

INSPECTION REPORT

Bysing Wood Primary School

Faversham

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118497

Headteacher: Mr Alexander Cameron

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jean Morley
25470

Dates of inspection: 10th –14th January 2000

Inspection number: 193880

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lower Road Faversham Kent
Postcode:	ME13 7NU
Telephone number:	01795 534644
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. Linda Sanderson
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Jean Morley	<i>Registered Inspector</i>	English; Science; Art; Design and technology; Special educational needs; Equal opportunities.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Anthony Mundy	<i>Lay Inspector</i>		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?
Helen Mundy	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Areas of learning for children under five; Mathematics; Information technology; Geography; History; Music; Physical education; Religious education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bysing Wood Primary School is situated on the outskirts of Faversham in Kent. Pupils are drawn from the immediate locality: three newly developed Housing Association estates and one more traditional council estate. Few pupils come from homes that are owner occupied. The school has places for 259 pupils and a current roll of 123. Since the last inspection three years ago, there has been a 38 per cent fall in pupil numbers. In October 1998, the school was faced with public consultation for closure on the grounds of surplus places in the Faversham area. The decision to keep it open so that it could serve its community was taken in March 1999.

The school takes pupils aged from four to eleven and, with its current roll, is a small primary school. There are 82 pupils (68 per cent) on the register of special educational needs and eight pupils (7 per cent) with statements of special educational need. Fifty four per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. All three percentages are well above national averages. During the last academic year, and in addition to the routine intake at age four and the routine transfer to secondary school at the age of 11, 24 pupils left the school and 25 pupils joined. Validated Baseline Assessment scores are well below the county average. Combined, these factors present the school with complex challenges that are significantly different to those faced by the majority of primary schools.

There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bysing Wood Primary School is an improving school. It provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils but with a number of good features; notably the pupils' personal development, the quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher and senior management, and improving standards. The attainment of the children when they enter the school is very low and, when they leave school, standards of attainment remain very low. However, since the last inspection there has been very significant improvement in attainment in English and science and a more modest, but still significant, improvement in mathematics.

The quality of the teaching observed during the period of inspection was satisfactory overall: 97 per cent satisfactory or better. 7.5 per cent was judged excellent, 7.5 per cent very good, 20 per cent good, 62.5 per cent satisfactory and 2.5 per cent, unsatisfactory. Together, the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have good leadership and management skills. They complement each other well. When account is taken of the satisfactory progress which pupils now make, the very high percentage of pupils with special educational needs, the high level of expenditure per pupil and the very low level of attainment on entry, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The headteacher and senior management lead the school well.
- The quality of teaching to the oldest pupils in the school is very good overall and often excellent.
- Pupils, their teachers, and other adults who help them all get on very well together.
- The school provides well for pupils' moral, social and personal development.
- Teachers know their pupils well and care well for them.
- The school provides good information for parents.
- New staff are nurtured by the school – and all pupils benefit as a result.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Although standards have risen significantly, they are not yet high enough in English, mathematics, science, information technology or religious education.
- The curriculum for children under five does not match their learning needs as well as it should.
- The presentation of pupils' work – their handwriting in particular – is not good enough.
- Efficient use is not made of classroom assistants.
- A number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected in January 1997, it was found to have 'serious weaknesses in important areas'. Since that time, it has faced a 38 per cent drop in pupil numbers, associated staff reductions, a substantial period without a deputy headteacher, and a threat of closure, resolved only nine months ago. However, in the three years since the last inspection, it has made good progress on all key issues raised with the exception of attendance. The response and the resulting improvement on this issue have been satisfactory.

Amidst these changes, the headteacher, management team and governing body have made a good start to restructuring the school and the action they have taken has had a significant and positive impact on the standards pupils achieve. The improvement owes much to the recognition of elements of unsatisfactory behaviour by pupils, and of a lack of expertise amongst the staff to deal with them, and to the fact that new measures have now been put into practice.

Standards have risen substantially in English and in science and more modestly in mathematics. The school has built good relationships between all adults and children and provides very well for pupils' personal development. The quality of teaching has improved as the school has virtually eradicated unsatisfactory teaching.

STANDARDS

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

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E
<i>very low</i>	E*

This information shows that in 1999, the school attained standards in English that were below national averages when compared with all schools, but well above national averages when compared to similar schools. Inspection findings indicate that, in Year 6, current attainment is well below national averages. However, this discrepancy is attributable to the difference between the two cohorts. Attainment in mathematics is very low: in the bottom 5 per cent nationally and still very low when compared to that of similar schools. Inspection findings confirm these results. Attainment in science is very low when compared with all schools but close to that of similar schools. Inspection findings also confirm these results.

The data from past years indicates clearly that, by the time they leave the school, pupils are attaining higher standards in all three subjects than they used to. The improvement in English and in science has been particularly good; in mathematics, although there has been some improvement, it has been more modest. However, standards in reading that relate to *interpreting* what is read are very low. This is the one factor that, more than any other, contributes to the very low standards in mathematics. This improvement in Key Stage 2 has been matched by similar improvement in standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Most pupils present their work poorly.

The school's targets have been set to 2003. Quite understandably, they fluctuate. This is because they represent a response to the variation that exists in the percentage of pupils on the higher stages of the register of special educational needs between one cohort and another. Overall, targets are modestly challenging.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have a positive attitude to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils work well together and all adults and children get on well together.
Attendance	Despite some improvement, attendance remains unsatisfactory.

Pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Overall, their behaviour is good although there are times when it deteriorates a little in the classroom. This is because some pupils occasionally find it difficult to control their own behaviour. There is little aggression between pupils: they work and play together amicably. Pupils lack maturity and show little initiative. However, when asked to do a particular job, they complete it sensible and willingly. Rates of attendance have improved but remain low. This is because the procedures in place to monitor attendance are not pursued with sufficient rigour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING.

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	Aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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

Of the teaching observed, 7.5 per cent was judged excellent, 7.5 per cent very good, 20 per cent good, 62.5 per cent satisfactory and 2.5 per cent, unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory overall, although some very good and excellent teaching was observed. The major strength in teaching is the teachers' management of pupils, some of whom require handling with great skill and patience. Good relationships contribute significantly to pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of homework. One particular weakness is the failure to use well, the time and skills of the support staff. Secondly, teachers sometimes assume, often wrongly, that pupils have understood what they have been taught. Pupils need significantly more opportunities to write at length.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn and to make progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes satisfactory provision for all pupils with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is good overall. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils. It is very good at promoting good behaviour, eliminating bullying, and offering support and guidance.

The school's partnership with parents is good and has improved since the previous inspection. Parents are welcome in the school at all times and are familiar with its routines and expectations. The school provides parents with good quality information. Reports inform parents of the progress their child is making and suggest targets for improvement. The school provides well for pupils' personal development. It provides a sound academic curriculum enhanced by some opportunities for additional activities: art and gymnastics, for example. The school provides good quality care for its pupils and, for most, this has a positive impact on the standards they achieve. The standard of care has improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	The school is well led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities.	The governing body provides sound support to the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance.	The school has a realistic awareness of its current performance and is aware of its shortcomings.
The strategic use of resources.	Most resources are used appropriately but efficient use is not always made of classroom assistants.

Class teachers are deployed well but the headteacher does not use his skills in information technology sufficiently to assist pupils and help his staff. There is a generous number of classroom assistants but they are not used effectively, because too much of their time and expertise is wasted. The school building provides good accommodation and pupils benefit from a newly developed library and computer suite. Resources are satisfactory in all areas except the large play equipment for the youngest children in school. The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. Although the school has been through a period of turbulent change, the headteacher, senior management and governing body have made a good start to restructuring the school, and the action they have taken has had a significant and

positive impact on the standards that pupils achieve. The headteacher and governors on the finance committee supplement best value principles with observation and bargaining skills when negotiating purchases of goods and services.

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 like school. • Behaviour in the school is good. • The teaching is good. • Parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • Their children are expected to work hard and do their best. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about how their children are getting on. • The range of activities outside lessons

The inspection team supports all the positive views of parents. While parents are kept appropriately informed about the progress their child is making, the written report often fails to tell parents what could be done to help them improve further. The quality of activities outside school is good. Their range is limited, particularly in respect of games such as football and netball which could open doors to matches with other schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children enter the school, most have very low standards in all areas. By the time they start Year 1 it is likely that their attainment will be well below the goals expected in language, literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. Some pupils are likely to attain the expected goals in creative, physical and personal development, although the majority will not.
2. Throughout the school, pupils achieve very low standards in nearly all subjects. This is confirmed by both national test results and by the findings of the inspection team. Standards are lowest in mathematics, where the school is in the lowest 5 per cent nationally. However, at the time of the last inspection in January 1997, standards were significantly lower still: there has been a marked improvement. For example, in 1997, 27 per cent of the 11 Year olds reached the national standard in English while in 1999 it had risen to 64 per cent. In mathematics where the improvement was more modest, the comparative proportions were 27 per cent and 37 per cent and in science, 16 per cent and 68 per cent. Similar rises in standards have taken place with the seven-year olds in school.
3. When performance is compared with that of pupils from similar schools, the picture is more favourable, particularly in English and science. By the time pupils leave the school, the standards they attain remain below those in similar schools in mathematics but match them in science. They exceed them in English.
4. There are two features that are particularly significant when judging the standards achieved by the pupils in this school. One is the percentage that has significant difficulties with learning, appropriate behaviour, or both. Of all the pupils currently in Years 1-6, more than seven in every ten are on the register of special educational needs. This is very high. The second is that only a small percentage of these pupils have the lowest level of need: almost six in every ten pupils are on the higher stages of the register. The extent to which this has the potential to effect results can best be understood by looking at the profile of one year group. In Year 6, for example, there are 19 pupils, only three of whom are not on the register of special educational needs. There are four pupils at Stage 1 and one pupil at Stage 2. Eight pupils are at Stage 3 and there are three pupils who have statements of special educational need. When the standards that pupils have achieved are viewed against this background, the improvement secured since the last inspection is commendable.
5. Pupils with special educational needs have appropriate targets set for them and make satisfactory progress towards them. Other pupils in school also make satisfactory progress.

6. Analysis of the results of national tests indicates that there is a difference in the performance of boys and girls. Girls outperform boys significantly in both English and mathematics. Given the statistics, however, this is not surprising: there are twice as many boys as girls on the register of special educational needs. Additionally, of those on the very highest stages, boys outnumber girls by three to one and, currently, all eight pupils who have a statement of special need are boys.

