

INSPECTION REPORT

HOLMER GREEN JUNIOR SCHOOL

High Wycombe

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110300

Headteacher: Mr Ian Holden

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th January 2002

Inspection number: 193777

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Common Holmer Green High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP15 6TD
Telephone number:	01494 713000
Fax number:	01494 713000
E-mail address:	office.holmergreenjun@easymail.rmplc.co.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Robin Meller
Date of previous inspection:	April 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther <i>Registered inspector</i> 18814	Mathematics Art and design Geography Music Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The schools results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Norma Ball <i>Lay inspector</i> 9391		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?
Sue Rogers <i>Team inspector</i> 31421	English History Religious education English as an additional language	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
Susan Senior <i>Team inspector</i> 10226	Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey. RH8 0RE Tel. 01883 723257

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Holmer Green is a medium-sized, community junior school for boys and girls who are 7-11 years old. It has 246 pupils. At the time of the previous inspection, it was a middle school with pupils from 8-12 years of age. The school is situated in a village on the edge of High Wycombe. The village retains much of its community spirit, despite being a suburban area. The school serves families whose social circumstances are largely much more favourable than national averages. Overall, pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 3 is well above average, as shown in their performance in national tests. Across the school, 49 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties. Four of these pupils have a statement. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is below average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Nine pupils have English as an additional language, but most of these are bi-lingual, and only two are at the early stages of learning English.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Holmer Green is a good and effective school that has a number of very strong features. Pupils reach high standards in their work and personal development. The headteacher and senior staff provide very effective leadership and management, which have helped the school to improve standards of attainment considerably over the past four years. There is a positive, ambitious atmosphere in the school, supporting its aim, "To inspire pupils to reach their unique potential". The school provides good value for the money it receives. When pupils join the school, most already have good basic skills, and their overall attainment is well above the national average. The pupils achieve well so that, by the end of Year 6, their attainment in English and mathematics is well above national expectations, with about half reaching the higher level (Level 5) in national tests. Attainment is also well above national expectations in a number of other subjects. The quality of teaching is consistently good, with many lessons in which it is outstanding. The curriculum provides a very rich set of learning experiences, well matched to the needs and interests of the pupils. There is a strong commitment among all the staff to continue to improve the quality of education.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The headteacher's excellent leadership is enabling the staff team to raise the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve well in their academic work and also become mature and responsible young people.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. It is very good and occasionally excellent in a significant proportion of lessons.
- The school creates an environment in which pupils are very keen to learn and want to do well.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. It is particularly strong in design and technology and music, and is enhanced by an excellent range and quality of activities outside lessons.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is very effective, and enables teachers to set targets for future achievement.
- The school is successful in forging an excellent partnership with parents.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The school has no significant weaknesses, but there are four minor issues in the main report that the governors may wish to include in their plans for improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When it was last inspected, in April 1997, the school was judged to provide an adequate standard of education, but there were a number of aspects of its work that required improvement. Pupils were not achieving the standards of which they were capable. Since then, pupils' achievements have improved considerably, and standards of attainment in Year 6 are now much higher. The school has also made very good progress in addressing all the action points from the report. The headteacher, appointed following the last inspection, is providing a very strong lead in school improvement, and staff who play a part in managing aspects of the school's work are clear about their roles and effective in them. The school improvement plan is a very effective document for guiding future developments. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school have been introduced, and they provide valuable information about strengths and weaknesses so that action can be taken. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, and the school now has a very strong team of teachers. Assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are carried out systematically, which helps the school to track progress, set targets and provide suitably challenging work. The school has worked hard to meet more fully the needs of its most able pupils and has largely been successful. In a few lessons, however, work for these pupils is still not challenging enough. The school is continuing to improve, and has a good capacity to raise standards further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6, based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	A	B	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	B	A	B	
science	A	C	B	C	

Attainment on entry to the school is normally well above average, as shown in the results of national tests at the end of Year 2 at its main feeder school. However, attainment does vary from year to year. Pupils' achievements (the progress they make in relation to their prior attainment) are good during their time at the school. Achievement data show that, for the pupils who left the school in 2001, the great majority made better progress between entering the school and leaving than the national average. Results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. All the results compared favourably with those gained by similar schools. Schools set targets for the proportion of pupils expected to reach the national average, Level 4. In 2001, the school exceeded its targets comfortably.

Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is well above national expectations in English and mathematics, and above expectations in science. In all three subjects, pupils achieve well across the school. Overall, pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are well above average throughout the school, and they are used and developed well in other subjects of the curriculum. Achievement in design and technology is excellent, and pupils reach high standards because the specialist teaching is of very high quality. In history, pupils achieve very well because teachers have good expertise. In geography, information and communication technology and music, pupils' achievements are good through the school because the curriculum is carefully planned and well taught. As a result, pupils

reach standards that are well above national expectations. In religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory, and attainment exceeds that expected by the locally agreed syllabus. In art and physical education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and they reach standards that exceed national expectations. These subjects are developing areas for the school and are not as strong as those where pupils' achievements are good. Pupils' achievements in all subjects have improved since the previous inspection, except in physical education where achievement was already good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very keen to come to school. They are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. They generally concentrate well in lessons and offer their ideas readily. This provides a very good basis for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite and friendly. They behave well in lessons and around the school. This supports their learning effectively. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Very positive relationships between pupils and with adults are an outstanding strength of the school. Whatever their background, pupils work and play well together, and all ages are friendly with each other. They respond eagerly when given opportunities to take on responsibility, and show a maturity beyond their years.
Attendance	Very good and well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	good

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

The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of very strong features. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and just over three-quarters of the teaching was good or better, including a significant proportion that was very good or excellent. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 3 and 6, and for design and technology. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Strong features of most lessons throughout the school are: meticulous planning, a strong focus on what is to be learnt in each lesson, praise and encouragement, and the use of a good range of teaching methods. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and make good gains in learning. The good management and organisation of learning are also strong features that help pupils to concentrate on their work and get a lot done. Where teaching was very good or excellent, the teachers' thorough knowledge of the subject, their enthusiasm, and the use of imaginative strategies all promoted rapid progress. Pupils responded well to these high expectations and made every effort to produce their best work. In the few lessons where teaching had weaknesses, activities were less interesting. There was a lack of pace and challenge, particularly in the independent work and for the more able pupils, which resulted in some pupils not making the progress of which they were capable. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Teaching meets the needs of all groups of pupils successfully, including those with special needs and the few learning English as an additional language.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
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The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a broad, balanced and rich curriculum, which is very well planned and organised. There are particular strengths in English, science, information and communication technology, design and technology, history and music. There is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities in which most of the pupils are involved.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The needs of these pupils are identified clearly. They are given appropriate work and support in lessons. The co-ordinator organises provision very effectively.
Aspect	Comment
Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language	Only two pupils are learning English as an additional language and they are well catered for within the good teaching in their class.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school considers provision for pupils' personal development to be a very important aspect of its work. A good range of activities in lessons and in the school encourages pupils to become confident, mature and responsible. Provision for pupils' social, moral and spiritual development is very good, and there is good provision for their cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and support for its pupils through a range of effective procedures.
Assessment	Very good. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are well established across all subjects of the curriculum. Teachers use the information well to set learning targets for pupils and to plan appropriate work for lessons. School-wide assessment information is used very effectively to identify areas for improvement.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has an excellent partnership with parents because it encourages them to be actively involved in its work and their children's learning. Parents respond very positively.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and a clear focus on raising standards. The deputy headteacher is very effective in leading a number of aspects of the school's work. Subject co-ordinators play an influential role in monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors are very supportive and well organised. They bring considerable expertise to their role and fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. They have a good appreciation of the strengths of the school and are increasingly involved in monitoring its work and planning for further improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school has comprehensive systems for monitoring pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning. It uses this information very effectively to identify exactly what needs to be done to raise standards. The principles of best value are used well to evaluate the school's work.

The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are very good. The school makes good use of its funding to raise standards, and plans ahead methodically.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school is well staffed, including a specialist teacher for design and technology. Teachers and classroom assistants are a committed, enthusiastic and hard working team. The building and grounds provide excellent facilities for learning that promote high standards in a number of subjects. Resources for learning are good in most subjects, but there are too few books in classrooms to build on pupils' interest in reading.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Their children enjoy going to school and make good progress. ▪ Teaching is good. ▪ They are kept well informed about their child's progress. ▪ The school is very approachable if parents have concerns. ▪ The school expects children to work hard to achieve their best, and helps them to become mature and responsible. ▪ The school provides a good range of activities outside lessons. ▪ Behaviour in the school is good. ▪ The school works closely with parents. ▪ The school is well led and managed. 	Parents raised no significant concerns.

About a third of parents returned the questionnaire and 20 attended the meeting. The great majority of these parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support parents' very positive views. At the meeting, parents' overall view was that Holmer Green is an excellent school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

*(Pupils' **attainment** is what they know, understand and can do at a particular point in time e.g. at the end of Year 6. Pupils' **achievements** are the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment. Therefore, a child starting school with low attainment may achieve well but still not reach the nationally expected standard of attainment by the end of Year 6.)*

1. The attainment of pupils who join Year 3 covers a wide range, but it is well above the national average overall. Results of national tests in English and mathematics show a consistent picture of well above average attainment for pupils at the end of Year 2 in the infant school from which most transfer to Holmer Green. This is because about half of the pupils reach the higher level (Level 3) in the national tests. The exception is the results of the current Year 4, which were average in writing and above average in mathematics. It should also be borne in mind that the Year 2 tests assess only a narrow range of subjects and skills, and are not necessarily a measure of overall attainment across all subjects of the National Curriculum. Inspection evidence from pupils' work and lessons in Year 3 shows that the standard of attainment in subjects other than English and mathematics is above national expectations, with attainment in science being in line with national expectations.
2. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. In all three subjects, almost all pupils reached the expected level (Level 4) of attainment. In English, just over a half reached the higher level (Level 5) of attainment, and about a third reached the higher level in mathematics and science. In science, one pupil gained the exceptional Level 6. For 2001, the school had set challenging targets for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics, and it exceeded them comfortably. Over the past few years, results have improved at a similar rate to the national trend. However, since the previous inspection, results have improved considerably. At that time, only about two thirds of pupils reached the expected Level 4, and only about a fifth reached the higher Level 5.
3. The school's results are also compared with 'similar schools', which are those deemed to be in similar social circumstances. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is the measure used. The 2001 results compared favourably with those gained by similar schools, being well above average in English, above average in mathematics, and average in science. There are no significant differences in the results of boys and girls. In 2001, girls did much better than boys in mathematics and science, but this was a characteristic of this year group of pupils, which contained a

higher proportion than usual of lower-attaining boys. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds are generally in the higher-attaining groups throughout the school and do well in national tests.

4. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 6 matches the picture from national tests. In English and mathematics, attainment is well above national expectations, with about a half of the pupils already working at a standard close to or at Level 5. In science, attainment is not quite as high, but is above national expectations. Although many pupils join Year 3 with well above average attainment, data comparing pupils' performance in the Year 2 national tests with their subsequent results in the Year 6 national tests shows clearly that most achieve more than is typical nationally. This, combined with the good standard of teaching and learning seen during the inspection, indicates that pupils' achievements are good in English, mathematics and science.

5. In most other subjects, pupils' achievements are good through the school. In design and technology, pupils' achievements are exceptional. The excellent quality of specialist teaching and the very good facilities result in pupils producing work in Year 6 that is well beyond national expectations. In history, pupils' achievements are very good. Teachers are particularly knowledgeable about this subject and the curriculum is very well planned so that pupils' work is of a high standard by Year 6. In information and communication technology (ICT), geography and music, pupils achieve well. Good teaching, good resources and an interesting curriculum ensure that, by Year 6, pupils reach standards that are well above national expectations. In religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and they reach standards that exceed those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Achievement in art and physical education is also satisfactory overall. The curriculum for art is not so coherent or well organised as in most other subjects. Whilst many pupils reach high standards in certain aspects of physical education, such as competitive sports, overall attainment in Year 6 is above, rather than well above, national expectations. Pupils' achievements in all subjects have improved since the previous inspection, except in physical education where achievement was already good.

6. Nearly all of the time, pupils of all abilities achieve well. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their initial attainment, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. In most lessons, work is well matched to their needs, and it is particularly well planned and managed in literacy and numeracy. In other lessons, these pupils receive targeted support from teachers and classroom assistants, enabling them to make good gains in learning towards the targets set for them. In a few lessons seen, however, higher-attaining pupils were not challenged sufficiently by the work they were given. Whilst they made satisfactory progress, they did not make the progress of which they were capable. Tackling this issue is a current priority on the school improvement plan, so teachers are well aware of the particular challenge they face with a high proportion of very able pupils in each class. All other groups of pupils achieve well. For example, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are often amongst the higher attainers and do well.

7. Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievements, their attainment in most subjects, and results in national tests have all improved significantly. This is because the leadership and management of the school have placed a high priority on ensuring that pupils achieve their best. Better teaching, a more organised and interesting curriculum, and very good systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress have all played a part in the very good improvement. The school has created a learning environment where pupils enjoy their work and do well, and so it is very well placed to raise standards further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, and this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. They are keen to come to school and enthusiastic in lessons. For the great majority of the

time, they listen attentively and enjoy their learning. Most pupils, especially those in Years 5 and 6, are able to concentrate well and stay on task, though younger pupils can be restless and take time to settle to their work. Staff carefully foster good learning habits, concentration and very positive attitudes to work as pupils move through the school. Pupils are keen to join in class discussions and very eager to offer their ideas, putting forward their views in a clear and mature way. A strong emphasis on social and moral development is evident because pupils show respect and courtesy for each other and their teachers, which in turn helps to promote a very positive learning ethos throughout the school.

9. Pupils with special educational needs also have very good attitudes in most lessons, and particularly enjoyed the design and technology lessons seen. They show interest in taking part in all lessons and are encouraged to co-operate with others in partnered or group work so that they are fully integrated into all class activities. In many lessons, the support of classroom assistants helps to focus these pupils' thinking and keep them 'on task' so that they can make good progress. All other groups of pupils show equally positive attitudes to their work. For example boys and girls, and pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, are all keen to be fully involved in activities.

10. Pupils work well together in lessons and mix well in the playground. For example, pupils in a Year 5 class worked very successfully in small groups to compose a fanfare similar to those of Handel. They were totally involved in their task and, in a very mature way, shared ideas and alternative suggestions on how to make the tune more interesting. Pupils also listen attentively to the contributions made in lessons by others. They show very good interest and involvement in a range of activities, taking advantage of the many clubs that are offered. Very positive attitudes and attention in class make a very effective contribution to pupils' achievements.

11. The very good behaviour of pupils has been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers work consistently to reinforce good behaviour and set clear guidelines for what is acceptable. In turn, pupils respond well, and the great majority meet the school's expected standard of behaviour with ease. A few pupils can be challenging and find extended periods of concentration difficult. These pupils are well managed by staff and do not hinder the learning of others in the class. Most pupils show friendly understanding of each other, politeness to staff and respect for the needs and feelings of others. They also show sensitivity and an excellent awareness of how their actions can affect others. Very good behaviour is also evident in and around the school. There have been no exclusions, and bullying and aggressive behaviour are not features of the school. Through the school council, pupils have taken the initiative in ensuring that bullying is not tolerated. The 'unfriendly friend' box is a valuable initiative that enables pupils to alert the school to poor or aggressive behaviour. The absence of aggressive, sexist and racist behaviour is a strength.

12. The personal development of pupils and their relationships with others are excellent, and are underpinned by the clear emphasis given to social and moral development. Staff provide good role models showing care and courtesy in their relationships with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to undertake responsibilities both in class and around the school. The school council is well established and respected in the school. Council members from each class and older pupils who have important duties around the school take their responsibilities very seriously. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative and are warmly praised when they do so. Pupils of all ages mix well together, and this is especially so at break times when the 'playground pals' help in the playground. These older pupils, who help and guide the younger ones, show the excellent standards pupils reach in their ability to accept responsibility and foster good relationships. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, contributing significantly to pupils' personal development.

13. Attendance is very good at 96.4 per cent, which is well above the national average. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with the national average. The school adopts a very firm approach to family holidays taken in term time, and such absences are deemed to be unauthorised. The school accepts

that such a policy can inflate the statistic for unauthorised absence and asks parents to think carefully before removing pupils from school in term time. Registers are taken efficiently and attendance information is reported clearly to parents. Punctuality to school is very good. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The quality of teaching is good overall, with a number of very strong features. Teaching is particularly strong in Years 3 and 6. Throughout the school, meticulous planning, a strong focus on what is to be learnt in each lesson, praise and encouragement, and the use of a good range of teaching methods are strong features of most lessons. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, work hard and make good gains in learning. The good management and organisation of learning are also strong features, which help pupils to concentrate on their work and get a lot done. Where teaching was very good or excellent, the teachers' thorough knowledge of the subject, their enthusiasm, and the use of imaginative strategies all promoted rapid progress. Pupils responded well to these high expectations and made every effort to produce their best work. In the few lessons where teaching had weaknesses, activities were less interesting. There was a lack of pace and challenge, particularly in the independent work and for the more able pupils, which resulted in some pupils not making the progress of which they were capable. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils successfully, including those with special needs and the few learning English as an additional language.

15. The quality of teaching was good or better in just over three-quarters of the lessons seen, and very good, occasionally excellent, in just over one quarter. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection, when about one in every six lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good overall, and it was very good in a significant proportion of the literacy lessons observed. Teaching is at least satisfactory and generally good for all subjects, with particular strengths in design and technology and history.

16. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Lesson planning takes account of the differing needs of these pupils so that they can make progress towards their learning targets. In some lessons, particularly literacy and numeracy, these pupils have specifically planned work. Where tasks are largely the same for all pupils, those with special needs have additional support from the teacher or an assistant. As a result, pupils with special educational needs are suitably challenged, receive the right amount of support, and make good progress. When classroom assistants teach small groups in lessons, the support is effective. The result of good teaching is that, by the end of Year 6, most pupils with special educational needs reach the nationally expected standard in English and mathematics.

17. Teachers have a confident knowledge of most subjects and are particularly strong in literacy, history and music. The specialist teacher for design and technology has exceptional knowledge of the subject, which supported the excellent teaching seen. This was seen, for example, when pupils in Year 5 designed and made a cushion. The teacher demonstrated and explained the task very clearly, emphasised the importance of design skills, and made clear his expectations of a high quality finished product. As a result, the pupils showed great enthusiasm for the task, worked hard, and were very proud of their new skills. In a music lesson for Year 6, it was the teacher's assured knowledge of the subject that enabled her to plan imaginative activities in which groups of pupils composed short pieces to describe the planets. The teacher continually asked them to listen to and evaluate each other's compositions, and she used searching questions to assess the pupils' knowledge of musical elements. The pupils' final performances showed how much they had learnt. In a few mathematics lessons,

however, weaknesses in teachers' knowledge of the subject prevented them from being as precise as they should have been, or meant that they did not always know the best way to extend pupils' learning.

18. The teaching of basic skills is effective. Pupils make good gains in reading because teachers have effective systems for monitoring progress, and they sustain good contacts with parents, who provide good support for reading at home. Calculating skills are taught effectively in mathematics lessons. Across the rest of the curriculum, teachers ensure that basic skills, such as correct subject vocabulary, are continually reinforced. For example, a music lesson for Year 3 began with the teacher discussing the meaning of words such as lyrics, melody, tempo and ostinato, so that the pupils could use them in their responses. Older pupils used a range of musical terms confidently because of this good attention to basic skills.

