding words.
47. The very knowledgeable and experienced co-ordinator works very hard, supporting staff and raising attainment. She organises the subject very well, although there are only limited opportunities for monitoring teaching and learning. The co-ordinator helps to ensure that assessments are analysed very carefully so that planning builds on strengths and weaknesses. For example, improvements in the structure of writing fiction came from an identified need. The co-ordinator has a very clear understanding of the direction to be taken by the subject in order to maintain and improve the school's very high standards.

## **MATHEMATICS**

48. Standards in the present Year 6 are well above average. Attainment has continued to improve since the last inspection. Pupils know their tables and can use a variety of number facts that help them understand different strategies for working out their answers. In mental arithmetic sessions they can explain how they arrived at the correct answer and appreciate that there are different ways of obtaining this. They use their knowledge of different types of measures and can convert percentages to fractions and vice versa. They can also work out percentages and know that they are parts of 100. They have a very good understanding of three-dimensional shapes and can work out areas and perimeters without any trouble. Pupils can also handle different types of data and can discriminate the type of graph they need which will give them the best form of picture to work out a hypothesis. They do not have enough opportunity to use this very good knowledge and understanding to help them when working with spreadsheets. They are quite able to develop formulae but are not given enough opportunity to use them.
49. Progress in learning is good throughout the school. Pupils enter Year 3 with good levels of ability but the school ensures that this is consistently challenged by the tasks that are given by teachers. The setting arrangements in Year 6 further enhance this challenge. Here, the pupils are given work more suitable to their own level of ability and this enables all pupils, and especially those with higher ability, the chance to progress further than pupils of a similar age. They find the work demanding and show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in the work that they are undertaking. In discussion a number of pupils say that this is their favourite subject. During lessons concentration is high, which is demonstrated by the low noise levels when pupils are working. The large quantity of work is presented neatly.
50. Teachers have good subject knowledge and follow the nationally agreed format for the numeracy strategy. This is ensuring that each year group is progressively challenged and work builds on what has gone before. Expectations both of ability and behaviour are high and there are consistently good relationships between the pupils and adults working with them. Time is used well and there is an urgency in all lessons to complete the work. The objective of the

lesson is often shared with the class and is reviewed for its success at the end. In the best cases pupils are also given a further task that will move the learning forward. Homework is used to provide further practice or to help pupils understand a part of the lesson they have not understood.

51. Teachers assess work, either as it goes along or after it is complete. The results of this marking are shared and followed up to ensure that appropriate action has taken place. Praise is given to encourage pupils but equally pupils know when they should have put in more effort. These systems ensure that pupils give of their best and the effort they make is good. They have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and are not afraid to share these. They understand the need to improve their mathematical skills. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well through individual education plans that highlight any numeracy problems. Classroom assistants support small groups of pupils during numeracy lessons.
52. The co-ordinator has a good view of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject and has a suitable action plan for improvement. There are plans to develop numeracy within other subjects. This is a particular weakness especially with regard to the use of ICT. Resources are adequate and are enhanced by individual materials provided by classteachers.

## **SCIENCE**

53. Standards are well above average by the end of Year 6. Since the last inspections the results have improved each year because teaching and learning are much better throughout the school as a result of very good planning by teachers. During the inspection pupils were investigating light sources to show that light travels in straight lines and can be reflected off a surface to change direction. They compared reflection from mirrors, shiny or dull objects. In the other Year 6 class they were investigating the facts which affect the size and position of a shadow, recording result so that they could compare them in a graph. These lessons show that pupils are able to work at higher levels than expected for their age and challenges them whatever their ability.
54. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. One lesson seen in Year 6 was exceptional. Teachers plan lessons very well; they have very good subject knowledge to teach basic skills and as a result pupils learn very well. The lesson about healthy lunch boxes in Year 3 was well organised, with sample lunch boxes for the pupils to talk about with their teacher. The teacher's very good subject knowledge and excellent relationship with the pupils made this lesson fun but challenging to the pupils in this class. Teaching methods and organisation of groups of pupils are carefully thought out. In most lessons practical work helps make the lessons interesting. Expectations are high, both of working together and presenting written results in books.
55. Pupils' attitudes to lessons are very good; they behave very sensibly when working with equipment. The relationships when working in groups, sharing resources and recording results are excellent. Their independence when conducting experiments is as a result of good concentration, skills and interest in what they are doing. Classroom assistants help groups of pupils with the more difficult experiments and this is a good use of their time in class.
56. The quality and range of the science curriculum are broad and there is plenty of emphasis on practical work and use of equipment. This makes work real and relevant and motivates the pupils' learning. Science contributes well to the pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and

cultural education as they are given opportunities to work together in groups. Teachers are assessing pupils regularly at the end of each unit of study and mark their work thoroughly and regularly. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their work is monitored so well and support in class is given when necessary.