7. Targets for attainment set by the school fluctuate markedly. These fluctuations reflect the proportion of pupils in the year group who are on Stage 2 or above of the register of special educational needs. Targets suggest that the proportion of seven year olds achieving the expected level will fall significantly over the next two years: from the 62 per cent achieved in 1999 in English to 50 per cent this year and then to 29 per cent in 2001. The respective percentages for mathematics are 58 per cent, 44 per cent and 24 per cent. It is anticipated that the proportion of 11 Year olds who achieve the expected level in English will drop significantly for the next three years but, in 2003, will rise again to current levels. By 2003, however, the school anticipates that standards in mathematics will have risen over current ones. At first glance this appears a bleak outlook. However, in broad terms the targets have been set at a level that anticipates that all pupils on Stage 1 and most pupils on Stage 2 of the register of special educational needs will reach the expected level. Viewed in this way, these targets are modestly challenging. The school is on target to meet - and possibly exceed them.

8. Weaknesses in literacy are several. There are many pupils not able to use a range of strategies to help them when they read, for example making use of the first letter sound, building phonetically regular words by breaking them down into sections, and 'reading on' when they meet a word they don't know.

9. Most find it difficult to interpret technical language sufficiently well to understand a question and then to provide an answer: this is particularly problematic in mathematics, where it is a real barrier to progress. None of the oldest pupils in school is adept at recognising inference and deduction although currently, this is a specific area of focus. Writing is particularly weak. Standards are very low in spelling, handwriting, punctuation, sentence structure and vocabulary. Pupils find it difficult to write, and they produce little. Equally, it is because they produce so little that they find writing so difficult. There are no significant strengths.

10. One additional and significant weakness is the difficulty experienced by the *majority* of pupils in understanding language, even when it is given to them slowly, clearly and in very simple terms.

11. Standards of work in numeracy are very low overall. By the time they are seven, the majority of pupils have poor mathematical language and are often confused by simple words such as 'before' and 'after'. Frequently, their mathematical skills are impeded by their lack of language skills. However, they are developing confidence in calculating mentally during whole class numeracy sessions. Most pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have substantial difficulties in interpreting written and spoken questions. For example, some are unable to

calculate a simple written problem of subtraction and addition around the sum of 50 pence. Many pupils do not understand the meaning of 'the sum of'. Most pupils have greater confidence with mental calculations. They quickly double numbers to reach 100, but their attainment overall is still very low. As with literacy, there are no significant strengths.

12. Attainment in other curriculum areas is below that which typifies pupils of a comparable age and progress is frequently constrained by weak literacy skills. In geography, science and religious education for example, pupils do not enjoy - and learn from - a range of interesting and challenging writing opportunities. Very little, if any, recording is undertaken in these subjects in Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, pupils have very little regular experience of longer length writing. It was noticeable, as inspectors worked in classrooms, just how many pupils looked in amazement and commented on how much their 'visitors' to school had written.

13. Retention of knowledge in religious education is poor. Pupils cannot effectively recall the meaning of written work in their books and attainment falls substantially short of the levels set by the locally agreed syllabus.

14. Attainment in information and communication technology is very low. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can word process and print simple stories. Evidence shows completed work in a single typeface and size, aligned left and centre. Mouse control is satisfactory but use of the keyboard is weak. Knowledge of computer language is very poor. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are learning to handle data. Higher attaining pupils know some computer terminology, including 'search' and 'field'. They open and close programs with confidence, and can change font type, size and colour. They do not easily interpret dialog boxes.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Entry to school for children under five is well organised. The relationships established between parents and staff promote positive attitudes among the children, who are all confident and secure. Although many of the children have behavioural difficulties on entry to school, they settle quickly to classroom and school routines, and are well behaved. They relate well to adults, and enjoy coming to school and meeting other children. Children listen attentively, particularly in story-time, but in most activities they are unable to concentrate for more than a few minutes. They eagerly respond to adults' questions, although they cannot easily sustain a dialogue. Children do not have the initiative to select their own activities and materials, and they have difficulty in explaining their activities to adults.

16. The good attitudes to work noted in the previous inspection report have been maintained. Most pupils, including some frequent absentees, are happy to come to school. They conform well to the structures of school life and respond warmly to the affection and respect they receive each day from adults. They enjoy lessons, and try to listen attentively to their teachers. Most pupils work industriously, although often slowly. In each class, some pupils are unable to concentrate on their work for more than a few minutes, except when teaching is of exceptional quality.

17. Some pupils can work independently but many do not have sufficient confidence to attempt new work. Frustration at these times can cause behavioural difficulties. Although

they enjoy being asked questions, most pupils respond with single word answers. Teachers' questioning techniques do not encourage longer answers, even from the small number of children who could currently provide them. Pupils do not engage confidently in problem-solving activities. They often have difficulty understanding and evaluating a written or spoken problem. In these circumstances, they will not answer at all, or will answer indiscriminately. For example, to the question 'How could I find out what the weather is in Australia?' a child responded, 'By Eurostar'.

18. Attitudes in extra-curricular activities are very good. In a pottery session, pupils were moulding pots while taking great care not to disturb their neighbours' work. In a gymnastics session in the school hall, pupils collaborated very well when performing sequences of complex movements, including handstands and cartwheels. There are no differences in attitude between pupils of different levels of attainment. In discussion with visitors they are all proud of their achievements, although often unable to discriminate between their best work and their less successful efforts.

19. Behaviour in classes and in the open areas of the school is good, and has improved since the previous inspection. Behaviour at lunchtime in the dining hall and playground is very good. Brief behaviour rules are displayed in each classroom. All pupils know the structure of the school's discipline and sanctions policy, and most conform to it. The relatively large number of exclusions last year was attributable to the school's firm response to occasional serious incidents of defiance, or damage to property. Parents and pupils confirm bullying or aggression between pupils to be rare, and to be dealt with effectively. Generally, pupils take very good care of the school buildings, equipment and personal property.

20. Pupils' personal development is good, and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Throughout the school, pupils listen to each other's views, and answer simple questions and make decisions quite confidently. Each member of the school community has equal status and receives sensitive and effective support at work and play. Where opportunities are provided, pupils are always willing to accept responsibility for everyday duties in classrooms and throughout the school. For example, they set out equipment for physical education lessons, carry messages, and deliver class registers to the school office. Higher levels of personal responsibility are not offered to them, for example managing a school newspaper, participating in a school council, or systematically helping younger children with reading.

21. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but is still unsatisfactory and is significantly below the national average for primary schools. Punctuality is satisfactory, and has improved since the previous inspection. The number of unauthorised absences is still significantly above the national average for primary schools.

22. Some families do not fulfil the legal requirement of ensuring their children's regular attendance. In autumn term 1999, twenty-five pupils had attendance rates below 88 per cent. Statistically, these pupils missed more than one day's schooling in each two-week period. Erratic attendance seriously affects pupils' knowledge of all subjects. They have difficulty remembering what they have learned previously, and difficulty in understanding and catching up with work they have missed.

23. Class registers are completed neatly, and conform to legal requirements. Registration periods are efficient, and most lessons during the day begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The last report judged teaching to be unsatisfactory in 20 per cent of lessons, good or better in nearly half of lessons, very good in a small percentage and satisfactory in the remainder. The unsatisfactory lessons were typified by a lack of pace and rigour, brought about by weak planning and this became a key issue for the school to address.

25. During this inspection, the overall quality of the teaching observed was satisfactory. Almost two-thirds of teaching was judged to be sound, one fifth was good, about one-sixth good or excellent in equal proportions and 2.5 per cent, unsatisfactory.

26. There was no variation in the overall quality between teaching for the under fives, in Key Stage 1, or in Key Stage 2. However, all the very good and excellent teaching was to the pupils in the Year 5/6 class. The overall quality of teaching represents an improvement over that reported in the last inspection, because the school has been successful in eliminating almost all of the unsatisfactory teaching. It has therefore responded positively to the key issue.

27. The spread of ability amongst the pupils in this school is not typical. Two-thirds of all pupils are on the register of special educational needs. Currently, no children under five - or in their Reception year - are placed on the register, although pupils' needs have been identified. This means that of the pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 the proportion is actually 72 per cent. Significant numbers of these pupils have behavioural as well as learning difficulties, and the challenges that these features present to teachers are significant.

28. Most of what the teachers do in their classrooms is satisfactory. Their subject knowledge, planning, the level of challenge in the work they set, and assessment are all examples. One area, however is a particular strength: the way in which teachers manage pupils and expect high standards of behaviour. In addition, they use homework well, given the difficulties that some pupils have in completing it. There is one particular weakness: the use of support staff. In addition, in some lessons, teachers do not use questioning effectively enough to establish what pupils have or have not learned.

29. Teachers manage pupils' well, particularly those who have substantial difficulty in controlling their own behaviour. Staff have undertaken training to help them establish classroom environments in which all pupils can learn. The three more experienced full-time members of staff and the headteacher have given very good support to the two newly qualified members of staff, who show sound levels of pupil management skills after just one term of teaching in this challenging environment.

30. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through homework. On a regular basis they provide interesting and challenging activities for pupils to try. They recognise that many pupils experience difficulties in working at home. Teachers are sensitive to these pupils and place no undue pressure on them.

31. All teachers have subject knowledge that is at least adequate for the subjects they teach, with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT). The headteacher has good subject knowledge in information and communication technology and, although able to compensate while other members of staff acquire the necessary expertise, doesn't do so often enough. There is other, specific subject expertise amongst the staff: in art and physical education, for example, from the two newly qualified staff. Their skills are currently being used well to offer extra-curricular activities to pupils, and the headteacher is rightly considering extending this to lesson exchanges.

32. Planning is sound throughout the school. Teachers ensure that every lesson has a clear learning target, although this is seldom made explicit to children other than those in the oldest class. There is no evidence, other than in Year 6, of pupils being aware of what they have learned and of how well they have done.

33. The level of challenge which teachers offer is variable but is never less than sound. The quality of teaching to the oldest pupils in the school is, however, inspirational. Each lesson is used to move pupils forward to new learning amid wide-eyed interest, and in this classroom they make rapid progress. Elsewhere, pupils are adequately challenged in most aspects of their work, but the standards of presentation which teachers accept are never high enough. This is true in all classrooms and includes the very youngest children in school.

34. The methods which teachers employ are tightly structured. This is the direct result of having to work so hard with pupils to establish an appropriate working environment in every classroom. So, while there are positive features in the actions they take, such as providing appropriately challenging work and working systematically with groups of pupils, there are too many occasions when what pupils learn falls short of what their teacher had hoped for. There are several factors that, combined, contribute to this. Firstly, teachers try hard, particularly in literacy and numeracy, to adhere to the planning linked to the relevant strategy. Secondly, whole class teaching to the pupils in this school takes longer than in most schools because pupils need a slower, clearer explanation. Teachers are then too frequently short of the time they need to check *how much* pupils have understood, before sending them off to work independently. Finally, and as a result, the understanding which teachers *assume* that pupils have is often not in place. This leads to unsettled work and learning that fails to hit its target. While much of the day-to-day assessment which teachers undertake is effective and used well, the missed opportunities described above mean that it is only satisfactory overall.