19. Teachers' planning of lessons is very thorough. They identify clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils so that they know exactly what they are trying to achieve. All teachers use WILF (What I'm looking for) to phrase the learning objective in a way that pupils understand. For example, in an excellent science lesson for Year 3, the objective was, "To explore the properties of a range of materials". The teacher pursued the objective by reviewing the previous week's work, introducing relevant vocabulary, enabling pupils to test a variety of materials for properties such as strength, flexibility and texture, and asking them to record their findings on a Venn diagram. A clear objective and effective strategies ensured that the pupils made excellent gains in learning. Plans are particularly detailed for literacy and numeracy, and outline separate, matched tasks for groups of pupils of varying prior attainment. The evaluation sections of teachers' planning often contain helpful indications of where pupils have understood the work and where further consolidation is needed.

20. In most lessons, teachers have high but appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve. Where teaching was very good or excellent, this was combined with challenging tasks and an enthusiasm that motivated the pupils. For example, in a geography lesson for Year 6, pupils researched mountain environments. In a lively discussion, they generated the questions they wanted to answer, and then pursued their research through books and a CD Rom. Two groups wrote and presented television style documentaries about their findings, which motivated them to work hard. The sharing of research at the end of the lesson showed that all the pupils had made very good progress. In a few lessons across the school, however, particularly in mathematics, the work given to the higher-attaining pupils was not challenging enough so they did not make the progress of which they were capable. For example, they could already do mentally some sets of calculations for which they were required to record all the working.

21. Lessons are well organised, and teachers use a good range of methods and strategies to promote learning. The assemblies seen were excellent, containing a good balance of thought-provoking stories, pupil involvement and quiet reflection. A number of lessons were also outstanding for the range of methods used and the interest this created amongst the pupils. For example, a Year 3 history lesson about Ancient Greece included whole-class discussion, work in pairs, a debate about the good and bad features of Athens and Sparta, and pupils recording their findings. The variety of activities and the very good structure of the lesson resulted in the pupils being very interested, working hard and learning a lot. Teachers have good skills in questioning pupils and leading discussions. Group and individual work is usually productive, particularly where pupils are encouraged to work collaboratively, as seen in music lessons.

22. Teachers manage pupils' learning and behaviour very effectively. They provide motivating activities, praise good work and behaviour, and use the school's clear procedures consistently. For example, in a mathematics lesson for Year 3, it was the teacher's constant praise and encouragement that gave the pupils the confidence to make good progress. Because teachers are so positive, pupils

respond in most lessons by listening attentively, concentrating on their work and behaving well. A common strength of the very good and excellent teaching seen was the brisk pace of learning. For example, in an ICT lesson for Year 5, the tasks were explained quickly but carefully, with any questions from the pupils answered knowledgeably. As a result, pupils made a rapid start on their work at the computers, with the teacher reminding them about the amount of time they had for the first task. Excellent support by the teacher and classroom assistant ensured that no time was wasted, so the pupils achieved much during a fairly short period of time. A weakness in few lessons was that the pace of work was too slow, so pupils coasted rather than making a real effort. Classroom assistants make a very good contribution to most lessons, particularly in working with groups of pupils.

23. Teachers have very good strategies to assess pupils' understanding. They usually begin the lesson with a review of previous learning to check what pupils know. They check pupils' progress during lessons, and are constantly encouraging them to assess their own achievements. The 'traffic lights' system, which both teachers and pupils use to assess understanding of work, is very helpful in enabling teachers to plan future activities effectively. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good overall, though some teachers place more emphasis on responding to the objective of the lesson and pointing out targets for improvement than others. Arrangements for homework are very good. The school has a clear policy, understood by parents and followed consistently by teachers, which results in a very good variety and quantity of tasks being completed at home.

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

24. The school's curriculum is very good. It is well organised and balanced, covering all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education in depth. Great care goes into the provision of exciting and interesting lessons. The work is very well planned in order to meet the needs of all of the pupils most of the time. There are particular strengths in English, science, information and communication technology, history and music. Provision for design and technology is outstanding. A good programme of visits made out of school enriches lessons. Nearly all the pupils attend at least one of the excellent range of lunchtime and after-school clubs.

25. Sensible amounts of time are allocated to each subject, and the timetable is well arranged in the main. However, lessons can occasionally become rushed or hard to deliver because of inappropriate placement. For example, during the inspection, a short religious education lesson followed on from a very active science session. The pupils were not in the right frame of mind for spiritual reflection, and time constraints made it very difficult to deliver the planned objectives.

26. The school has worked hard and very successfully to introduce the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. As a consequence, results in national tests for English and mathematics have improved considerably during the past few years. The raising of standards in these core subjects has not detracted from the development of science and the foundation subjects. The planning of the curriculum is very well managed by the deputy head teacher. Her guidance and monitoring ensure that planning is detailed and clearly follows through from the long term to the short-term plans. School curriculum policies are similarly clear, following the same format, which makes them very accessible and so they are well implemented.

27. Good links between subjects are also a strong feature of the curriculum. This ensures maximum use of time, as well as providing a good context for work. The links planned between English, geography and history are excellent. For example, Year 4 pupils recently experienced a living history day in which they dressed up and acted as Celts. Ensuing tasks involved writing newspaper accounts and a study on settlements, from the geography scheme of work. Development of pupils' literacy skills

across the curriculum is very good because of these links. Numeracy skills are also used and developed in lessons other than mathematics, though this is not as strong or well planned for as literacy. For example, there is little use of databases or spreadsheets in geography. A number of other key cross-curricular skills, such as higher order thinking, are required by the latest national guidance. The school has introduced staff training and held discussion on these skills, but they have yet to be fully integrated into planning and teaching.

28. Personal, social and health education is very well planned and taught. Standards are consequently high. There is a designated co-ordinator who is successful in integrating this work into the life of the school and in managing the school council. Social education is a strong feature of religious education lessons.

29. Provision for pupils with special educational needs, which was considered a weakness in the previous inspection, is now very good. Pupils are identified carefully, their progress is well monitored and reviews are carried out correctly. Individual education plans are written by the class teacher and special needs co-ordinator together, so that there is continuity in meeting the needs of each pupil. These plans are regularly reviewed and a 'small steps' approach to setting new targets is used. There are good systems to ensure that pupils with a statement of special educational need are well supported by class assistants. Annual reviews of statements take place at the appropriate times and always involve parents and sometimes the child.

30. The very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school, and this represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school maintains a loving and caring ethos in which all members of the community are valued. Pupils are treated fairly, and there is a shared commitment to encouraging them to grow and develop as young people who are sensitive to the needs of others as well as being responsible for their own actions.

31. Assemblies and acts of collective worship take place daily and make an outstanding contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils' spiritual development is also very well promoted in the school through religious education. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, a moving and deeply reflective discussion by the pupils focused on God in nature and working with God to share and enjoy what is wonderful in our world. Assemblies are well planned and carefully organised to provide broad experiences for pupils. The celebration of festivals of other faiths, the important contributions to mankind made by great religions, and a joy in the richness of nature and art are all used well to provide the basis for reflection. Moments of quiet and calm also allow pupils to think about the gifts of life and food and care from others. Pupils respond well to such moments of quiet spirituality.

32. Provision for moral development is also very good. Moral development is strongly fostered by the school's aims and code of behaviour, which all pupils know and understand. Pupils are encouraged to show a sense of responsibility for themselves and others in their actions and in courteous behaviour. They have a clear understanding of good behaviour. They recognise the needs of others and are able to share and co-operate in a variety of settings. Bullying, theft and graffiti are not features of the school, and pupils show a mature and well-developed sense of respect for people and property. Pupils are encouraged to organise their own charitable and fundraising events, and they do this well. For example, pupils support the NSPCC charity and have also been concerned with helping a school in Africa and Street Children throughout the world. Pupils recognise that it is important to help and support others in need.

33. The school's provision for social development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to mix well, both in class and in the playground. As a result, they join in group activities well and are able to work co-operatively and constructively in pairs and in small groups. There are three opportunities for pupils to join in residential trips, and these make valuable contributions to the social development of pupils as well as supporting curricular studies. The school council provides pupils with an opportunity to contribute to the running of their school, and they have responded in a very sensible way to this initiative. Older pupils also undertake a range of responsibilities around the school, such as helping in the school office and looking after the library in a dignified and sensible manner.

34. The school provides good cultural development for pupils. Studies are made of the local area and, through history, music geography and art, pupils are encouraged to explore and value their own cultural heritage. In geography, pupils are also able to contrast their own culture with those in other parts of the world, such as Africa, India and the Caribbean. Historical studies of ancient cultures such as those that existed in Egypt and Greece also provide valuable insight into different ways of life. Through art and music, pupils also develop a sound appreciation of other artistic traditions. In religious education and assemblies, pupils are provided with a basic understanding of the main faiths of the world. Pupils' awareness of other cultures and ways of life develops well, though the curriculum does not contain sufficient opportunities to raise pupil's awareness of cultural diversity in our own society.

35. A number of day visits are included in the planning, in order to supplement the curriculum, and pupils in three of the four year groups make residential visits to Devon or to local activity centres, enhancing their social, physical and academic skills. The curriculum is also well supported by an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities. There is an impressive range of clubs, including sports, music, computer and art activities. The orchestra is especially lively, producing music of a high standard, and sports' clubs are particularly successful. In addition, there is a 'challenge club' contributing to the development of higher-attaining pupils. The school is to be commended for having targets that aim to ensure that all pupils benefit from attending at least one club. The success rate is already over 80 per cent inclusion.

36. Curriculum planning makes good use of the local community. Local people attend school events such as the annual fete. Pupil visits are made to shops and the church. There are good musical links. The choir sings carols at a local home for senior citizens and, at the time of the inspection, the brass section of the orchestra was preparing to play at a Wycombe football club match.