57. Leadership and management are excellent. The co-ordinator has very clear ideas about how to improve the standards through regular analysis of test data and scrutiny of how well pupils answer individual questions in test papers. He has monitored this over a period of time and changes emphasis to teaching as a result of his findings. Teachers are well supported by this high quality of co-ordination and evaluation of the subject. The co-ordinator has clear priorities for improving the subject, stressing that links with ICT need to be stronger. Resources are good, overall, supporting the curriculum very well with enough to provide opportunities for investigational work. However, areas of using ICT such as sensing and control work and the use of spreadsheets to analyse scientific data are still areas for improvement.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

58. Standards in art and design meet the national expectation. Year 6 pupils are able to draw confidently and can use different media. There is a number of very artistic pupils and the quality of their work is particularly effective. The pastel drawings on display show a good understanding of blending and tones and demonstrate various methods of illustrating movement and depth. Pupils in other year groups are learning skills through a balance of well-planned and thoughtful projects. Some of the work is linked to other subjects such as geography and history and the work in these books is lively and competent. The sketchbooks that are kept help pupils practice their skills. They include exercises on texture and colour mixing and the effectiveness of this approach is reflected in the finished project.
59. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection but from the scrutiny of work and discussions it is clear that pupils enjoy their lessons and find them stimulating. No overall judgement can be made about the quality of teaching. However, teachers prepare each task carefully in year group planning meetings and this ensures that all pupils receive similar experiences. From the work on display it is clear that teachers try to incorporate as much work as possible that will help pupils improve their technique as well as develop their confidence in drawing and modelling. Consequently, progress in learning is sound throughout the school. As yet, not sufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring that specific skills such as pencil sketching are developed year by year although there are plans to incorporate this into the new scheme of work. Good use of computers is starting to be made. In the lesson seen the teacher was comparing the use of painting with a software program. Here, the pupils were asked about how well they thought the computer could be used. They correctly identified the shortcomings as well as highlighting the successes. Their enthusiasm for the work was demonstrated through the high levels of concentration and their interest in the final results. The lesson moved at a fast pace and the teacher was asking astute questions related to the artistic content. In each class the displays represent a wide range of work that has been undertaken recently. A portfolio has been kept of previous work and this illustrates that good emphasis is placed upon painting and drawing; there is less evidence of three-dimensional work through modelling or sculpture.
60. The experienced co-ordinator helps provide advice and support for the planning of lessons. She has not undertaken an effective monitoring or evaluation of teaching and this limits her ability to be fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject. To counteract this shortcoming she has been keeping a portfolio of work from different year groups and there is

some photographic evidence of successful projects. Resources for the subject are adequate but no professional development has been arranged for classteachers. The school is actively involved in the 'Cheltenham in Bloom' project and has had some success.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

61. Standards in design and technology have improved slightly since the last report. However, this subject still has a low profile in the school and some teachers lack sufficient expertise. Pupils in the present Year 6 attain standards that are in line with the national expectation. They are able to talk about different modelling that they have done and how they designed and assembled the models. They are not so clear about why they have chosen particular designs because they have not had sufficient opportunity to take models apart and discuss what has been successful in the design stage. Pupils in Year 5 have been able to make moving models with cams showing how it is possible to change a rotational movement into linear motion. They have successfully built moving dragons using constructional material such as wood and card. Overall, more resistant materials such as wood and plastic are not used enough.
62. Although only one lesson was seen during the inspection it is clear from discussions with pupils that they are keen, eager and interested in their work. They talk enthusiastically about the lessons and they are confident about the differences between an art lesson and one involving designing. Progress through the school is sound. Work is planned carefully by each classteacher in conjunction with their year groups. This ensures that all pupils have similar experiences. The weekly planning is linked to a longer term plan but this does not clearly highlight the skills that are to be taught and relies more on the task or model. In the one lesson seen the pupils were making slippers. They were practising how to stitch in different ways, from a worksheet. Concentration levels during this lesson were high and a lot of work was completed. Pupils had a clear idea about what was expected and knew why they were having to practise. They could talk about the next stage they would be moving on to. The teacher was using a new format of assessment to enable the pupils to make annotated sketches, describe what they were doing and evaluate the final product. Unfortunately, they had not been given the opportunity to look at commercially produced slippers or footwear to discover the best way of producing their own. Consequently, the task was too teacher directed and did not allow the pupils to think for themselves and make decisions.
63. The experienced co-ordinator is well aware of the shortcomings within the subject and is planning some professional development in the near future. Schemes of work are now more closely allied to the nationally recognised plans. The co-ordinator is also in the process of developing more tasks using materials such as wood and plastic. Resources for the subject are just adequate. The subject could be improved if there were more tools and materials of different types. The subject was highlighted for improvement at the time of the last inspection. Some improvements are apparent but the subject has not had a high priority until very recently.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