35. The most significant weakness in the quality of teaching is the use that teachers make of their support staff. While the teacher is working with the whole class, they are invariably inactive. They work with groups of pupils, following the teacher's verbal instructions, but rarely have written guidance or have taken part in the planning. Expenditure on the nine support staff who work in this school is inefficient, as the progress that pupils make as a result of working with them does not, currently, represent value for money. Some work undertaken by support staff, however, is very effective: Additional Literacy Sessions provide the best example.

36. Literacy skills are taught satisfactorily through the literacy hour. This allows pupils to make sound progress, but the standards they attain are still very low. However, the majority of pupils in this school have significant learning difficulties, nearly all of which relate to literacy. Taking into account the detrimental impact that these difficulties have on all their work in school, it is surprising that no additional time is made available in an attempt to support, reduce or eliminate some of the difficulties through small group work with a trained and well-briefed adult. For example, pupils currently have inadequate opportunities to write at length, and few sessions when the very specific targets on their individual education plans can be addressed. In addition, speaking opportunities, for example to describe, explain, or justify, are rare.

37. The school teaches numeracy appropriately and, in lessons, is wisely placing substantial emphasis on the improvement of pupils' mental agility. However, the overriding factor that contributes to the very low standards in mathematics in this school is the significant difficulty that pupils experience at each stage of their work - when reading a mathematical problem, interpreting the mathematical language it contains, and knowing which calculations to use to solve it.

38. Pupils learn new knowledge at a pace that is entirely commensurate with their capacity to do so. Through the sterling efforts of the school, they are taught how to behave well in the classroom. Most are keen to learn: they ask questions and listen intently, albeit just for a short period of time. When teaching is really dynamic and lively, as it is in the Year 5/6 classroom, pupils try very hard at everything they do. Even in other classes, their effort is rarely less than satisfactory. The pace of their work is slow, largely because their writing skills are so weak and the school has not fully recognised the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to write.

39. Pupils in this school are not independent learners. Generally speaking, they do not have the skills to work independently and the length of time for which they can concentrate is significantly less than for most pupils of a comparable age. Most have significant difficulties in understanding what they are taught even when it is presented to them slowly, clearly, in very simple language, and with every sign that they are paying attention. It is not surprising that very few pupils have a realistic idea of the quality of their own work or the extent to which it is improving.

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

40. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was judged to be insufficiently broadly based and lacking in balance. There were elements of the English, mathematics and science curriculum that were not covered. Provision for pupils aged five was generally good and an appropriate curriculum was offered to pupils with special educational needs. There were two key issues relating to the curriculum: the school should develop policies and schemes of work for all subjects, and review and improve planning strategies to provide rigour, pace, and continuity and progression in pupils' learning.

41. The school has responded well to these key issues. Commercial schemes of work have been adopted in all subjects, and long-and medium-term planning is now thorough. All elements of the programme of study are covered for each subject, but there are some small weaknesses. For example, a new computer suite has been installed, but the curriculum for information and communication technology is limited by the level of staff expertise. Art and music are taught in alternate half terms. With this arrangement, opportunities to enrich the curriculum through interaction between these two subjects are missed. History, geography and environmental studies are taught independently in successive terms: this is satisfactory.

42. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been fully implemented. The literacy hour itself is making a sound impact on learning. However, there are not enough planned opportunities for extended writing. This applies to English but more particularly to other subjects of the curriculum. This shortfall in curriculum planning has a negative impact on the standards pupils attain and on the progress they make. Additional resources in the form of trained and skilled volunteers are provided for some pupils with reading difficulties through the charity Volunteer Reading Help Scheme, whose local office is in an unused classroom on the school site. This support is a valuable addition to the school's curriculum and the ease of access to it is a further bonus. The curriculum also provides help to a group of low achieving pupils through the Additional Literacy Support. The school is rightly seeking to extend this programme. The numeracy strategy is fully in place, and pupils' abilities in mental calculation have improved, although there is little evidence that mathematics is incorporated sufficiently into other subjects.

43. The school makes sound provision for extra-curricular activities, including country dancing, art and gymnastics. These activities are open to all children, and attendance is good. Through them, pupils benefit from staff expertise, particularly in gymnastics and art. There are no regular netball or football teams and no regular opportunities for pupils to play matches against other local schools. The school does not have a structure to ensure that expertise is shared among staff and best practice developed in all subjects, but currently the school rightly considering the option of some 'class swapping' in physical education and art. The information and technology skills of the head teacher are used in teaching small groups of older pupils. The under-fives teacher's good knowledge of the desirable learning outcomes is not put to use by the school.

44. Equality of access and opportunity is sound in the planned curriculum. The school provides effectively for pupils of both genders and all ages. Equality of access and opportunity diminishes where pupils are frequently absent from school.

45. The curriculum for children under the age of five is adapted to their needs from Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. Although children have some good opportunities to develop their skills and extend their experiences, some activities are too difficult for them, particularly in language and literacy. Children with very low attainment on entry to school are deprived of the specialist early years curriculum. A high priority is given to promoting children's personal and social development. The provision for outdoor play for children under 5 is unsatisfactory.

46. Pupils with special educational needs are in the majority in this school: two thirds of all pupils are on the register of special educational needs, with the large majority of those at Stage 2 or above. They are identified soon after they arrive at school and monitored carefully. All pupils have appropriate individual education plans. The school fully meets the requirements of the special educational needs Code of Practice. A number of additional features to the school's provision allows all pupils with special needs to make progress commensurate with their capacity to do so. The most significant of these is the extensive (although not fully used) support from non-teaching assistants. In this school, consistent features of pupils with special needs are poor retention of previous learning and a frequent inability to understand what their teacher explains clearly and simply to them. Constant revision and checking of understanding by class teachers is necessary and needs closer attention than is currently the case. Clearly this raises some issues about future planning of the curriculum for pupils with special needs.

47. The use of learning support assistants within subjects is weak. The curriculum, as it is currently planned, still leaves these assistants inactive for too much of their time in the classroom. The skills and experience of some learning assistants is not fully used though the school. This is because most teachers do not plan specifically for how their assistants will spend their time, or what precisely they will do with groups of pupils. Currently, they receive only oral instructions from teachers to help them with their work.

48. Time is generally well used in the literacy and numeracy hours although, in Key Stage 1, only the bare minimum is allocated to mathematics, even though the standards are so very low. Throughout the school, not enough time is allowed for extended writing in English and in other subjects of the curriculum. Opportunities are missed for pupils to express things in their own words rather than fill gaps on worksheets. At lunchtimes, children aged under 5 are in the playground for at least 45 minutes. Play equipment for these children is very limited; for example, no wheeled toys or climbing apparatus are provided. Similarly, the pupils are given no opportunities for development of their language skills. The school does not plan, for example, for midday assistants to organise games involving words and actions.

49. Satisfactory opportunities are provided for pupils to develop spiritual awareness in school assemblies. Through the theme of 'hopes and wishes' pupils are encouraged to reflect on their achievements at school and the effects of their absence on their classes and friends. In assembly, pupils have opportunities for prayer and quiet reflection, although the prayers are not always simple enough for the Key Stage 1 pupils to understand. Pupils are taught about values and beliefs in religious education, but some tend to be confused between those of one faith and another. They have good opportunities to reflect on the work of others but insufficient to reflect on their own work. Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on their feelings: in Key Stage 1, for example, they think about *kindness*. Year 6 pupils express great sadness when they relate the destruction of the school pond through the theft of the plastic liner. They are acutely aware of environmental issues and know the value of recycling

shoes and waste paper. Visits out of school to the local church and museum encourage pupils' self-knowledge and awareness of the wider world. The oldest pupils in school listen with wide-eyed wonder to their teacher in many lessons.

50. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. A sense of value is promoted in assemblies. All adults set strong moral examples, and the very positive relationships in the school encourage good behaviour and self-discipline in nearly all pupils. Pupils are trustworthy and have no fear of their possessions being misappropriated. All adults make good use of praise; they value pupils' ideas and celebrate individual achievement. Rules are displayed in all classrooms and many pupils can recite them by heart. Pupils have great pride in their school, but their pride in their work is indiscriminating. Pupils show respect for teachers, for other adults and for the school, and are encouraged to be aware of the needs of others. Instances of aggressive behaviour and bullying are rare, and are dealt with sensitively and fairly by the staff.

51. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. The school emphasises the qualities of care, respect for others and self-discipline. In lessons and in activities beyond the school day, pupils have opportunities to work amicably in small groups of mixed gender. They learn to co-operate, share ideas and equipment, and communicate effectively. Educational visits and visitors into school all contribute positively to pupils' social development. Among regular visitors are a police officer, a vicar and a number of reading volunteers. Pupils of all ages are willing to accept responsibility, although opportunities are limited to simple tasks. For example, older pupils select music for assemblies and control the tape recorder but are not asked to write the title of the music and the composer, and hold them up and read them to the school. Year 6 pupils help midday assistants in the dining hall. In most classes, pupils are given responsibilities for tidiness and taking care of resources. They raise money for Barnardo Homes and, at Christmas, entertain elderly people in a local care home.

52. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Through the local museum, country dancing and May Day celebrations, pupils have some opportunities to learn about their own culture. In geography, older pupils are learning about African culture. They enjoyed the visit of an African drummer. Year 6 pupils have re-written the tale of the Pied Piper but set it in an African village and they have choreographed a dance to Mexican music. Year 4 and 5 have learned about Monet and have attempted to replicate his style. Reception children have decorated areas of their classroom with Indian prints. The previous inspection report identified the school's approach to multi-cultural education as an area for development. Pupils are now given some insights into other faiths and cultures through the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In all classes, books show a variety of cultures and ethnic types. The school has made satisfactory progress in this area although further development is still necessary.

53. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. Adequate curriculum time is scheduled weekly for each class, when topics including personal feelings and stranger danger are considered in discussions and written work. Visitors include the school nurse, who speaks to pupils about health- and sex-related issues. Other aspects of sex education are covered within the science curriculum. Pupils receive specialised guidance from a police officer who regularly speaks about drugs awareness, and from safety officers representing the fire service and the railway. The recently appointed PSHE co-ordinator has

reviewed resources within the school and has some proposals for expanding the programme. For example, a travelling healthcare exhibition is to visit the school next term. Although, in practice, the school's provision is good, the documentation is out of date and a review is overdue.

54. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory, and maintains the standards noted in the previous inspection report. The school makes good use of community resources. Pupils visit a local museum, the parish church, library and fire station. They study the environment and wildlife of a tidal creek. Occasionally they make day trips to Canterbury and Whitstable. A local charity is sponsoring an educational residential visit for Year 6 children. Recent visitors from the community have included an African drummer and the town carnival queen and her entourage. The parish priest is a welcome visitor. He regularly takes part in school assemblies. No contacts are established with schools in nearby France, and other international, multicultural and multi-ethnic links are similarly underdeveloped.