37. Liaison with partner institutions is also good. There are strong links with the feeder infant school, with staff meeting regularly to discuss the curriculum. Students from Oxford Brookes University are frequently based at the school and benefit from the expertise of the teaching staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school provides a very safe and caring environment in which all pupils are valued. The good relationships that teachers and support staff have with pupils contribute to the good level of care. There is very good first aid provision and good arrangements for the care of pupils who are unwell. All members of staff have, or will shortly have, a qualification in first aid. Very good steps are taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection. There is a clear policy for child protection and all staff have undertaken recent training in this area.

39. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. With a very good attendance profile, sophisticated monitoring of attendance is not required, but registers are checked regularly. There is rapid follow up in the rare cases where the school has not been informed of a pupil's absence.

40. Monitoring of behaviour is good because the behaviour policy is clear and consistently applied through the school and thorough records are kept of sanctions and poor behaviour. The majority of pupils behave well, but good support is available for the few pupils who show difficult or challenging behaviour at times. Regular reports are used to monitor the behaviour of some children, and parents are fully involved. Through the "unfriendly friend" box, staff are also able to keep a close check on any aggressive behaviour that the pupils draw to their attention. The clear sanctions for poor behaviour are known and respected by pupils. Pupils are very aware that bullying and oppressive behaviour is unacceptable, and that they should report any worries they have to staff. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good.

41. The school has very good systems and procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their academic progress. Pupils' day-to-day work in lessons is enhanced by very good strategies to assess their progress, and they are also involved in self-assessment. For example, in English, mathematics and science, pupils title the work in their books with what they are aiming to learn and, at the end of the lesson, assess their own success by using a 'traffic light' system. This feeds into teachers' records of pupils' achievements and helps them to plan the next step in learning. In other subjects, a couple of pieces of work each term are selected for assessment.

42. School wide, a very effective tracking system monitors individual, group and cohort progress from Year 3 to Year 6. A comprehensive array of standardised tests and teacher assessments are systematically recorded and analysed in order to set individual targets for pupils and raise attainment. For example, the results of nationally recommended tests taken by pupils in June are used to set targets for the coming year. Each September, standardised tests in reading are used to check pupils' attainment. In February, standardised tests for English and mathematics aim to identify any pupils who are underperforming, so that action can be taken. By Year 6, pupils are encouraged to set their own targets for improvement in various aspects of their work. The school evaluates the results of annual National Curriculum tests for pupils in Year 6 to detect any areas of weakness within the curriculum that should be strengthened. Procedures for assessment have improved considerably since the previous inspection, led by a very knowledgeable co-ordinator, and they now support teaching and learning very effectively.

43. Careful assessments are made of pupils' special educational needs or when pupils with English as an additional language first join the school. The information is used effectively to identify suitable targets for improvement and to provide appropriate support in the classroom. Assessment and record keeping for pupils with statements of special educational needs is of very good quality, and these pupils are involved in evaluating their own progress towards their targets. Good provision for all pupils with special educational needs ensures that they are fully included in all aspects of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Parents think Holmer Green is an excellent school. They say that their children enjoy going to school and make good progress. Parents are appreciative of the good standards of behaviour in the school and feel that their children are encouraged to become mature and responsible young people. Parents also feel happy to approach the school with queries and problems. The inspection supported these positive views. Parents are pleased with the range of activities provided for pupils, and say that they are kept well informed about how their children were doing at school. They feel that the school is well led and managed and that it has close links with parents. A few parents were concerned about the amount of homework, but the inspection found homework provision to be very good.

45. The school places a high priority on maintaining excellent links with parents and works consistently to involve them fully in their children's education. Monthly newsletters are informative and helpful to parents. A large number of parents, up to forty, help in the school on a regular basis, both in class and with extra-curricular activities, and their contribution is valued. The Junior School Association provides a very valuable dimension to the school, and they have made a significant practical contribution to better resources through their fundraising activities. Overall, the impact of parents' involvement in the work of the school is excellent. The autumn term meeting with class teachers is much valued. It gives parents an opportunity to find out about the range of work their children will cover in the coming year and how they can help and support their children's learning. The contribution made by parents to their children's learning at home and at school is very good.

46. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about their children's progress is very good, and is an area that has improved greatly since the last inspection. Parents have two opportunities each year to meet staff and discuss their child's progress. The annual reports of pupils' achievements provide parents with a very clear picture of the work their child has done in class, and can be discussed with the class teacher if parents wish. The annual report and regular opportunities for parents to discuss the progress of their child considerably strengthen the links between home and school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept fully informed about their child's progress. They are invited to contribute to the individual education plan review and given many opportunities to consult with the co-ordinator. They have regular access to a file of additional information about special educational needs, which is made available in the foyer of the school. Information for new parents is clear and helpful. The induction meetings for new parents and pupils are well planned, and make a strong contribution to successful transfer into the school. Parents are provided with good guidance about education initiatives and the important stages of their child's progress through the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. Leadership and management of the school have improved vastly since the previous inspection in 1997, which identified several aspects of school management as key issues for action. The headteacher and senior staff now provide strong and very effective leadership, which ensures that the school sustains a positive, ambitious atmosphere, with a clear direction for improvement. Raising pupils' attainment is central to all development planning. It is particularly evident in the school's self-evaluation framework and the close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, which enables the staff to identify and tackle weaknesses. As a result, the leadership and management of the school have been successful in securing a marked improvement in pupils' performance in national assessments since the last inspection. The school's aims emphasise its commitment to the personal, social and academic development of each pupil, the importance of mastery of basic skills, and the nurturing of self-esteem as the vital foundations for learning. These aims are reflected well in the work of the school.

48. The headteacher provides excellent and very effective leadership. He has high expectations of quality in all aspects of the school's work, both academic and social. He ensures that this vision is shared by his colleagues and pursues a very effective range of strategies so that these high expectations of success are met. He provides considerable support for staff so that they can strengthen their work in the classroom, and this promotes a strong sense of teamwork. As a result, the headteacher is well respected in the school and local community. He receives strong support from the deputy headteacher, who is well involved in aspects of the management of the school and provides a good role model with her skilled teaching.

49. The flexible senior management team structure, and the delegated responsibilities of subject leaders, enable all staff to make a significant contribution to the management of the school. For example, the impetus for whole-school improvement is as likely to arise from a review carried out by a subject manager as from senior management. In this way, staff share a strong commitment to raising standards and school improvement. Subject managers also play a vital role in leading and planning their curriculum area and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The interwoven nature of their role, as classroom teachers, supporters of colleagues and monitors of quality, is effective in ensuring that pupils benefit from a very well planned curriculum and good teaching. Although some are fairly recently appointed, subject managers are effective in leading improvements in their subjects and each has a clear action plan. Provision for pupils with special education needs is very well managed. The co-ordinator is very effective in organising good support from the assistants, who help pupils individually and in small groups within the classrooms.

50. Monitoring of all aspects of the school's work is rigorous and effective, and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Senior staff make termly observations of teaching and learning in each class, using a set of agreed procedures and making judgements against the agreed criteria for high quality teaching. Verbal and written feedback is provided for staff. The process also enables the school to evaluate the effectiveness of training relating to school improvement issues. Where weaknesses are detected, an action plan is drawn up, with targets for improvement, and support is provided. Judgements of teaching in the previous inspection compared with the quality of teaching observed during this inspection show that the strategy has been effective. The results of national assessments are very carefully analysed so that weaknesses can be tackled. For example, an analysis of pupil scripts for science led to an evaluation of work on the water cycle and consequent improvements to the subject teaching of that topic. Pupils' attainment is monitored and evaluated at all levels, through self-assessment, teacher assessment in lessons, regular tests, and a scrutiny of work over time. Information from monitoring is shared and analysed, and action taken to tackle weaknesses. The school has recently introduced a school self-evaluation framework, which incorporates a comprehensive policy for monitoring all aspects of its work, from pupil participation in extra-curricular activities to links with parents. This is being effective in developing the school as a self-monitoring institution.

51. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities effectively and makes a good contribution to the leadership of the school. Governors bring considerable expertise to their role and have established good relationships with the school management and the staff. Although governors have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, their monitoring of the work of the school is not sufficiently rigorous. Many governors are new to the role and have yet to be involved in monitoring activities. As a result, the governing body is still building its contribution to strategic development and its involvement in school development planning. Governors monitor progress towards targets set out in the school improvement plan and aspects of school management, such as the curriculum and finance, through a well established pattern of committees.

52. Whole-school development planning is very good. The four-year school improvement plan, which identifies strategic goals and targets up to 2005, is complemented by more specific targets for the current year, linked well to finance, resources and staff development. Each goal in the school improvement plan is linked to the school self-evaluation framework through specific and measurable targets. Each subject also has a subject action plan, which interconnects with the school improvement plan. Progress on all aspects of school development is reviewed regularly, through planned discussions between the headteacher, subject managers and key governors. There is high concentration upon the impact of developments on standards and pointers to the next step in seeking improvements.

53. Educational priorities are very well supported through financial planning, and systems are flexible enough to ensure that there are funds available if unforeseen needs arise, such as additional SEN support. Good use has been made of booster funding for literacy and numeracy to support specific groups of pupils. The school makes good use of new technology, both for administration and to support teaching and learning.

54. The school has a committed and hard working staff, whose experience and expertise are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Specialist staff make a valuable contribution to standards within the school, particularly in design and technology. Some of the staff have joined the school fairly recently, but they have been welded into an effective team by supportive systems for staff development. Induction procedures are effective, with a well-judged balance of monitoring and support. The school building provides excellent accommodation, with new specialist areas for ICT, resources and a library added to the existing subject-specific provision for art and design and technology. The grounds are good and there is ample play space. Learning resources are good overall, with very good resources in music, science, ICT and design and technology, but a particular weakness in books for reading in classrooms and the library.