64. Standards are very good at the end of Year 6 and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now achieving well as a result of good teaching and coverage of the curriculum throughout the school. In Year 3 pupils could explain how land use in different locations, describing and contrasting physical and human impact on the countryside. By Year 4 they know that different parts of the world have different climates and that this is dependent on changes in rainfall and temperature over time. In Year 5, pupils were able to describe how the River Nile has influenced Egypt, locating it in North Africa from a map in an atlas. A Year 6 classroom display showed that pupils had been studying world oceans and comparing them as seen in an atlas and on a globe.

65. Teaching and learning are good overall because the expectations about what will be learnt are high and the tasks set are very appropriate to the level of ability. In the two lessons seen in Year 3 and 4 it was very good and satisfactory in the lesson in Year 5. No teaching was seen in Year 6. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners, listening and concentrating well on the tasks set them. However, in the Year 4 lesson, when the teacher concentrated on the lower ability group, a few pupils were unable to sustain their concentration and, as a result, the pace of the learning was not maintained throughout the lesson. Pupils are mostly very keen to do well and their relationships with each other and with the class teacher are often very good. As a result of this good teaching and learning and of positive attitudes among the vast majority of pupils, standards are very good.
66. The co-ordinator has monitored the policy and scheme of work to ensure good coverage of the curriculum over the four years. As a result the subject is now well taught. Resources are generally satisfactory, although there is some need for modernising the atlases. Teachers are also reluctant to make links with ICT and use, for example, spreadsheets to analyse data collected. There are no recently purchased CD-ROMs to enhance subject knowledge and use on the class computers. Staff have recently attended courses to update their skills and help with implementation of the scheme of work. Assessment and recording of pupils' achievements are currently under-developed, but focused tasks to test pupils' understanding are regularly set after each teaching unit.

## **HISTORY**

67. During the inspection it was possible to see only one lesson. However, from the one lesson seen, from discussions with teachers and pupils and from scrutiny of teachers' planning and from scrutiny of the limited amount of pupils' work available, the evidence is that by the end of Year 6 attainment is in line with national expectations.
68. Pupils generally have a sound factual knowledge of aspects of history. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in their understanding of chronology. This is helped, for example, in Year 5 by the use of time lines showing events from the time of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks to the period immediately before the birth of Christ. Year 6 pupils know about events such as the advent of the railways and the Great Exhibition during the Victorian period. They compare the lives of rich and poor people. Year 3 pupils know about the lifestyles of the Celts and Romans and Year 4 pupils relate accurate information about the life and times of Henry VIII.
69. As they move through the school most pupils begin to develop a sound understanding of methods of historical enquiry. Pupils in Year 6 begin to distinguish between primary and secondary sources of evidence. They use data in calculating Victorian death rates. They develop their understanding of the gradual changes in Victorian life that led to improvements in conditions for the poor. Year 4 pupils describe aspects of Henry VIII's character and use portraits as evidence. They begin to research into crime and punishment in Tudor times. Pupils' understanding of lifestyles and the use of artefacts is increased when teachers arrange visits to local museums where, for example, Year 6 pupils use the costumes and utensils from the Victorian period and Year 3 pupils learn about Roman times when they visit Corinium Museum. Teachers arrange for history specialists and theatre groups to come into school and adopt the roles and costumes of particular people of the past such as the Tudors and Celts. This helps to extend their knowledge and understanding and to increase pupils' interest in history. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their historical skills further, such as how to

understand that facets of the past may be differently interpreted, or how to select and link information from a variety of sources, including ICT.