55. The school's summer fete and boot fair is a major social and fund-raising event, well supported by local residents. Pupils collect for local and national charities throughout the year, and distribute harvest parcels to senior citizens at a nearby care home. At Christmas the school choir sings carols in the town. Opportunities are missed to promote the school more widely in the community. For example, although pupils visit the local library, they do not contribute to library exhibitions of children's work. The school does not receive business sponsorship but is adept at obtaining grants from local educational charities. The school buildings are not used by the community.

56. Satisfactory links are maintained with an on-site parent and toddler group. The school provides free accommodation and some resources for the group, and occasional co-operative activities are organised with the Reception class. However, the school does not effectively promote itself as the natural first school for all the children of the group. Local primary schools do not have a tradition of co-operation, but good liaison is maintained with local secondary schools. Each year, work experience students benefit from effective mentoring, and make a valuable contribution to life at Bysing Wood. Links with universities are tenuous because the school feels unable, currently, to participate in the initial training of student teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

57. The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good, has a positive effect on educational standards achieved by most pupils, and has improved beyond the satisfactory provision identified in the previous inspection.

58. Teachers and other adults know the children well and are committed to their health, safety and welfare. In this small school, teachers maintain relationships with many pupils in classes other than their own. Pupils receive very good individual care and support from class teachers and the headteacher. The school's large number of learning assistants develop close relationships with pupils, and give very effective social and welfare support at all times. Playground supervision is very well organised to ensure pupils' safety at break times and lunchtimes. At the end of the day, the youngest children are very well supervised until collected by parents or carers. Good safety practices are evident in physical education and

crafts lessons. One member of staff is a qualified first-aider. All staff are caring and sympathetic to injured and distressed pupils. Short-term medication is stored safely in a cabinet and is administered by the office staff.

59. The programme for personal, social and health education is very effective, and is supplemented by cycling proficiency lessons and regular visits from a police officer and representatives of the fire service and railway. Pupils are frequently reminded of potential hazards from strangers and the environment. These reminders are never oppressive or exaggerated, and instil in pupils a sensible understanding of the world around them. Procedures are established to ensure pupils' safety on the school site, and when away from the school on educational visits. Governors regularly inspect the site and buildings for deficiencies and hazards but a system of regular formal risk assessment is not established.

60. The headteacher is responsible for child protection. He has received recent training and has ensured that all staff, including learning assistants, and midday assistants have adequate understanding of child protection issues. However, formal training in child protection has not been provided for learning assistants. The school's procedures for child protection are implemented unobtrusively. A good working relationship is maintained with the social services department of the local authority.

61. Rigorous procedures are established for monitoring pupils' academic progress. The headteacher assesses work in pupils' books. The deputy headteacher and English co-ordinator analyse the performance of all pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The information is used to identify weaknesses in individuals and groups through the school and to set targets for improvement. While the assessment systems put in place by the school have provided much valuable and well used information, the data currently generated is too prolific. Assessment clearly helps the school to identify very particular weaknesses in pupils' work, but is beginning to be counter-productive. This is because it is now so tuned in to fine detail that it is beginning to prevent senior staff from reflecting adequately on the underlying and more global weaknesses. However, the school is aware of an urgent need to review and refine its systems. Although performance in information and communication technology is included within core subjects, specific information and communication technology skills are not effectively monitored.

62. In co-operation with parents, the school sets realistic individual targets for overcoming pupils' weaknesses in attainment and personal development. Older pupils participate in short-term target setting. Targets are not set for attendance. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and very well integrated. Individual education plans are carefully structured, and are sensitively implemented by all the staff.

63. Parents and children are warmly welcomed into the school's Reception class. A parent and child workbook provides opportunities to work together at home before admission to school. Pupils joining other year groups settle quickly and happily into the school's routines. Very effective procedures in Years 5 and 6 prepare pupils for transfer to secondary education.

64. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are very effective, although largely informal, and are based on teachers' observations, knowledge and understanding of individuals. After-school clubs are well organised and encourage pupils to develop talents in art and gymnastics.

65. Systems for monitoring and promoting attendance are unsatisfactory, and have not improved since the previous inspection. Monitoring is infrequent, and the school is slow to respond to pupil absences. Patterns of unsatisfactory attendance established in the youngest classes are maintained through the school. In autumn term 1999, at least four pupils in each class had absence rates exceeding 12 per cent. The school accepts these figures too readily, failing to demonstrate to pupils and parents that any single absence is a serious matter that will be rigorously investigated. Parents receive no guidance about the school's expectations, and some parents do not understand how unauthorised absence is legally defined. No targets or incentives for attendance are offered to individuals, classes or year groups. The services of the county educational welfare officer are used inconsistently.

66. A fully structured policy for the management of behaviour, including bullying, is implemented by all the staff. The small number of rules at the heart of the policy is displayed in each class, and many pupils can recite them. A significant number of potentially disruptive pupils respond very well to the staff's consistent use of the policy's praise and sanction structure. Consistently good or improved behaviour is rewarded by a personal letter from the headteacher and posted to parents. An effective merit system of house points and stickers recognises the contributions of pupils in all areas of school life. Merit badges and certificates are presented at half-termly assemblies to which parents are invited. The merits system, and consistent praise for individuals, promotes good behaviour in classes, in the open areas of the school, and in the playground. The school functions very well as a happy and orderly community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. Partnership with parents is good overall, and has improved since the previous inspection. It is beneficial to pupils' attainment, progress and personal development.

68. At a pre-inspection meeting for all parents, opinions of the school were overwhelmingly positive. These opinions were confirmed by responses to questionnaires and by discussions with a number of parents during the inspection. The school is rightly valued and respected by parents and the local community.

69. Parents have satisfactory involvement in the work of the school. They are welcome in the school at all times, and they have good relationships with class teachers and other members of staff. The parent-teacher association is currently inactive. A new parent-school partnership committee, chaired by the deputy headteacher, proposes to organise a number of social and fund raising events in spring and summer terms.

70. The quality of information for parents is good. Advance notice of class topics is sent to parents at the start of each half term. Newsletters are very informative, well designed and well written. Occasional questionnaires invite parents' opinions of the school's provision or invite them to vote on proposed changes, for example the colour and design of school uniform. The school prospectus is an exemplary document, including much useful information and advice for parents. The most recent governors' annual report to parents conforms fully with legal requirements.

71. Teachers' written reports to parents accurately identify what pupils can do but do not always indicate how attainment can be further improved. Two consultation evenings each year are very well attended, and parents are certain of a sympathetic response from teachers at any other time if difficulties arise.

72. Parents are very well informed of the school's routines when their children enter the under-fives class or join the school's other year groups. They are less well informed about the school's expectations. Parents of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are well informed about secondary transfer. Secondary schools confirm the good behaviour of Bysing Wood pupils, and the high levels of support and co-operation provided by most parents. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are well-informed of progress, and they understand the school's procedures for support and discipline. They are appreciative of the school's sensitivity to individual feelings.

73. Parents' involvement with their children's learning is satisfactory. Varied and relevant homework is provided for each year group. Parents are encouraged to read with their children at home, and to note progress in the reading record book. A small number of parents and friends help as volunteers in classrooms, and a larger number accompany classes on educational visits. The school does not systematically audit the skills and enthusiasms of parents to extend the opportunities offered to them to work with pupils in classes and in lunchtime or after-school clubs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The quality of leadership and management is good overall. Since the last inspection in 1997, the school has been through a period of turbulent change. This has included rapidly declining numbers and associated staff reduction, an increase in pupils with special educational needs to seven pupils in every ten, a process of closure consultation, and a lengthy period without a deputy headteacher. Amidst this change the headteacher, senior management and governing body have made a good start to restructuring the school, and the action they have taken has had a significant and positive impact on the standards that pupils achieve.

75. Following the last inspection, an appropriate action plan was prepared. The action taken on the key issues identified in the last report has been good overall. With the exception of the

key issue relating to attainment where progress has been satisfactory, all have been dealt with well. The headteacher, senior managers and the governing body have:

- * *Appointed co-ordinators to the core subjects of English and science.* The co-ordinator's role is established and the senior management team of the school is well aware of the need for still further development;
- * *Improved the curriculum by the further development of policies and schemes of work for all subjects of the national curriculum and clear, short-term objectives to focus the teaching and learning.* The school now uses national or commercial schemes of work in all subjects of the national curriculum. Teachers plan their lessons with clear learning objectives and this helps pupils to learn effectively;
- * *Developed strategies and initiatives to raise the attainment and progress of all pupils.* Although standards of attainment remain significantly below national standards, they are much higher than at the time of the last inspection, particularly in English and Science. This has been achieved through the successful introduction of strategies to improve the behaviour of pupils, through using assessment to identify specific areas of weakness, and through teaching that is planned specifically to deal with these weaknesses;
- * *Reviewed and improved planning strategies to provide rigour, pace, continuity and progression in pupils' learning.* The introduction of commercial schemes of work has helped with continuity and progression. Teachers are clear about what it is they want pupils to learn in each lesson because they ensure that it builds logically on to earlier learning. For these reasons, pupils now make better progress than they did;
- * *Partially improved attendance and punctuality by implementing a system of rigorous monitoring.* While the school has implemented systems that have resulted in some improvement in pupils' punctuality and, to a lesser extent, attendance, the latter is still unacceptably low.

76. The governing body provides sound support for the school. Through discussions with and reports from the headteacher, it keeps abreast of the strengths, weaknesses and improvements in the school. It acts as a critical friend in specific areas, for example in guiding the school in building bridges in its relationships with parents, but in academic issues it takes the lead from the headteacher and supports him in his actions. With active support and guidance from the headteacher, some governors, particularly those linked to literacy, numeracy and special educational needs, are beginning to develop their roles and responsibilities for strategic planning and monitoring. However, this is in the very early stages of development. Individual members of the governing body provide help in a very practical way, for example in building repairs and playground developments.

77. The targets set by the school are variable over the next four years and, understandably, reflect the proportion of pupils in the year-group who are on the higher stages of the register of special educational needs. In real terms they project no significant improvement in attainment in English: more specifically from 64 per cent of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in 1999 to 65 per cent in 2003. The comparable figures for mathematics are 37 per cent and 55 per cent. To date, the school has not sought innovative or imaginative ways of tackling the underlying problems of pupils. Specifically, these are significant and debilitating weaknesses in the ability of pupils to understand what they hear, and to express themselves clearly and with appropriate vocabulary, their competence in independent writing, and their competence in reading, particularly in applying reading to other activities such as mathematical ones. That is not to say that the school does not recognise these problems; it does. However, it has felt

constrained to toe a very central line, and while this has been successful in raising attainment significantly in the school, inspection judgements find - and the targets set confirm - that the school has reached a plateau of attainment. Hence it is *additional* strategies, sharply focused on the atypical needs of pupils in this school, that the school is rightly *beginning* to consider in order to 'kick-start' further improvements in the standards pupils attain.