55. At the last inspection, the leadership and management of the school had several weak aspects. The school has successfully addressed these and the other key issues arising from that previous inspection. Pupils' performance in national assessments has improved considerably, particularly in mathematics and English. The school's determined leadership and management, and the commitment of staff and governors, give the school a very good capacity to achieve further improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. The school has no significant weaknesses, but there are four minor issues, which the governors may wish to include in their plans for improvement. Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- Provide challenging tasks for higher-attaining pupils in all lessons. (*paragraphs 6, 14, 17, 20, 65, 70, 72, 79*)
- Improve resources to stimulate pupils' interest in reading more consistently. (*paragraphs 54, 64, 66*)
- Ensure that all classes follow a curriculum for art that develops pupils' knowledge and skills systematically. (*paragraphs 81-85*)
- Place a greater emphasis on pupils learning about the diversity of cultures within the United Kingdom. (*paragraph 34*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

50

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	9	25	11	0	0	0
Percentage	10	18	50	22	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents two percentage points.

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)	246
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	49

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

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	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.3
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	36	31	67

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	34	33	35
	Girls	30	30	31
	Total	64	63	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	96 (83)	94 (87)	99 (94)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	32	33	32
	Girls	29	29	28
	Total	61	62	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (81)	93 (87)	90 (85)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	237
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)	10.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	31

Education support staff: Y3– Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	132

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	465,157
Total expenditure	463,592
Expenditure per pupil	1,948

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance brought forward from previous year	6,698
Balance carried forward to next year	8,263

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.7
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	247
Number of questionnaires returned	81

Percentage of responses in each category

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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My child likes school.	75	21	2	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	59	39	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	32	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	48	11	0	0
The teaching is good.	70	28	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	44	7	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	25	2	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	21	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	32	6	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	75	23	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	31	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	70	30	0	0	0

An average proportion of parents returned the questionnaire, the results of which show very strong approval for the school. Twenty parents attended the meeting and they were also very positive. They were unanimously happy with the progress their children are making, and the great majority felt that their children are making good progress. They said that the information the school provides about what their children are taught and the progress they are making is excellent. They felt that the school has strong links with parents and is very responsive if there are any concerns. These parents said that their children are enthusiastic about their work and are developing very good attitudes to learning. A few parents felt that their children receive too much homework. Parents particularly mentioned that they thought standards in the school had improved during the last few years and that the leadership of the headteacher had been important in achieving this improvement.

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

ENGLISH

57. Since the previous inspection, there has been a considerable improvement in the school's results in national tests at the end of Year 6. In 2001, they were well above average compared to both national scores and to the results of schools judged to have a similar intake of pupils. The school comfortably exceeded its target for the number of pupils attaining the expected level (Level 4). Over half of the pupils gained the higher level (Level 5) compared to about a quarter nationally.

58. Work seen in school indicates that, in the current Year 6, pupils' attainment is also well above national expectations. National test results at the infant school that most pupils attended show that they enter junior school with English skills that are already well developed. They are articulate, have very good standards in reading and slightly weaker standards in writing. They achieve well to reach well above average standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well supported, and the majority make very good progress to reach the expected national standard by Year 6.

59. Pupils enter the school able to speak confidently and clearly and to listen reasonably well. By the time they leave the school, both their speaking and listening are very good indeed. They make particularly good progress in listening, and pupils in Year 6 demonstrated this by their understanding of their learning and their perceptive questions. They are able to engage in lively dialogue to explain what they are doing and are skilled in making presentations to the class and to the whole school. They also demonstrate their high standards by being able to organise, in groups, their own expressive poetry performance, including division of parts, choral speaking and appropriate actions.

60. Pupils read very well when they join Year 3. By the end of Year 6, they have achieved well to attain even higher standards, as measured in national tests. Inspection evidence indicates that a large proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 had already reached the expected Level 4 standard by the beginning of January. Year 6 pupils demonstrate their abilities by reading fluently with good expression. They can recall the plot, predict events and discuss characterization. They are able to compare styles of writing and authors. For example, a pupil sensibly contrasted the works of Tolkien and J.K. Rowling and expressed his preferences. In discussion, pupils throughout the school express an enjoyment of reading and are especially keen on reading fiction. They use a mixture of appropriate clues to work out the meaning of unknown words.

61. Writing standards at the beginning of Year 3 are good, but not as strong as other aspects of English. Nevertheless, good progress is made across the school to reach the high standards attained in Year 6. By then, pupils have explored writing in a wide range of styles and have a very good grasp of story structure. At the time of the inspection, Year 6 pupils showed this by making a long list of the different types of poetry they know and choosing an appropriate form when asked to write a humorous poem. The careful attention to development of style was obvious as Year 3 studied fables, Year 4 studied adjectives and characterization, and Year 5 looked at the structure of myths and legends. In all cases, the quality of work done by the children is very good. Across the school, standards in grammar and use of punctuation are equally good.

62. Handwriting is taught separately throughout the school and has a strong emphasis in Year 3. As a result, standards of handwriting are exceptionally good. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their lessons are clear from the amount of work they complete and the general quality of presentation. Work is consistently laid out throughout the school. Spelling is also very good, and pupils in Year 6 spell accurately and use a dictionary to check work when necessary.

63. Pupils' achievements mirror the quality of the teaching in English. Teaching is good across the school, though there are variations in teachers' skills. Three quarters of the teaching seen was good or very good, and there were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers are good at making sure that pupils know what they are expected to do and how this links to what they have covered previously. The National Literacy Strategy has been well adapted for use in the school. Lessons are well organised and managed. In most lessons, whole-class teaching is very good, and in some it is excellent. The pace of work, enthusiasm, teacher knowledge and use of small tasks to break up the time when pupils are sitting still are features of the best lessons. For example, in both Year 3 classes, pairs of pupils were given the task of picking out and comparing the adjectives in two fables. This also had the effect of

developing higher order thinking. In most lessons, a brief session at the end was put to good use to consolidate learning, with pupils being encouraged to be constructively critical of others' work. Year 3 pupils learned mapping skills and then evaluated the use of adjectives in each other's diagrams.

64. In less successful lessons, the independent task was either not well matched to pupils' ability or not well explained. Pupils lacked a sense of urgency, sometimes because expectations were not made clear enough and sometimes because they were unsure about what to do. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 5 were given an appropriate and challenging task to plan and write a myth, but they needed more information about how to tackle this difficult piece of work. The range of reading provided is another area that is relatively underdeveloped in teaching. Pupils are not often guided towards non-fiction texts for individual reading. As a result, pupils do not read as widely as they might and are not familiar enough with the book retrieval system in use in the library.

65. Teachers' planning of lessons is meticulous. Pupils with special education needs are usually well catered for, and most work is sufficiently challenging for all. In some lessons, there are insufficient challenging questions and not enough more difficult vocabulary to keep the most able fully stretched. Good planning in other subjects ensures that every possible opportunity is taken to reinforce literacy skills. Vocabulary related to topics is on display in all classrooms to aid spelling. Excellent use is made of history and geography as a basis for teaching English, and a number of important writing styles such as persuasion, comparison and reporting are taught in these subjects. For example, Year 6 geography on mountains involved note taking, poster design and drama role-play.

66. Assessment of pupils' attainment and achievements in English is very good, with very detailed records of progress in reading and writing. Assessment of speaking and listening has still to be developed, along with a detailed scheme of work. Resources for the teaching of the National Literacy Strategy are adequate. The texts used by teachers in whole-class sessions are sometimes too small for children to see, although enlargers, big books and overhead projectors are available. Pupils enjoy the library, but book provision in general has weaknesses. There are insufficient fiction books, and class libraries are unattractive and unmotivating.

67. Classroom assistants are generally used well, but on occasion they are not as well briefed as they might be. The most effective practice was observed during whole-class sessions when assistants supported pupils or made assessment notes. They were effective in supporting the lower attainers during independent work, and the most effective were very knowledgeable about the point of the lesson. The subject is very well managed. There is a detailed, clear policy and good schemes of work, except for speaking and listening. The co-ordinator is extremely enthusiastic and hard working. With the headteacher, she monitors planning, sets targets and observes lessons. She is available constantly for informal advice and is a very good role model for teaching the subject.

MATHEMATICS

68. Results of national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Then, about half of the pupils reached the expected level (Level 4) of attainment; now, almost all do so. In 2001, results were well above the national average, and above average when compared with those gained by schools in similar social circumstances. Girls did considerably better than boys, contrary to the national picture, but this had always been the case for that year group. The school exceeded the target it had set itself for pupils reaching Level 4. About a third of pupils reached the higher Level 5, and this proportion is also improving steadily.

69. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is also well above national expectations. This is a marked improvement on the previous inspection when attainment was judged to be average. The great majority of pupils in Year 6 work very confidently with number. For example, they use their knowledge of factors to multiply by 140, and show their method by using brackets. They are equally confident using fractions, decimals and percentages to perform calculations. Pupils' mental recall of number facts such as multiplication tables is good, an improvement since the last inspection, and this supports their problem solving. Pupils name and describe accurately a wide range of plane and solid shapes, helped by their good mathematical vocabulary. For example, in a lesson observed, more able pupils described the faces, edges and vertices of a hexagonal prism before going on to discover a formula to describe its total edge length. In this lesson, the less able pupils were able to find the perimeter of rectangles and then compound shapes. Pupils' past work shows that they can gather data and draw suitable graphs, and that they understand some of the basic principles of probability. Although there are a few examples of pupils investigating mathematical ideas, this is a weaker aspect of their work. For example, an interesting investigation about triangular numbers had not been seen through to explore the shape and number patterns.