70. In the one lesson seen the quality of teaching was very good. The teacher shared his very good subject knowledge so that the Year 5 pupils' understanding of how Greek writing can be used as evidence was increased. The teacher's use of questions and the pace of the lesson encouraged pupils to sustain their concentration and apply considerable intellectual effort. The very good relationships ensured that pupils were confident to participate in the class discussion because they knew that their suggestions would be valued. This helped to increase their understanding of the similarities and differences between ancient Greek and modern English writing.
71. The very knowledgeable co-ordinator works hard to organise the subject and to support colleagues. However, opportunities for the monitoring of teaching and learning are limited. She has a clear understanding of the direction to be taken in order to raise standards.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

72. Standards are well below expectation by the end of Key Stage 2. They have improved in desktop publishing and presentation skills more recently, through pupils having more regular use of computers in the specialist room. However, pupils enter the school with good standards in mouse control and hand to eye co-ordination because they have regularly used the computers in the infant school. As a result, during their time in the junior school progress is limited by the narrowness of the curriculum currently offered to pupils, although this was better during the inspection week. The subject has had a very low profile in the school in the past and resources are few in number compared with the number of pupils in the school. Many computers are unsatisfactory in quality, as they lack suitable software which teachers are familiar with to support learning in class. The school has plans to build and equip a new computer suite in the near future.
73. In Year 4, some pupils can use the mouse to point and select different tools to apply colour to the screen and fill a shape. By Year 6, pupils could use a multimedia package and combine text graphics and sound together for a presentation to the class. Pupils generally have a basic knowledge which they have learnt from using personal computers at home and from the infant school. Many have access to the Internet, using it to search data and send e-mails. However these skills have not been sufficiently developed at the school and as a result progress from what pupils already know is limited. Pupils are keen to improve their skills and talk enthusiastically about what they are studying now. However, they know that they have not used computers enough in the past at school.
74. Teaching and learning seen during the inspection week was good. Most teachers had good subject knowledge about the particular area they were teaching but not in sufficient depth. They plan work and set targets for what they want pupils to achieve in the lesson. However, in subjects such as mathematics, where pupils are achieving high standards, opportunities are missed to improve ICT skills by developing work using spreadsheets. Pupils are keen to learn and although space is tight in the computer suite, resulting in as many as four pupils sharing a computer, they are anxious to do well. Relationships with each other are often very positive. In the best lessons pupils are organised well to make maximum use of the resources available. One teacher made some Year 4 pupils work on the floor with a related activity so that better access could be given to the pupils using the computer. This organisation improved learning for

the pupils using the equipment. Adult support staff is deployed well and the specialist support from a voluntary helper has improved staff expertise and confidence overall.

75. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the school are currently unsatisfactory, although a scheme of work is now supporting teaching. Appropriate statutory requirements are met through planning but certain aspects of the curriculum have not been taught in the past. While emphasis has been given to the development of communicating skills in ICT and this supports literacy, little has been done to improve pupils' knowledge about using data-handling programs, such as spreadsheets, to analyse data collected from an experiment. Pupils have not use control equipment since they left the infant school. There is currently no sensing equipment in the school to support subjects such as science and geography when the pupils study weather or conduct experiments. Little use is made of other software, including the Internet or CD-ROMs to support other areas of the curriculum and develop research skills in history, art or music. Pupils' skills have not been assessed as too few samples of pupils' work are around the school and teachers rarely keep paper copies of what pupils have achieved. As a result teachers are unsure what pupils know and therefore pupils' skills are not developed at an individual level.
76. Co-ordination of the subject is currently satisfactory. The policy has been updated and a new national scheme adopted by the school. This supports teachers. However, too little training in the past has affected teachers' skills and confidence. Resources for teaching ICT are currently unsatisfactory. The number of computers is insufficient for the number of pupils in each class and large groups often have to share together. The computers in the classrooms are rarely used. Teachers lack skills in using the different range of systems currently in the school and as a result these resources are currently wasted. Software on the computers in the classroom is unfamiliar to many teachers and opportunities to use them in other subjects are currently being missed.