78. Teaching is monitored and evaluated well, for although the process is still in the early stages of development, the strategies adopted to date have been both appropriate and successful. The headteacher monitors the quality of all teaching through classroom observation, and senior managers do the same for teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The information gathered has triggered specific and appropriate training. For example, since the last inspection, staff and classroom support assistants have had training in pupil management to help them deal effectively with the significant number of pupils who present challenging behaviour. This has proved effective to the extent that it is now one of the strengths in the quality of teaching. Staff have had training related to pupils' difficulties with receptive language and they are soon to embark on a Language Enrichment programme. While there is no fully operative system of appraisal, classroom observations by the headteacher and an annual professional development interview combine to produce an effective substitute.

79. Following the decision to appoint two newly qualified staff in September 1999, the headteacher and senior management were very clear about the urgent need to provide high quality training to also help these teachers manage the pupils in their classroom. The quality of this specific training, the induction process in general, and the unstinting support and encouragement offered by all the staff combine to make a package of very high quality. The two new staff have quickly integrated into the school and, furthermore, have involved themselves in offering high quality extra-curricular activities to pupils, from which all are able to benefit.

80. There is some very high calibre teaching in this school, and through various initiatives, some evidence that it is having a positive influence on the work of colleagues. The school makes good strategic use of its resources, including specific grant and other funding. Financial planning is good, and the school has a costed, three-year development plan. The headteacher and governors on the finance committee supplement best value principles with observation and bargaining skills when negotiating purchases of goods and services. Budgeting to date has been the responsibility of the headteacher. Some governors have limited roles in financial planning, but most governors are not adequately informed to participate fully, to have an effective overview of the process, or to monitor the effects of spending decisions.

81. Administrative routines are good, and the school office functions smoothly. The school's administrator ensures that updated financial information is available to the governors, headteacher and senior managers. Good systems are established for checking and collating purchases, and for paying creditors. An audit in 1997 by the local education authority required a number of changes to financial procedures and bank accounts. All of these changes have been implemented. The audit indicates the proper expenditure of all funds allocated to the school, including those for pupils with special educational needs. The core curriculum is adequately funded. Spending totals for each curriculum area are readily available to staff.

82. The school's teachers are effectively deployed, although the headteacher does not fully use his skills in information and communication technology to train staff and to work with pupils to raise information and communication technology standards through the school. The generous number of support staff are effectively deployed through the school but their time is not always used effectively, and their specialist abilities are not utilised. Very good use is made of the building, external areas and learning resources.

83. The school building provides good accommodation, and is generally in good decorative condition. Furniture in classrooms and in the open areas of the school is in good condition, and is suitable for all children in the primary age range. Displays in classrooms and open areas are good. There is a computer suite, well equipped with hardware - and with just adequate, but growing, software - and a recently developed library containing an adequate range of attractive books. Resources are sufficient in all subjects of the curriculum, with the exception of large play equipment for children under five.

84. Externally, the building, playground and sports field are in good condition. The main playground is poorly equipped. The play area for children in early years is also poorly equipped, but extensive development is proposed. The school site and buildings are free of graffiti and litter, and are commendably clean and well maintained. The site generally presents no risk to health and safety.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build further on recent significant improvements in this developing school, the headteacher, senior managers, staff and governors should work together to:

- Raise standards of attainment:

In English by:

- * Allocating additional and regular time, specifically for the focused teaching of reading skills;
- * Providing planned and frequent opportunities in a range of subjects for pupils to write at greater length.
(Paragraphs: 2, 9, 36, 110, 130, 131)

In mathematics and science by:

- * Providing the co-ordinator with opportunities to demonstrate good practice;
- * Providing significantly more opportunities both for problem solving activities throughout the school and for pupils to explain their thinking when working on them.
(Paragraphs: 2, 11, 37, 126)

In information technology by:

- * Providing appropriate training both for teachers and for classroom assistants;
- * Making greater, regular use of the computer suite.
(Paragraphs: 2, 14, 156)

In all subjects, including religious education, by:

- * Using, as a matter of course, carefully planned questioning and opportunities for engaging pupils in discussion, to establish that what is taught has been fully understood.
(Paragraphs: 2, 12, 39, 49, 108, 134)
- * Adjust the foundation curriculum for children under five so that it is more closely matched to the Early Learning Goals;
(Paragraphs: 45, 48, 100)
- * Improve the presentation of pupils' work in general - and their handwriting in particular.
(Paragraphs: 110, 122)

Make more efficient and effective use of classroom support assistants by:

- * Providing high quality training, specifically linked to planned initiatives, to enable classroom assistants to support more effectively, pupils with special educational needs;
- * Integrating classroom assistants more fully into planning for, working with, and assessing the progress of these pupils.
(*Paragraphs: 28, 35, 47, 99, 112, 156*)

Raise pupils' attendance at school by:

- * Increasing the rigour with which attainment is monitored;
- * Taking a more pro-active role with parents whose children do not attend school regularly.
(*Paragraphs: 21, 22, 65*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	40
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7.5%	7.5%	20%	62.5%	2.5%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll	119 FTE
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	60

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	82

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	5.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	10	11	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	5
	Girls	9	8	7
	Total	13	12	12
Percentage of pupils At NC Level 2 or above	School	62 (55)	57 (55)	58 (70)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	4	4	7
	Girls	9	6	7
	Total	13	10	14
Percentage of pupils At NC Level 2 or above	School	62 (60)	48 (45)	67 (70)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	9	10	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	5	2	7
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	12	7	13
Percentage of pupils At NC Level 4 or above	School	63 (26)	37 (32)	68 (32)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	5	2	8
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	12	7	13
Percentage of pupils At NC Level 4 or above	School	58 (32)	37 (38)	74 (38)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	123
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	8	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2
Average class size	23.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	140

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	322253.00
Total expenditure	322644.00
Expenditure per pupil	2030.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	19631.00
Balance carried forward to next year	19240.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	123
Number of questionnaires returned	15

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	40	13	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	64	0	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	50	14	0	7
The teaching is good.	40	40	0	0	20
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	40	27	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	53	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46.5	46.5	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	43	43	14	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	33	47	7	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	33	20	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	40	13	20	7

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

85. Provision for children aged under five is satisfactory, and has maintained the standard reported following the previous inspection. Provision for outdoor play has not improved, and is still unsatisfactory. Children start school in the September following their fourth birthday. Children whose birthday is in the autumn term attend full time immediately. Other children attend part time until February half term, unless parents exercise the option for them to start full time in January. At the time of the inspection, nine children were aged under five. On entry to Reception, evidence from baseline assessments shows children's attainment to be very low compared with that of children of similar ages nationally. Progress for children aged under five is satisfactory.

86. Children make satisfactory progress in all areas of the curriculum, although by the time they are five they do not achieve the standards expected in the Desirable Learning Outcomes. On entry to Reception, the attainment of most children is unsatisfactory. No children aged under five are officially placed on the register of special educational needs because the local education authority delays formal referral of these children until Year 1. However, the teacher is acutely aware that the majority of children do experience difficulty in learning. They are closely monitored.

Language and literacy

87. Children's attainment in language and literacy is below average. They speak confidently to adults and to each other, although they cannot always be understood. Their sentence construction and diction are often very poor, and they usually give one-word answers. A few children are able to speak clearly in sentences. Some answers to simple questions indicate that the question has not been understood. Children listen very well to instructions from adults, and they listen carefully to each other. All the children enjoy listening to stories. They show interest and enjoyment in books, pointing to illustrations and sometimes asking relevant questions. They recall parts of familiar stories, not necessarily in sequence. With help, they can place in order picture cards illustrating a story. They handle books carefully. Most children can recognise their name and some letters of the alphabet. They visit the school library, and take books home to share with their parents. All children can hold a pencil correctly but writing skills are underdeveloped. The youngest children cannot write recognisable letters but they can trace simple patterns with their pencils. The highest attaining children can write legibly most of the letters of their first names. Children have access to a word processing computer but the keyboard letters are all in capitals. During the inspection children were having difficulty locating the letters of their names in lower case. All resources and areas of learning in the classroom are very well labelled, and children are encouraged to write labels for their own displays.

88. The quality of teaching in language and literacy is sound, and sometimes good. However, the demands of teaching a class of three separate year groups prevents the teacher from always attending closely to the needs of children under five years of age. During the inspection, in the literacy hour, children under five could not understand the fifteen-minute introduction to a dictionary lesson planned for Year 1 pupils. In this, and similar instances, classroom assistants are not always used efficiently. For example, they do not supervise children under five when work for the class is too difficult for them. Their behaviour was very good but their time was wasted. Children make satisfactory progress but, at current rates, will not attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

Mathematics

89. Children's attainment in mathematics is very low. Their understanding of mathematical language is very limited. For example, during the inspection, average children could not understand the sequence of action pictures showing the order in which a child was putting on clothes. They do not understand the words 'before' and 'last'. Good use is made of tidying up time for sorting and counting. Higher attaining children can count objects accurately to ten but they do not understand simple subtraction problems of taking away one or two. They all know they are four years of age. They cannot recognise simple shapes. They successfully sort small numbers of objects by colour, shape and size but cannot answer questions about positioning. For example they do not know the meaning of 'in front of'. Number rhymes are not used consistently: none were heard during the inspection. Some children are able to place in correct sequence chairs numbered one to six as part of a train. They learn size and order through fairy stories, such as *The Three Bears*. Progress in lessons is reinforced by good mathematics displays, and by use of homework. For example, during the inspection children were asked to check the street numbers of their houses when they went home, and recall them next day for the teacher. A few children could remember the number but none could write it.

90. The quality of teaching in mathematics is sound. The demands of teaching a class of three separate year groups prevents the teacher from always attending closely to the needs of children under five years of age. Children make satisfactory progress but, at current rates of progress, will not attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

91. Children have little understanding of this area of learning. Their attainment is limited by linguistic skills significantly below average for their age, and by incomplete comprehension. For example, one child described a cave as a bed. Their curiosity is limited by difficulties in formulating and asking questions. In circle time, they learn about themselves and their places in their families. They know something of the birth process. They know they began life in their mothers' stomachs. All children contributed to a map of the area, showing where they live, and their routes to school. They cannot remember their

road names. They have learned about light and dark, but cannot explain the use of a torch. When given materials they attempt to collage house shapes onto paper, but these skills are not developed, and they cannot twist and fold paper for a variety of purposes. Their cutting skills are good. When sorting objects, some children can name a few primary colours. Children have very good access to information and communication technology in their classroom and in the school's computer suite.