70. Pupils join Year 3 with mathematical skills that are well above average overall, as shown in the results of national tests at the infant school. Pupils' achievements are good during their time at the junior school. Data comparing pupils' attainment in the Year 2 national tests with their eventual performance in Year 6 test shows clearly that the achievement of the great majority is better than that found in most schools. The development of pupils' number skills is particularly good. For example, in the lessons seen, more able Year 3 pupils were calculating with money to £5.00, and the less able to £1.00. In Year 4, pupils explored strategies to add a series of two-digit numbers mentally, for example by pairing the units to make 10. In Year 5, pupils found fractions of quantities such as $\frac{3}{4}$ of £80. In this way, pupils' skills with number improve steadily through a well-planned and structured curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because the work is well matched to their level of understanding and they receive good support from teachers and classroom assistants. In some lessons, however, the more able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. For example, they are given calculations to complete on paper that they are already capable of carrying out mentally, or the task is too closed and does not give them the opportunity to show how able they are. Part of the school's current plans for improvement is to ensure that these pupils are challenged sufficiently.

71. The quality of teaching is good overall. In the eight lessons seen, teaching was good in six and satisfactory in two. Lessons are planned in detail, following the pattern recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy, which is well established. Teachers identify precisely what the children are to learn, such as "To order numbers with up to two decimal places", and share this with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson. As a result, pupils are very clear about what they are trying to achieve. Teachers also use these learning intentions to assess pupils' achievements, so that they can plan the next step in learning. Lessons start with a mental mathematics activity. Pupils enjoy these sessions, often using number cards or white boards to show their response to questions. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, pupils placed numbers from 90 to 110 on a 4 x 4 grid and then crossed them out as they solved mental number problems. An excellent feature of this activity was the way in which the teacher involved two more able pupils as quizmaster and checker.

72. Teachers explain new concepts clearly in whole-class sessions, and they have good skills in questioning pupils to assess and extend their understanding. In a few lessons, however, the pace of the whole-class session faltered, so pupils lost concentration. Independent activities are planned so that pupils of varying ability have appropriately challenging work. In the lessons seen, this was good for the middle and lower attaining pupils, but higher attainers were not always challenged sufficiently. It was

effective in a good Year 6 lesson, where the least able pupils found the perimeter of simple shapes, the middle attainers compound shapes, and the higher attainers investigated formulae for the total edge length of solid shapes. In some lessons, pupils do not work quickly enough on independent tasks because the teacher does not set targets for the amount to be completed or the time allowed. Classroom assistants often work very productively with groups of less able pupils and help them to make good progress. Teachers' management of pupils' attitudes to learning is very good. They are very positive, they praise attempts as well as success, and so pupils respond by being enthusiastic about their work. Many teachers have a good knowledge of mathematics, but a few are not confident enough to enable them to plan more open-ended tasks, explore ideas or make connections between aspects of the subject.

73. The curriculum covers most aspects of mathematics systematically, though work on using and applying pupils' skills, particularly through investigations, is a weaker element. Teachers in each year group plan lessons collaboratively, which leads to a high level of consistency. Pupils have good numeracy skills, and they are used and developed well in subjects such as design and technology. For most subjects, however, teachers do not plan systematically enough to incorporate numeracy activities. In some sessions in the ICT suite, pupils' ICT skills are used well to support mathematics. In classrooms, however, there are no computers, so ICT skills cannot be routinely used to support mathematics. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, both lesson by lesson and as they move through the school, are very good, enabling teachers to set targets for future achievement.

74. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is only fairly recently appointed but she already has a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning because she has observed lessons in other classes and reviewed assessment data. The current action plan contains appropriate targets for improvement, alongside the whole-school improvement plan that emphasises the need to challenge the high proportion of able pupils. For example, the deputy headteacher takes groups of pupils in Year 6 who, with extra support, may reach Level 5 in national tests. Provision for mathematics, and its impact on pupils' achievements, have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The school is well placed to improve these standards still further.

SCIENCE

75. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6 were above average. Almost all pupils reached the expected level (Level 4) of attainment. Although the 34 per cent reaching the higher Level 5 was similar to the national picture, one pupil achieved the very challenging Level 6. Compared to schools in similar social circumstances, the results were average. Results have fluctuated over the past four years, though they have remained above average overall and improved in line with the national trend. The 2001 results represent a marked improvement on those reported at the time of the previous inspection in 1997.

76. Attainment in the current Year 6 is above national expectations. Pupils have good scientific knowledge. Their skills in carrying out experiments are also good because they have consistently tackled this type of work since entering the school. In the lessons observed in Year 6, pupils investigated hypotheses about electric circuits, setting out to prove or disprove their predictions about the brightness of a bulb in various circuits, including parallel wiring. Most pupils predicted and justified the differences they observed when using higher voltage batteries, thicker wire or more components in a circuit. Pupils with special educational needs successfully predicted and tested the conductivity of materials before considering the effect of changes to the circuit. The past work of Year 6 pupils shows an in-depth coverage of science topics based upon factual discussions, observations and problem solving investigations. Work on green plants shows that pupils understand adaptations to the environment and how nearly all food chains start with a green plant. Through work on microorganisms

and electricity, pupils demonstrate their familiarity with scientific language whilst considering cause and effect. There is a steady development in their investigation skills, particularly in drawing conclusions from results.

77. Although there is a small but significant proportion of pupils who have a higher level of scientific understanding, most pupils start Year 3 with a sound basis of knowledge and skills in science, as shown in the results of national tests in Year 2. Pupils' work in Years 3, 4 and 5 shows that their achievements are good because they learn through an effective mixture of factual input, group investigations and experiments. In Year 6, work focuses more upon applying factual knowledge to test assumptions and hypotheses. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress because work is well matched to their level of ability and they are given extra support in lessons.

78. The quality of teaching is good across the school, though there are variations in teachers' skills. In the seven lessons observed, teaching was very good in two, good in four, and satisfactory in one. Teachers' planning and preparation for lessons are very good, and learning intentions are shared with the pupils so that they understand what they are aiming to achieve. The success of the teaching is evident in the quality of the scientific language used by pupils and their independence and focus in group investigations. Most teachers use their good knowledge of science so that pupils are actively engaged in learning and develop their understanding. For example, in a good lesson, pupils dissected real flowers to locate and identify the main parts of a flowering plant. The teacher asked probing questions about where pupils would find each part, constantly drawing on their existing knowledge of the parts' functions, to make pupils think and reason. Whilst the pupils carried out the dissection, the teacher continued to question them about how the flower they were studying varied from others, and why the parts were in that particular place, including the challenge of why a particular flower did not have sepals. As a result, the pupils worked conscientiously and were able to relate their learned knowledge to real life.

79. Although higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged in all lessons, expectations of what pupils can achieve are generally well matched to their existing attainment, with the result that they make good gains in learning. Classroom assistants play an important role in supporting pupils with special educational needs so that they make good progress in activities which are appropriate to their knowledge and understanding. The best teaching is well paced, pupils are challenged and expected to work hard in a focused way, and there is a good balance of explanation and practical activity. Where teaching was less successful, introductions lasted too long and pupils' behaviour in practical work was not managed well enough for them to make their best progress.

80. The curriculum is based on the school's adaptation of nationally recommended guidance, which provides a broad and balanced set of experiences. In Year 6, however, additional work is included to extend the higher achievers so that Level 6 attainment can be an option. Organisation of the subject across the school is good, and significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Now, assessment procedures are effective and very good resources enliven lessons. The subject manager monitors the quality of teaching and learning effectively, and has a view of where further improvements need to be made. The subject action plan reflects this monitoring and sets targets to raise standards. As a result, the school is well placed to continue to improve.

ART and DESIGN

81. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above national expectations, and about the same as at the previous inspection. Most pupils produce the standard of work expected for this age, as seen in their pencil sketching, and there are few lower attainers. Pupils start Year 3 with good basic skills, and their achievements are satisfactory across the school. However, the curriculum does not provide a

sufficient variety of experiences or a strong enough emphasis on developing pupils' skills systematically. For example, the work seen showed a predominance of drawing and painting, occasional collage, but little work in three dimensions, fabric or printing.

82. Pupils' past work in Year 3 was linked to their topic on Ancient Egypt. Painting inspired by decoration on burial caskets, scrolls and the typical figures and designs of that era, is all of sound quality for this age. Collage ceremonial collars, using a range of media, are of good quality. This type of artwork supports other subjects well, but does not develop pupils' skills systematically enough. Current work focusing on pattern, linked to a topic about Ancient Greece, is more appropriate. Pupils in Year 4 have considered the content and mood of 'A tiger in a storm' by Rousseau, producing their own paintings in the same style. They have also use artwork to support their topic on Ancient Britain, drawing Celtic knot designs, painting shields and weaving. This work is of the standard expected for the age group.

83. Work in Year 5 has developed an art theme more systematically. Pupils considered the use of pattern in paintings by Paul Klee and then experimented with their own ideas, with good results. Still life groupings, arranged by the pupils themselves, provided the stimulus to consider form and to develop skills of shading. The pupils' finished drawings and paintings are of good quality, and reflect the depth of study that preceded them. Year 6 pupils have considered the theme of 'People in action', and their drawings capture the movement of characters such as an American footballer. A focus on sketching shoes led to designing and making a range of footwear in a variety of materials.

84. In the one lesson seen, the quality of teaching was good. The lesson was well planned to provide a variety of activities about pattern. The pupils decorated thumb pots, painted vase templates and drew designs, all in the style of Ancient Greece. A good introduction focused the pupils' attention on pattern in the environment. Although the adults supported pupils well in completing their tasks, there was too little emphasis on teaching good technique in the use of brushes, pencils and other tools. A quiet appreciation time at the end of the lesson was very good practice, when the pupils looked at all the work that had been completed and evaluated it. Discussion with pupils across the school revealed that they enjoy their art lessons. Teachers value pupils' work and display it well around the school.

85. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work to plan the curriculum, but it is not implemented consistently in all classes. Some teachers place too great an emphasis on using artwork to support other subjects. Each pupil has a sketchbook, but these are not used as well as at the previous inspection to develop a variety of ideas in a range of media. The work of artists and craftspeople, particularly those representing a range of cultures, is not used enough to inspire pupils' work. Organisation of the subject across the school is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is fairly recently appointed and has not yet had an opportunity to gain a clear view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school, so she cannot easily plan for improvements. She does, however, provide a good example with her own teaching. Resources for art are significantly enhanced by the availability of a specialist teaching room.

DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY

86. The results of teacher assessments of pupils' skills at the end of Year 6 indicate that attainment has risen since the previous inspection in 1997. Attainment was above average at that time, but now it is outstanding. The work seen indicates that pupils' knowledge and skills are far beyond what would be expected for their age.

87. Pupils' achievements are superb through the school because they rapidly develop their skills, knowledge and understanding by following the school's own adaptation and extension of a nationally

recommended scheme of work. This involves re-visiting, improving and extending designing and making skills, and using evaluation to refine the quality of work. For example, pupils in Year 3 make a basic wooden chassis vehicle, Year 5 extend this to moving vehicles and Year 6 produce very high quality powered vehicles that can be controlled by a computer. Exceptional finished products result from the rigour of the designing, making and evaluating process. In all cases, pupils produce a detailed record of their work which, in Year 6, includes immaculately drawn plans, suggesting alternative ideas and possibilities for the task. Pupils then produce meticulous, detailed plans for their preferred design and work from these to make the product, modifying the plans where appropriate. Evaluative personal, peer and teacher assessment of products and processes is developed as an integral part of each project, resulting in very high achievement. All pupils use ICT as part of their work. They learn to control traffic lights and alarms, have very good experience of computer aided design, and further extend their desktop publishing skills. Children with special educational needs have work adjusted to their personal level of attainment, but practical tasks are differentiated largely by outcome.

88. Design and technology is taught by a highly-skilled specialist teacher. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching was excellent. These lessons were characterised by superb pupil management, outstanding subject knowledge, very high expectations, knowledgeable and perceptive questioning, and a brisk pace. As a result, the pupils were completely absorbed by their tasks. Lessons are extremely well prepared and very clearly planned with specific learning objectives, which are shared with the class. The enthusiasm of the teacher transmits itself to the pupils, while the exceedingly skillful management of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, ensures that motivation remains at a high level throughout the lesson. All pupils clearly enjoy their design technology sessions and work very hard throughout the lesson, sustaining concentration, helping each other with positive encouragement, and focusing on the production of high quality work. In one lesson in particular, there was a feel of total commitment from the pupils who went about their work with great enthusiasm.

89. The quality of work is greatly enhanced by a superbly resourced area, which is set aside especially for design and technology work. The management of the subject is extremely effective in maintaining exemplary standards across the school. Family involvement in the Technology Challenge contributes to interest and involvement in the subject. Pupils' achievements in design and technology are an outstanding strength of the school.

GEOGRAPHY

90. The curriculum is well organised and provides a rich set of experiences. Pupils learn about a range of places and explore the issues faced by the people who live there. As a result, pupils' achievements are good across the school and, by the end of Year 6, they reach standards that are well above national expectations. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly because the more able pupils are now being challenged.

91. In Year 3, good links are made between history and geography in work about Ancient Egypt. Pupils learn about rivers and the ways in which they sculpt the landscape by erosion and deposition. Clear written accounts and the use of a wide range of specialist vocabulary are good features of this work. Map work skills are developed as pupils identify the course of the Nile from its source to the sea, and locate the major rivers of the United Kingdom. Pupils explore geographical issues as they debate the advantages and disadvantages of building a dam. In Year 4, good resources support a study of Chembokolli, a village in India. As well as finding out about climate, vegetation and farming, pupils compare village life in their experience with that of the inhabitants of Chembokolli. Pupils' perceptive writing about a day in the life of a child living in Chembokolli shows the depth of their knowledge and understanding.

92. In Year 5, pupils develop their skills further by studying Kaptalamwa, a village in Kenya. They locate the country and village on maps of varying scales. Very good work using photographic evidence results in pupils being able to explain why things are as they are. Imaginative tasks, such as writing a tour guide for the village and a letter home from Kaptalamwa, reveal the pupils' depth of understanding while developing their literacy skills. The issue of whether to build a leisure complex close to the village enables pupils to show their wider understanding of conservation and change. In Year 6, a study of St Lucia builds on all the work that has gone before. They write detailed descriptions of physical features, climate, landscape, houses and industry when they compare St Lucia with the United Kingdom. Once again, pupils' geographical and literacy skills are developed through such writing as a newspaper article about Hurricane Debbie or a tourist leaflet. Debate about the environmental issues surrounding various ways in which the island might earn its living, as shown in the pupils' excellent newspaper articles, indicates attainment well above that normally expected for this age.

93. In the two lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good in one and very good in the other. Both lessons were well planned, with clear learning objectives shared with the pupils. In the very good lesson, for Year 6, the teacher wanted the pupils to continue their exploration of mountain environments. The pupils reviewed what they already knew and then formulated their own questions. The subsequent activities were exciting and challenging, including two groups writing and performing a documentary about mountains, whilst others carried out research using a CD Rom. The teacher's very good knowledge of the subject and emphasis on promoting enquiry enabled the pupils to make very good gains in learning. Throughout the school, pupils' work is presented very attractively in special topic books, which are successful in encouraging a high standard of work.

94. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work to plan the curriculum, and this is enhanced by study of the immediate locality and residential fieldwork. Assessment of a few pieces of pupils' work each term helps teachers to plan the next steps in learning. There is a good range of resources. The subject is well led and managed across the school. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of strengths in teaching and learning, and therefore areas for development, because she has observed lessons and evaluated pupils' work. As a result, the current action plan, seeking to challenge the more able pupils, is very appropriate to improve standards still further.

HISTORY

95. Pupils' achievements are very good and, by the end of Year 6, overall attainment is well above national expectations. This represents a marked improvement since the previous inspection.

96. Pupils have very good historical skills. Their understanding of chronology develops well, with the various period studies located on a time line in each classroom. In Year 3, pupils are already achieving very well to be able to order a simple version of this timeline. Pupils can follow a historical enquiry using key questions and sources of evidence, including computer simulations. There is less evidence, however, of the use of a wide enough variety of historical sources, such as artefacts. Neither is ICT fully utilised, as databases are not yet used to extract information. Work in Year 6 includes comparing evidence and deciding what is fact and what is fiction, so developing interpretation skills. Pupils attain high standards in organising and communicating their work, being able to recount information and present findings in a variety of ways. Year 3 pupils demonstrate good skills in being able to consider, very sensibly, the points for and against living in the city-states of Athens and Sparta.

97. Pupils' knowledge of historical facts is very good. In Year 3, they study Ancient Greece and Ancient Egypt and have an understanding of what it would be like to live in these times. In Year 4, they examine the lives of Celts and Romans and compare diet, amongst other aspects. Following this,

Henry VIII and the Tudors are the focus in Year 5, with pupils studying portraits of Henry to see what they can learn and debating if he was a good or bad king. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, they have finely developed comparative and debating skills. Pupils also learn to empathise with characters in history, imagining what it would have been like to be an evacuee or to live the life of Anne Frank in World War II.

98. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection, and the quality of teaching was good in both. Work seen in pupils' books indicates very good teaching. The detailed response and the high quality of the work represent enthusiastic, knowledgeable teachers bringing periods of history to life. Teachers ask good questions, use resources well and have high expectations. The classrooms contain stimulating displays of pupils' work that have useful labels asking further questions and encouraging interaction. Excellent cross-curricular links are made with geography, art, and English in particular. Pupils produce high quality writing, in a variety of styles, including obituary (Ann Frank), letters (evacuees), persuasion, comparison (modern food versus World War II recipes) and fact versus opinion. Topic books are beautifully presented and are obviously a source of pride to the pupils.

99. The history curriculum is enhanced by visits and events, which reinforce learning most effectively. For example, Year 5 spend a day on the Golden Hind, and Year 4 recently experienced a lively Celtic Day. Historical skills are regularly assessed and the information is used well to guide planning. The subject is well organised and managed. The co-ordinator nurtures the enthusiasm apparent in the school and has carried out some monitoring of books and lessons. The history policy is clear and appropriate, and all aspects of planning have been well developed. Resources have been purchased since the last inspection and more books are on order. Overall, there has been a very good improvement in standards since the last inspection.

INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

100. At the previous inspection, attainment at the end of Year 6 was close to national expectations. Now, attainment in Year 6 is well above national expectations and pupils' achievements are good across the school. This marked improvement is a result of better teaching and much improved resources for learning.

101. Pupils in Year 6 have acquired very good ICT skills through regular use of the recently created computer suite. For example, they input information about school trip costs into a prepared spreadsheet, identify and correct inappropriate or poor quality information, and extract results. Higher-attaining pupils show more advanced skills, confidently designing and creating their own spreadsheet to answer 'What if...' questions about changes to costs in the school trip information. In music, Year 6 pupils use ICT creatively to combine phrases of music and compose tunes. Year 5 pupils also have the skills to question databases, and they appreciate how errors in data affect the results. This builds upon the good work done in Year 4 when pupils explore and add to branching tree diagrams through the use of 'yes' and 'no' questions. Year 3 pupils demonstrate good skills in using appropriate fonts, size and style of print when word processing letters about their studies of materials in science. However, pupils' ability to decide for themselves whether ICT is an appropriate tool for tackling classroom-based tasks is underdeveloped because there are no computers permanently based in classrooms. There are some simple word processors and a lap top computer, and these are used effectively. For example, during a geography lesson, Year 6 pupils successfully researched CD based information on mountains. All pupils use ICT effectively to develop ideas and make things happen. This is achieved through their work in design and technology where they explore computer control, a variety of tools for computer aided design, and desktop publishing.