## MUSIC

77. Standards in music have declined since the last inspection, when standards were satisfactory by the end of Year 6. As last time, few music lessons were observed and those seen were in Years 3 and 5. As a result it is not possible to make an overall judgement about music standards by the end of Year 6. Schemes of work introduced by the co-ordinator have not been in place long enough to improve pupils' skills and knowledge and they are not yet making enough progress in this subject. However, many pupils take up the opportunity to have music tuition, paid for by their parents, and there are plans to form an orchestra in the future.
78. Pupils were observed singing in assembly and they were able to sing well with a good sense of time and rhythm. A group of girls played some simple melodies on violins in one assembly, demonstrating their newly learnt skills well. In the Year 3 lesson, pupils were able to recognise repeating patterns and explain where the music was fast or slow. They suggested possible symbols to use for notation and illustrated and explained their music to the rest of the class. In the Year 5 lesson, taken by the co-ordinator, pupils could identify the main dynamics of a piece of music and use the correct terminology such as *crescendo* and *diminuendo* to explain changes to the tone. They also named the main instruments they could hear in the composition played to them. In the second session they chose percussion instruments and composed their own piece of music to emulate a train moving along a track as a result of listening to the Villa Lobos composition of "The Little Train from Caipira"



79. Both lessons seen were taught well and teachers were able to develop pupils' understanding of music and develop their skills in listening and appraising. As a result learning was good in both lessons seen as pupils are enthusiastic and have a good attitude to the subject. There was no unsatisfactory behaviour and their relationships with each other and the class teacher are excellent. Teachers are also keen to learn new skills and develop the subject. The newly appointed co-ordinator is aware of the weaknesses in teachers' skills and confidence and the lack of resources such as tuned instruments to support class teaching. There has been no use of electronic instruments in the school as there are no resources to teach this aspect of the subject. Currently the subject is under-resourced and not taught consistently well through the school. This is depressing standards overall through the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

80. Physical education has a high priority within the school and has been allocated a good proportion of time. Pupils exceed the national expectation in their abilities and progress in learning is very good. Pupils throughout the school have access to a wide range of different sports and activities. Most of the lessons are based around developing skills. By the end of Year 6 pupils can take part in a number of team games including football, hockey, basketball, rugby and netball. They are able to dribble balls, use a hockey stick correctly and know the relevant rules for the games that they are playing. They work well together in teams and value one another's contributions. In gymnastics younger pupils are able to construct simple routines and sequences showing balance, travel, start and finish. In Year 4 they have just begun to put together large pieces of apparatus at the start of the lesson. This is still at an early stage, although in the lesson seen the pupils were generally sensible and took good account of the safety aspects. All pupils also have the opportunity to undertake swimming at the local public baths. A number of the younger pupils are already swimming the 25 metres as recommended by the end of Year 6. The programme for physical education also includes opportunities to practise drama and dance routines and adventurous activities.
81. The school places great importance on physical development and in this they are successful. In consequence, pupils make very good progress. Teaching is good. Lessons are planned well, the teachers have good subject knowledge and those who are not so confident are supported well by other teachers. The pupils enjoy lessons. They change into appropriate clothing, as do the teachers which sets a good example. There is urgency to complete tasks and an enthusiasm for learning. Pupils are keen to learn new skills and do not become frustrated when they cannot play a full game. They understand that they need to develop good levels of skill and see these lessons as a way of achieving this. Time and resources are used well as all equipment is ready and easily accessible. During the inspection the weather was cold. The teachers were aware of the need to ensure that pupils kept on the move. This was generally achieved, although on some occasions the groups were too large and pupils had to stand around while waiting for others. Concentration levels are high. Pupils listen carefully to what is asked and follow instructions well. There are very few incidences of misbehaviour and they are the result of over-exuberance rather than deliberate mischief. There are good relationships between the teachers and the class. This is the main reason why pupils achieve so well.
82. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular sports activities, including a wide range of competitive teams. The school has been very successful in recent years and this has helped raise self-esteem amongst the pupils and a pride in the school. This is added to by regular reports during assemblies, photographs of sports action around the school and a display of trophies in the entrance hall. The school, quite correctly, sees this as a major influence in

building up a fully rounded individual. The very well organised co-ordinator has been able to verify the strengths of the provision while developing weaker areas. The development plan recognises dance and gymnastics as areas for improvement. New schemes and guidance are being trialled and the results are to be evaluated. Lessons are conducted with two year groups and this enables teachers to see how each other works. It also provides a good method of seeing good practice. Resources for the subject are adequate and have been enhanced recently with the emphasis on providing for basketball. The school has a good-sized hall and extensive playing fields and a large playground. Good use is made of local amenities and a residential trip is arranged to provide for more adventurous activities.