92. Teaching is satisfactory in this area of learning, and is sometimes good. Where teaching is good, effective use is made of old and new resources, such as an oil lantern and a modern bicycle lamp. Children make satisfactory progress but, at current rates, will not attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

Creative development

93. Children have sound understanding of this area of learning. They express themselves through a variety of activities, including collage, printing and painting. However, their drawings are immature, and some, very immature. For example, their drawings of parents have arms extending from their heads. The children enjoy imaginative play, where they have very good opportunities to express themselves in the roles of train driver and refreshment steward. Although the children enjoy role-play, the variety of clothes and domestic articles in the home corner is related entirely to Western culture. A soft toy is used as a link between home and school. Each evening 'Moppy' goes home with a child. Subsequently, the child describes Moppy's adventures at home. The children enjoy musical activities. They are learning to make long and short sounds to accompany the teacher's story.

94. The quality of teaching in this area is often good. Staff make effective use of resources to encourage speech development, and they try hard to consolidate home-school links. At current rates of progress, some children will attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

Physical development

95. Children's attainment in physical development is satisfactory. They have some skill in the use of pencils and scissors but cannot control the finer movements needed for glue spreading and colouring in. During the inspection, no threading or sewing activities were observed to encourage development of these movements. Dance sessions in the hall are enjoyed by all children. They respond to commands to start, stop and change direction. They can hop on one foot, and skip and gallop. They have good awareness of space, and are confident of their physical movements. Children can work alone and can co-operate effectively with others. They share large apparatus with other classes in the school. They do not share the more suitable play equipment used by the on-site parent and toddler group. No small apparatus, such as beanbags and hoops, was observed in use during the inspection. The provision of outdoor activities is unsatisfactory. No separate play area is provided for children aged under five, and no large equipment, such as wheeled toys and a climbing frame, is available for them. During the inspection, children were observed to play with skipping ropes and balls at lunchtimes, and to enjoy running games in the large space available.

96. The quality of teaching in this area is satisfactory, but poor provision of resources constrains children's physical development. At current rates of progress, some children will attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

Personal and social development

97. The development of children's personal and social skills is good. Children are very happy to come to school. They settle quickly into the routines of the mixed age class, and are always willing to take turns, share with each other, and wait patiently in turn. They are confident in the classroom, and when demonstrating exercises to other children in the hall. They take good care of all equipment, and help enthusiastically to tidy up. They are very obedient, but show little initiative in the classroom and in their work. Behaviour is good, although many children have special educational needs, including behavioural difficulties. They have satisfactory attitudes when working and playing together, although they are unable to sustain concentration for more than a few minutes. They try hard to persevere until activities are completed. All relationships are very good. During the inspection, children were observed to be sharing, taking turns and collaboratively tidying up. They are valued individually as personalities, and their work is valued, although much of it is of modest quality. Children learn about the values and beliefs of others, but their understanding is generally very limited. Relationships are very good, and children with special educational needs are well supported.

98. The quality of teaching in this area is good. Staff constantly praise and encourage children, clarify school rules for them, and speak positively to them at all times. Children respond by quickly understanding the difference between right and wrong. At current rates of progress, some children will attain the standard expected nationally of Reception age children.

99. Classroom assistants are not always used efficiently, although they have the skills to provide good support for all children, including those with special educational needs.

100. The early years co-ordinator has extensive knowledge of the foundation curriculum but has inadequate opportunities to plan for it and teach it in a class with three distinct year groups. Staff have high expectations of behaviour but not always of attainment. They do not always question children effectively to stimulate their retention of learning. The curriculum for children under five is unsatisfactory. It is adapted from Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum and is not directly related to the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children aged under five. All children have equal access to the curriculum. Children who do experience difficulty with the routines of school life or with learning are quickly identified and are fully integrated in all activities. Staff make regular written assessments of the children's progress, and use the information to guide informal planning. Formal assessment is satisfactory and is developed as children pass through the three age ranges of the first class. Classroom assistants are asked to assess children each day, but are not given adequate guidance in assessment procedures to enable them to report to the teacher in sufficient detail.

101. Planning is satisfactory. Lesson plans have clear objectives for children of all abilities. Children are effectively grouped for most activities, including storytelling. Management of pupils is very effective: activities continue in unbroken sequence with minimal disruption. Routines consistently applied by all adults contribute to an orderly and very happy environment.

102. The early years co-ordinator provides good leadership and clear educational direction. However, she is not given sufficient independence to use her skills fully in her mixed age class. She shares her expertise but does not fully utilise the abilities of classroom assistants.

103. A wide range of learning resources is provided. Some good resources and permanent displays are made by members of staff. All resources are accessible, in good condition, and used effectively by staff to promote learning. Indoor accommodation is good, and is well used by staff. Outdoor accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although space is generous, no fixed equipment is provided and the area is barren and is not stimulating for the children.

ENGLISH

104. At the end of Key Stage 1, test results for 1999 show that the percentage of pupils achieving Level 2 was well below the national average in both reading and writing. The proportion reaching the higher level, Level 3, was also well below the national average. Although these results are low, they do indicate a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, inspection evidence suggests that in Year 2, pupils are on line to achieve standards which remain well below national averages this year. When compared to those of similar schools, standards in reading are broadly average while standards in writing are low.

105. The 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 2 show that the percentage of pupils achieving the national target of Level 4 was below average. The proportion achieving Level 5 was well below average. However, the results in the 1999 tests are the best that the school has achieved and indicate a very significant improvement since those reported at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 at the time of the last inspection was 40 per cent. In 1999, it was 64 per cent. Current inspection evidence, however, finds that the majority of pupils in Year 6 are on course to attain standards well below national averages. This apparent drop in standards is attributable to the fact that a higher proportion of pupils in the year group is on the register of special educational needs. Additionally, the Key Stage 1 test results for these same pupils confirm that their attainment then was very low. With a national average of close to 80 per cent, just 36 per cent of Year 6 pupils attained the expected level in reading when they were in Year 2, and 28 per cent attained the expected level in writing.

106. There is a difference in attainment between boys and girls, with the girls achieving significantly higher standards. However, two-thirds of the pupils in this school are on the register of special educational needs and the ratio of boys to girls on this register is 2:1.

107. Standards of speaking are poor overall. Pupils do not have a broad vocabulary and, in particular, they find the acquisition of the specific technical language (necessary for work in a range of subjects in school) particularly hard. Pupils are happy to give a 'yes, no' or one word answer to a question, and the opportunities for them to speak at length are currently too infrequent. Many are inquisitive and eager to ask questions, but the pace of the lesson that the teacher has planned and the extent of the work that is to be covered often militate against making time available for pupils to talk.

108. 'They listen but don't always hear' is very true of pupils in this school. They sit quietly and appear attentive. In the majority of lessons, a period of direct teaching is then followed by the pupils completing some written work independently. It is again the need to cover a certain content in a lesson that curtails the time which teachers feel they have available to check whether pupils have heard and understood what they have been taught. There are occasions when, although the explanation they are given is crystal clear, pupils are not able to explain it back to their teacher. This is a significant feature relating to teaching and learning in this school.

109. Standards in reading are very low. There are three features that are particularly significant. Firstly, a significant number of pupils are unable to use *a range* of strategies to help them with their reading. Some, for example, do not know letter sounds. Some cannot take longer, phonetically regular words, and break them down into smaller sections. Few think of 'reading on' if they come across a word they don't know, and few use either picture clues or their knowledge of the text so far to help them. Secondly, they find great difficulty in interpreting what they have read particularly if it contains technical language in order to use it to complete another task. This manifests itself in mathematics in particular, when pupils need to be able to read the words of a question, understand the mathematical language (*difference between* or *product*, for example) and then apply this understanding to the numbers involved to solve the problem. While there are clearly weaknesses in pupils' mental agility with numbers, the consistently very low standards in mathematics are more inextricably linked to the difficulties pupils have with understanding and using what they read. Finally, the older pupils in school have considerable difficulty in interpreting figurative language and in using the skills of inference and deduction.

110. Standards in writing are very low. Pupils' very limited skills mean that, in the time made available for them to write in literacy lessons, they are able to complete very little. The planned opportunities for them to write in other lessons, for example science, geography, history and religious education are insufficient. In Key Stage 1 in particular, there is little or no recorded work in history, geography or religious education. Pupils clearly find writing difficult and are therefore often reticent to embark on it, especially without the constant support of their teacher. While the school does face considerable problems with two-thirds of pupils on the register of special educational needs, it has not yet put in place all of the strategies and incentives it could to help make writing fun. For example, pupils do not always have easy access to the vocabulary they will need to use, there is no exciting writing

area in the reception and Year 1 class, too little use is made of the computer suite and, too frequently, writing has no audience other than the teacher who marks the work. The presentation of pupils' work is unacceptable right from the reception year. Standards of spelling are weak and in some classrooms pupils of a wide range of age and ability are given the same spellings to learn. However, the school is very aware of the need to do much more and must be judged on the substantial improvement it has secured over the last two years.

111. Two-thirds of the pupils in this school are on the register of special educational needs, with most at Stage 2 or above. Although standards in English are very low, pupils do make sound progress through both key stages. In one class in particular, the progress they make is good or very good. Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to establish, in classrooms, an environment where teaching and learning can take place effectively. This has led directly to the current sound progress. However, the existing features of teaching and learning are not sufficient if the pupils are to make better progress.

112. The quality of teaching is sound overall but with some excellent teaching to the oldest pupils in the school. The hallmarks of the very best teaching are an infectious enthusiasm for the subject and pupil management skills which deal '*en passant*' with any hint of pupil disruption without denting the flow of the lesson and without leaving the pupil sulking or unwilling to work. The pace of these lessons is very fast indeed: this keeps the pupils on their toes and also allows time for the teacher to question pupils and to confirm the extent of their understanding. The classroom support assistant is gainfully employed for the duration of the lesson. There was no unsatisfactory teaching in English, but two weaknesses in particular did feature in the lessons observed. The first concerns the deployment of the classroom assistants who, for the full duration of the lesson, are not engaged in a task that enables one or more pupils to make better progress than they otherwise would have done. The second feature is one common to some lessons in all subjects in this school and concerns the failure of the teachers to complete, through questioning, a thorough check of how much of the taught content of the lesson has been understood by the full range of pupils.

113. The literacy hour has been fully implemented in the school and is functioning satisfactorily. The co-ordination of the subject is sound although the fact that the co-ordinator teaches the very youngest pupils in school makes a thorough understanding of the achievements of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 problematic. There is a wealth of assessment data that is used well to highlight specific difficulties. These weak areas are then addressed through adjustments to planning and teaching. Sometimes, however, this scrutiny is too specific: the school does not always take a *broad* enough look at attainment and seek innovative ways to address the more global issues. For example: Could the classroom assistants be used more effectively? Can we realistically expect these pupils to become competent writers with the writing opportunities they currently have? Is there anything more that could be done to 'kick-start' reading? Why don't pupils understand when we explain clearly to them? There are sufficient resources in the subject and, usually, they are used effectively.