102. In the four lessons seen, the quality of teaching was very good in two, good in another and satisfactory in the fourth. Some teachers have more expertise than others, but all use ICT confidently to demonstrate skills. At the start of lessons, teachers make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn and how that links to what they have covered previously. The end of sessions is used effectively to encourage pupils to identify what they have learnt and to prepare them for what they will learn next. Pupils work independently and attempt to solve their own problems. Teachers plan an appropriate range of work, with additional challenge for some groups of higher attainers in the older classes. Pupils with special educational needs have classroom assistant support and work matched to their level of ability. In some cases, work is specifically designed to support these pupils' individual learning targets. The weaker aspects of lessons that were otherwise satisfactory were less skilled pupil management and classroom organisation. Where teaching was very good, resources were to hand, there was a crisp, business-like manner, and very good behaviour management ensured that pupils quickly got on with their work. Where teaching was satisfactory, a slower pace allowed time for pupils to swivel on chairs and chat before they settled to work. As a result, they concentrated less and developed fewer skills. Pupils enjoy their work in the ICT suite, generally work with interest, and succeed in making good progress.

103. Since the previous inspection, the subject policy has been revised. Arrangements now include provision for each class to have one hour per week in the computer suite to develop ICT skills, and another hour to enable cross-curricular work. Recently completed training has raised teachers' confidence across the school. This has resulted in a greater understanding of the ways in which ICT can be used successfully across the curriculum and has improved teachers' planning for specific ICT lessons. Pupils' work is well assessed, formally and informally, and pupils enjoy assessing their own progress and receiving certificates. Management of the subject is very effective in improving standards because of the strong leadership and guidance given by the co-ordinator. Resources are very good, especially since the creation of the ICT suite, and these have a very positive impact upon standards.

MUSIC

104. Pupils' achievements are good because they are given a wide range of high-quality musical experiences and are taught well. As a result, by the time they reach Year 6, standards of attainment are well above those expected nationally. A significant minority of pupils learn to play a musical instrument and attain particularly high standards. Musical clubs, concerts and opportunities to sing and play in whole-school gatherings further enrich the music curriculum and make this subject an outstanding strength of the school. This is an improvement in a subject that was already good at the previous inspection.

105. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy their music-making activities. In assemblies, they sing tunefully and enthusiastically, as well as listening to a range of music as they enter and leave. In the lessons observed, Year 3 pupils listened carefully to extracts from 'The Carnival of the Animals' by Saint Saens, and then used movement to interpret the mood of each piece. They described the music using a good range of appropriate vocabulary, which the teacher had reinforced at the beginning of the lesson. Year 4 pupils sang a song confidently in three parts and listened attentively to music inspired by a river. They thoroughly enjoyed a game where they sat in a circle and 'passed round' sounds describing the gushing and flowing of water.

106. Year 5 used Handel's 'Music for the Royal Fireworks' as a starting point to compose their own fanfares. They recognized the pomp of the music and many correctly identified the instruments. Their own fanfares, composed in small groups, were performed well. Lessons in Year 6 were based around a theme 'Journey into space'. In the ICT room, pupils composed space music using a computer

program, or listened to 'Mars' from the Planets Suite by Holst and appraised its content and mood. They worked with great effort and concentration, and shared their compositions and views at the end of the lesson. In the next lesson, in small groups, these pupils composed a short 'theme' for each planet, and then performed it as if at the request of 'the aliens' looking for a home. The quality of composition, performance and appraisal was outstanding.

107. The quality of teaching is good, overall, with many very good features. Of the seven lessons observed, teaching was very good in two, good in four, and satisfactory in one. Throughout the school, teachers use and explain musical vocabulary well, such as tempo and pitch, so that pupils build their ability to describe music. By Year 6, this enables pupils to explain quite complex musical ideas clearly. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a good range of activities so that pupils' interest is captured and sustained. They strike a good balance between listening, appraising, composing and performing so that pupils develop their skills steadily in each aspect. Activities are challenging. Many teachers have personal musical ability, and this enriches their teaching. A few teachers are less confident, but they still provide activities that ensure pupils make sound gains in learning.

108. The curriculum is rich and varied, with clubs for recorder and orchestra, and occasional productions, adding to its quality. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed systematically so that future lessons can build on current success. Resources are good, and include a music room. Experience of instruments and music from a range of cultures enhances pupils' personal development. The subject is very well led and managed, which results in a high degree of consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. The co-ordinator has a very clear view of strengths and areas for development because she observes lessons, discusses planning and monitors the pupils' performances. Current priorities for improvement are well chosen, including pupils making greater use of ICT for music, so the school has a good capacity to improve the subject further.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

109. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory across the school and, by Year 6, attainment is above national expectations. There are few lower-attaining pupils, and many individuals reach high standards in particular activities. Standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. The school provides a broad range of physical activities in lessons, which is enhanced by after-class clubs for games and athletics.

110. There is a range of attainment in each class, but all pupils show that they know about the value of warming up before beginning exercise, and the need to plan, practice, perform and develop their own skills. For example, in a Year 6 dance lesson, pupils listened to the music, practised their movement response and then gave good initial performances. Subsequently, they discussed and refined their ideas and built these into a movement sequence that showed imagination, creativity and a very good response to the music. They took time to consider each other's performance and to give effective feedback, which improved the quality of gestures and movements. Less able pupils also improved their musical interpretation and achieved the development of a series of movements. The practice, evaluate, improve cycle was seen again in a Year 5 outdoor games lesson where pupils covered a carousel of skills-based activities. Time was allocated to practice, monitoring performance for improvement and recording the outcomes. By moving from dribbling a ball, to chest passing and on to bouncing passes, pupils demonstrated their versatility and growing mastery of ball skills.

111. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, with good aspects in some lessons, particularly where pupils worked collaboratively to improve their performance. Lessons are planned to cover a good range of activity, and learning intentions are shared with the class. Teachers generally show good subject knowledge. They manage pupils' behaviour effectively, even when some

pupils respond less sensibly than they should to musical interpretation in dance. Where teaching was good, lessons were well organised and sequenced so that pupil activity was maximized. Pupils were increasingly challenged to control their movements and apply themselves physically and mentally to refine their skills. A weakness in lessons that were satisfactory overall was a mismatch between what the teacher expected pupils to be able to do and the pupils' ability to listen and interpret. Teacher and pupil demonstrations are used well to encourage evaluation and improvement. As a result, pupils clearly enjoy their lesson, work safely together and support one another effectively when they are part of a group.

112. Involvement in team games and sporting activities, such as inter-school leagues, makes a valuable contribution to pupils' social and moral development. The football team has been particularly successful, showing the high standard that some pupils reach. The organisation of the subject across the school is satisfactory, with a broad and balanced range of activities, including swimming in Year 5. Recently improved resources have extended gymnastics skills. Good assessment, including self-evaluation, is a strong feature of the subject. Older pupils set their own targets for improvement, and the school is involved in a special project exploring the use of ICT to assess physical skills. The recently-appointed subject leader monitors teachers' planning and provides support and advice. She has plans to observe lessons so as to gain a clearer picture of how teaching and learning in the subject can improve. She also plans to revise the scheme of work to ensure that pupils build their skills steadily.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

113. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 exceeds the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Although attainment has improved since the previous inspection, compared with other subjects, religious education is still relatively underdeveloped. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall, with good achievement in some aspects of the subject.

114. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they can retell Bible stories from the Old and New Testaments and they have a sound understanding of aspects of Christianity and other world religions. Throughout the school, pupils also engage in important and challenging religious discussions, such as looking at concepts of God. At the time of the inspection, Year 4 classes were involved in this debate and were finding objects that conveyed the wonder of God. Further sophisticated thinking was evident in Year 5, where pupils were identifying symbols in the story of Noah. Issues of spirituality are covered well and, following on from the work in Year 4, Year 6 pupils were constructing boxes of objects that represented the values in their own lives. Achievement in some strands of religious education is therefore good, with some high-level thinking being developed. However, coverage of work relating to Christianity is patchier, as is the study of world religions. For example, in a Year 4 class, a study of Buddhism was quickly succeeded by work on Sikh principles. This could easily lead to confusion.

115. In the few lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. Taking work in pupils' books into account as well, it is apparent that teaching of the subject is inconsistent, but is never unsatisfactory. In the best teaching seen, a variety of approaches caught the pupils' interest and led to lively, thoughtful work. In some classes, too many worksheets are used, so pupils do not have the opportunity to record their ideas in their own ways. Nevertheless, the worksheets themselves are often well designed and thought provoking. In all classes, good use is made of opportunities to teach literacy, and relevant vocabulary and research skills are included. The subject has excellent links with personal, social and health education. Discussions based on moral and social issues and dilemmas are a feature of a number of lessons.

116. Daily assemblies are used well to reinforce religious knowledge. For example, a story told by Buddha was used to illustrate the concept that some people can easily give things to others whilst for those who have little it is a great sacrifice. Pupils are usually interested in lessons, particularly when there are variety of activities, including opportunities to listen, discuss and record. In one lesson seen, however, tasks were less well structured and teachers talked for too long without involving pupils. Pupils' recorded work is generally of good quality and shows that they are keen and interested in much that they have done. Work is neat and well presented, demonstrating concentration and effort.

117. The curriculum is currently based on a nationally recommended scheme of work, but the school is making the transition to the new Buckinghamshire agreed syllabus. Because the curriculum is being altered, long-term planning is not yet complete. Day-to-day planning is good, and useful assessment notes are made so that teachers can plan the next lesson to meet pupils' needs. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is newly appointed, but she has a good understanding of religious education and is very able and willing to support colleagues. Improvements in curriculum planning are well under way and the co-ordinator has already spent some time looking at pupils' work and talking to them to find out what they know. A number of religious artefacts have been purchased. This was recommended in the last inspection and has improved the teaching of world religions.