MATHEMATICS

114. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for Year 2 pupils, the proportion achieving the expected level, Level 2 was very low in comparison with the national average for all schools, and was well below the national average for similar schools. No pupil exceeded the expected level.

115. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils, the proportion achieving or exceeding the expected level, Level 4, was very low in comparison with the national average for all schools, and was well below the national average for similar schools. Although still very low, standards have improved steadily since the last inspection. The school is now carefully monitoring and evaluating its improvement to ensure that progress is sustained, year on year, but is realistic about the extent to which the very high proportion of pupils on the higher stages of the register of special educational needs makes this possible.

116. At the time of the last inspection, standards in National Curriculum tests were very low and well within the lowest 5 per cent nationally for pupils' aged seven and eleven. Both the results for 1999, and the evidence of this inspection, show a slight improvement at age seven and a significant improvement at age 11. However, the improvements are close to those made nationally, and are not yet sufficient to lift the school out of this very low bracket.

117. These still, very low standards and the fairly modest improvement in mathematics are largely the result of three factors. These are in addition to children's very low levels of attainment on entry to the school. Firstly, most pupils have weak reading skills; secondly, they have significant difficulties with retaining technical language and with attributing the correct definition to it; and finally, when they *can* access the task, they are often uncertain about the particular calculation(s) necessary.

118. The majority of pupils in Year 2 have difficulty using and applying mathematics in simple problem solving. A few higher attaining pupils calculate change from 10 pence. Most pupils have poor mathematical language and are often confused by simple words such as 'before' and 'after'. Frequently, their mathematical skills are impeded by their lack of language skills. They are developing confidence in calculating mentally during whole class sessions in the numeracy strategy. Using simple apparatus, they are able to count in units of five and add single units to arrive, for example, at a figure of 37. Without apparatus, their counting is less secure. Higher attaining pupils, writing numbers from 1 to 50, frequently write the figures in reverse. Pupils are beginning to understand place values in tens and units.

119. Pupils of average attainment understand the meaning of 'half' and 'quarter' but do not recognise the symbol $\frac{1}{2}$ when written. Few pupils understand the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. A few high attaining children know some of the properties of a square.

120. Most pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have serious difficulties in interpreting written and spoken questions. For example, during the inspection, they were unable to calculate a simple written problem of subtraction and addition around the sum of 50 pence. Many pupils do not understand the meaning of 'the sum of'. However, most have greater confidence with mental calculations. They quickly double numbers to reach 100, but their attainment overall is still very low. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were demonstrating on paper several methods of multiplying 128×4 . Average children were able to do this quickly. Higher

attaining pupils demonstrate rotational symmetry and understand the theory of negative numbers. They play games to reinforce their knowledge of co-ordinates. They measure acute and obtuse triangles using a protractor. Average pupils in Year 6 use a computer to manipulate simple data.

121. Pupils' progress in lessons and over time is satisfactory, although they have difficulty in recalling simple concepts. For example, many pupils in Years 3 and 4 cannot tell the time. In Year 1, when tidying after lessons, pupils make satisfactory progress in counting to ten by sorting and putting away various objects. Pupils in Year 2 make satisfactory progress in understanding numbers larger and smaller than 20. In Year 3, pupils total the squares in a complex pattern and then colour half of them, while Year 4 pupils name and draw simple three-dimensional shapes, such as a cone. A few higher attaining pupils are able to draw a triangular prism. In Year 5, most pupils can mentally add and subtract small amounts of money. In both key stages, most pupils make poor progress in acquiring mathematical language. Often, they remember new words only briefly. They have difficulty in remembering and explaining completed work in their books. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in and out of the classroom and make satisfactory progress.

122. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are satisfactory overall, although much better in classes where teaching is good or very good than in classes where teaching is satisfactory. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, attitudes are unsatisfactory. Pupils work well together, in pairs and in groups. Presentation of work is generally poor, except in Year 6 where the presentation of the work of a few pupils is satisfactory.

123. Overall, the quality of mathematics teaching is satisfactory but there is a significant range: of the five lessons observed the quality of teaching was good in two, very good in one, satisfactory in one and unsatisfactory in the remaining one. In lessons where it is good or better, teachers motivate the pupils with high expectations of behaviour and attainment. They deliver exciting lessons at a pace to hold pupils' interest for extended periods. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is because of the inability of the teacher to maintain a quality of behaviour in the classroom that allows pupils to learn effectively.

124. The mathematics policy and scheme of work are detailed and relevant. The school has responded very well to the requirements of the national strategy for numeracy. Teachers' weekly planning sheets are usually satisfactory, including brief but adequate detail of the content of the lesson for all ability groups. Where detail is inadequate, planning sheets are unsatisfactory. Throughout the school, few opportunities are provided for pupils to apply mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum. This is a notable weakness in informal mathematics, where the example of Year 1 pupils counting cups and biscuits at snack time is not developed in other years. For example, during the inspection, no pupils were observed to count the number in class for registration and subtract the number having school lunches. In Year 4 and 5 science lessons, pupils have used computers to produce bar charts when analysing animal habitats. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have used time lines to follow the royal succession from Henry VII to the Stuarts.

125. The school is rigorously attempting to raise standards in mathematics, particularly in National Curriculum tests at Year 2 and Year 6. The results for 1999 were carefully analysed to reveal strengths and weaknesses in individuals and year groups. All pupils are assessed by their teachers, and assessment information is used effectively to ensure that the work matches the pupil's needs. Classroom assistants are not trained in assessing the work of pupils with special educational needs, and their immediate reports are consequently of reduced value to teachers. In the current term, teachers have set targets for each pupil, and the targets are clearly highlighted in workbooks. Parents have been informed of the targets, enabling them to help their children at home, and targets will be reassessed by staff during subsequent terms. Year 6 pupils are to evaluate their own targets. Marking is generally poor throughout the school. Staff do not review past mistakes to ensure that corrections have been made and that ideas are understood.

126. The subject is very well led by a recently appointed co-ordinator. She has introduced numerous initiatives within the school, and has arranged for staff to receive additional training. Her own teaching is a major strength of the subject but she has not yet had opportunities to share good practice with all colleagues.

127. The range and quality of resources for mathematics is satisfactory. All resources are in good condition, and are accessible to staff and pupils.

SCIENCE

128. At the end of Key Stage 1, teacher assessment indicates that the proportions of pupils who reach the expected level, Level 2, and those who reach the higher level, Level 3, are both well below national expectations. Although very low, these do represent a significant improvement over the standards attained at the time of the last inspection. Test results at the end of Key Stage 2 also indicate that standards are well below national averages. However, these too, represent a significant improvement over the standards at the time of the school's previous inspection. For example, 33 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 in the 1996 national tests while that percentage had risen to 68 per cent by last year.

129. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils classify foods according to vegetable, fruit, cereal or protein. They predict what will happen when they exercise and then carry out the exercise in order to find out. They know the difference between fast and slow and identify times when they have moved in those ways. They know the meaning of words such as *rough*, *shiny*, *rigid*, *bendy* and *hard*. Some of the more able pupils in Year 2 know that *rigid* and *bendy* are opposites and that if an object is *bendy*, then it will not be *rigid*.

130. There is some evidence of practical work but very little evidence of recorded work. While this reflects the difficulties which pupils have with writing, it also underlines the fact that they are provided with too few opportunities to write: one problem feeds the other and the circle has not been broken.

131. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can draw a shadow of an object once they know where the light is coming from. They draw and label sources of light, list materials that reflect light well, and tell the difference between materials that are opaque and those that are transparent. Pupils know the names of the major body organs and some can describe the function of the heart. They know that the pulse rate increases with exercise and that it slows after a rest. They know that the state of some materials can be changed and that this change can be reversed: water, ice, water, for example. Pupils in Year 4 name the basic parts of a plant stem, leaf, flower and root and some can suggest what makes a fair test when trying to find out if a plant with many leaves will grow faster than one with just a few. Some work is underpinned by practical work: for example, the formation of shadows, the effect of exercise on the pulse rate and whether or not seeds need light in order for them to germinate. However, there is little evidence of pupils' own writing to systematically predict, describe what they did, record data, and draw some conclusion from their work. A significant number of pupils participate in the practical work in science because they enjoy it, but fail to understand what it is they have learned. Consequently, when asked to write, they have great difficulty.

132. Pupils with special educational needs account for two-thirds of the pupils in this school. These pupils make sound progress in their understanding of scientific concepts in relation to their capacity to do so. Pupils who are not on the school's special needs register also make satisfactory progress. In some classes, however, the work is not always adapted to challenge them fully. Neither group makes satisfactory progress in recording work in science. In Key Stage 1 the quantity of recorded work is too small, and in Key Stage 2, it is too reliant on worksheets and minimal pieces of writing, some of which are copied.

133. Pupils enjoy the practical element of science lessons. Most pupils behave well and share resources. When behaviour deteriorates it is because they are asked to write yet have failed to make the necessary 'link' between the activity itself and the scientific implication of it.

134. The quality of teaching in science is sound overall. In the five lessons observed, the teaching was satisfactory in four and excellent in one. The strong features, all of which were present in the one excellent lesson were an imaginative practical demonstration followed by the pupils' own practical work, both accompanied by skilfully graded questions which took pupils step by step from a basic understanding to a fuller one. Written work was differentiated so that it was a good match for all pupils, the pace of the lesson was breathtaking and the strategies used to motivate pupils were highly successful. There was one weak element evident in the lessons that were unsatisfactory. It manifested itself when pupils were asked to produce some written work in the second half of the lesson. They clearly found this very difficult. The teachers had failed to pre-empt this difficulty because they have not used probing questioning to establish the level of pupils' understanding following the first half of the lesson.

135. Management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge and inspirational teaching skills. Assessment in science is thorough and the school is aware of the pupils' strengths and weaknesses. However, having raised attainment in science thus far, the school is ready to address the elements of its current practise which constrain further progress.

ART

136. The standards which pupils attain throughout the school are substantially below those that would normally be associated with pupils of a comparable age. These standards are similar to those stated in the previous inspection report. However, pupils make sound progress overall, building on a low level of competence and skill when they enter Key Stage 1. There are two significant factors, however, which militate against more rapid progress. The first is the school's decision to teach art for only half of every term with the other half of the term is dedicated to music. Not only is the valuable interaction between these subjects lost as a result of this arrangement, but the time dedicated to teaching art is reduced. The second is that pupils do not have the opportunity – in sketchbooks, for example - to experiment and to practise and refine techniques using different media.

137. In Year 2, pupils look at the attempts of a number of artists at drawing a portrait. They produce a face shape and add features to it but draw the features because they know they are there rather than as the result of observation of their partner. Pupils in Year 1 produce a fabric collage linked to the 'Floppy' stories. There is little work on display and no evidence to show that pupils work with a full range of media.

138. The focus for the current work in Year 6 is water and reflection in painting by the French impressionists. Pupils show very limited skill in experimenting with the skills that famous artists have used. Their drawing, cutting and gluing skills are very basic. Pupils in Year 4, working on portraits, learn how to produce a face shape and where to position all features. They understand how artists such as Picasso and Klee have used segmented portraits to produce faces on which the features are differently placed.

139. The quality of all the teaching observed was sound. Lessons had a clear learning focus and teachers were attempting to improve pupils' skills. However, too frequently, the background chatter was such that it took away some necessary concentration and hence reduced the quality of the finished work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. The standards which pupils attain at the end of Key Stage 2 are below those expected of pupils aged eleven but all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress through the key stage. These are similar to the standards at the time of the last inspection. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the progress that pupils make through Key Stage 1.

141. Pupils in Year 6 work to the brief of 'Making Santa go up and down the chimney. There are good links to science in their work, e.g. friction slows down movement. Pupils develop a range of ideas which are shown through simple sketches. Their skills on show in the end products are unrefined but the range of novel ideas is within the range typical of Year 6 pupils. Through looking at and operating a simple structure, Year 4 pupils *see* how a cam mechanism works. As they copy a drawing of this mechanism, some begin to *understand* how it works. They have difficulty, however, in understanding how this mechanism could be used in a toy and are unable to make any realistic suggestions about toys for which it would be suitable. Pupils in Year 3 experiment with a plastic bottle and a balloon to help them

understand that air pressure can be used to produce and to control movement. They enjoy the practical work but have great difficulty in understanding the significance of it beyond the element of fun.

142. The quality of teaching observed was satisfactory in two lessons and very good in one. The strengths of the best quality teaching were the sheer excitement engendered the richness of the language that was used, the high quality of the questioning and the very good relationship that existed between the teacher and the children. Where teaching was satisfactory, there were several positive features, notably planning and pupil management. The one significant weakness was the failure to help all pupils to see the *technical* significance of what they were doing. Year 5 pupils, for example, operated a model to show how a cam operated, but couldn't suggest a toy in which it could be used.

143. Resources for design and technology are adequate but there has been no significant development in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

144. Geography was not taught in autumn term, and no volume of written work was available in the first week of spring term. One lesson was observed at the end of each key stage, and pupils in Key Stage 2 were interviewed. Based on this small amount of evidence, no overall judgement on attainment or progress is possible.

145. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils studying the environment as part of the geography syllabus are learning about the Global Eye project. They know the structure of the human eye, and can name some of the parts. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils in Years 5 and 6 can describe differing environments in countries of the world. They interpret the keys on atlases, and relate mountain heights to climate and rainfall.

146. Pupils in Key Stage 1 know that the world extends much further than the local area. In Key Stage 2, pupils in Years 3 and 4 know that the sun is not shining in all countries at the same time. They understand the meaning of 'drought' and 'hurricane'. Higher attaining pupils can locate some countries on a globe. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are learning about Africa. An African visitor stimulated music, drama and dance with African themes, and these are continuing. Pupils have re-written the story of the Pied Piper, set in an African village. Through the school, pupils are making good progress with environmental studies. Year 4 pupils know the value of planting trees for shade, and have planted oak trees in the playground. They understand how compost is made, but do not understand the word 'pollution'.

147. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to the subject. They are keen to speak about green issues within the school. In Years 5 and 6 pupils work very well together, and homework is used effectively. Behaviour is very good in Key Stage 2, and is satisfactory in Key Stage 1.

148. Teaching observed was satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. In the better lesson, pupils were carried along by the enthusiasm of the teacher, and the pace of her delivery. The learning objectives were clear and were met in full. In the weaker lesson, pupils were restless and the flow of the lesson was frequently interrupted. Leadership of the subject is sound and resources are adequate.

HISTORY

149. During the inspection, history was not timetabled. Insufficient evidence is available to support judgements in this subject.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

150. Overall, standards compared with national expectations are very low at the end of Key Stage 1 and low at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards have not improved in Key Stage 1 since the previous inspection, but have improved slightly in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1 pupils make satisfactory progress. In Key Stage 2, progress is uneven but is good at the end of the key stage.

151. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can word process and print simple stories. Evidence shows completed work in a single typeface and size, aligned left and centre. Punctuation is basic, and spelling is uncorrected. Mouse control is satisfactory but use of the keyboard is weak. Pupils' knowledge of computer language is very poor.

152. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are learning to handle data, and are aware of similarities and differences between a paper filing system and a computer. Higher attaining pupils know some computer terminology, including 'search' and 'field'. They open and close programs with confidence, and can change font type, size and colour. They do not easily interpret dialog boxes.

153. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Pupils develop their word processing skills from entering their name to entering simple sentences, and saving and printing their work. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Completed work shows use of a drawing program to illustrate food on a plate, with a caption describing a favourite meal. Some captions are printed in capital letters. Pupils in Year 5 can edit their work, but their efforts are very laborious and often they delete more work than intended. They can use the shift key but most use a single finger to strike keyboard letters. Average pupils can save their work unaided, and can exit the program. Pupils' knowledge of computer language is still very limited. For example, during the inspection, an average pupil in Year 4 wanting to delete text asked 'How do I rub this out?' In Year 5, pupils have measured their pulse rates, entered them into a program and summarised the results on bar charts. In Year 6, evidence from completed work shows information technology used within curriculum areas. In English, pupils have designed and printed firework warning leaflets, with illustrations of firework bursts and explosions. In mathematics they have listed numerous ways of totalling five, using addition, subtraction and brackets. In science, they have produced bar charts of pulse rates.

154. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have positive attitudes to their work. Although few pupils have computers at home, and those who have computers make little use of them, they are confident when working on screen and do not worry when things happen which they cannot fully understand. In all classes, pupils work well together, sharing expertise from the earliest years.

155. In the four lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good in two and sound in two. Where the teaching was sound, the weakness was teachers' limited skills. Additionally, this causes some staff to limit the use they make of the computer suite. Where teaching is good, learning objectives are clear, and teachers use good vocabulary and have the expertise to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

156. Teachers do not fully use the skills of the headteacher or develop those of classroom assistants in this subject. Schemes of work are in place, but work for all pupils is simplified by using programme of study units for the previous year group. Assessment is erratic but teachers are aware of the attainment of all pupils in their classes.

Resources are greatly improved since the previous inspection. A new computer suite has been installed, and one computer is linked to the internet. Software resources are limited in most curriculum areas. The computer suite is currently underused because some teachers do not have the skills or confidence to use to the full the new hardware and programs. The headteacher is the subject co-ordinator. He has satisfactory expertise, and is timetabled to teach groups of children in years 5 and 6. However, he does not work with younger pupils and does not use his skills fully to raise expertise amongst his staff.

MUSIC

157. During the inspection, music was not timetabled. Although pupils' attention is sometimes drawn to the music playing as they enter and leave assembly, music does not have a high profile role in the school. There are no regular, additional opportunities for pupils to take part in musical activities. Insufficient evidence is available to support further judgements in this subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

158. At the end of both key stages, attainment is satisfactory and the standards noted during the previous inspection have been maintained.

159. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils follow instructions from a recording and from their teacher. They dress imaginatively as magicians and fairies. They interpret movements for floating through the air and swooping low. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils choreograph dances and perform rhythmically in small groups. They can recall some steps from dance learned last term.

160. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 1 have good awareness of space and, when running, are able to change direction on the beat of a tambourine. Pupils

in Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. In Years 3 and 4 they throw and catch accurately and, in games, can defend their territory. In Year 5 they can perform sequences of jumps to move forwards or sideways. Swimming is a summer activity for pupils in Key Stage 2.

161. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to the subject. However, the attitudes of pupils not involved in lessons are less satisfactory. When inadequately occupied, they distract other pupils and cause disruption to the flow of lessons. They are rarely provided with tasks related to the lesson. Throughout the school, classes move in and out of the hall silently. Pupils work very well in groups, and the work of mixed gender groups is a feature of the subject.

162. Teaching is always satisfactory, and was excellent in one lesson observed. In this lesson the teacher's dynamic leadership and very good subject knowledge, and the joy of performing, produced high attainment for all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In the satisfactory lessons, some gossiping is allowed and pupils placing themselves furthest from the teacher are not fully involved. In all lessons observed, teachers demonstrated good awareness of health and safety issues. For example, all earrings were taped before pupils entered the hall.

163. The subject co-ordinator has very good knowledge of physical education, and has introduced an extra-curricular gymnastics club, open to all year groups. In a club session observed, pupils worked hard to achieve high standards of individual and group performance. Resources are satisfactory, although some items of small equipment are not available.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

164. At the end of both key stages, attainment is very low and has not improved since the previous inspection.

165. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils understand the rules of the school and understand that rules become laws in the wider world. They are able to relate their everyday behaviour to laws which affect adults as well as children. For example, they know that stealing is wrong, and that drinking and driving is wrong. Higher attaining pupils know that Jesus was born at Christmas. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils know the meaning of the symbols of Christianity. They are able to name other religions, such as Islam and Judaism.

166. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make satisfactory progress, although they are easily confused. They frequently visit a local church but have little understanding of the function of a church. Similarly, their understanding of artefacts is very limited. During the inspection, a group of pupils in Year 1 agreed among themselves that a bible is 'a great big tent'. Pupils in Year 2 know that Diwali is a festival celebrated by non-Christians.

167. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. In Year 4 they know that Jesus spoke about God in the story of the Sermon on the Mount, but they cannot remember any other Bible stories. Pupils in Year 5 understand the meaning of the Ten Commandments. In Year 6, pupils could name the books of the gospel. However, all pupils in the school are confused by the mass of information in the religious education syllabus. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were unsure if Jews are still alive. Pupils in Year 6 could not

decide if the Koran is an Islamic or Jewish bible. A Year 6 pupil describing the Jewish Passover said that Jews are only allowed to eat food without fat, 'like bread'.

168. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, have good attitudes to the subject. Throughout the school, retention of religious knowledge is very poor. Pupils cannot effectively recall the meaning of written work in their books. Behaviour is good in both key stages, and is particularly good in Key Stage 1 when lessons are developed during circle time.

169. Teaching is satisfactory. Although teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge, and use the locally agreed syllabus, too much detail is included in most lessons. Pupils are often unable to recall many facts, or are confused about them. In better parts of lessons, where good questioning makes children think about what they have learned, they do retain some knowledge accurately. Teachers do not always make time available for discussion of the subject.

170. The recently appointed co-ordinator has not yet had opportunities to evaluate work throughout the school. Assessment is currently minimal but the co-ordinator is aware of the need for improvement. Resources have improved since the previous inspection but are still unsatisfactory.