

INSPECTION REPORT

PARKLANDS JUNIOR SCHOOL

Romford

LEA area: London Borough of Havering

Unique reference number: 102299

Headteacher: Gina Gardiner

Reporting inspector: Paul Bamber
15064

Dates of inspection: 11 – 14 June 2001

Inspection number: 194021

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Parklands Junior School

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 7-11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Havering Road
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Essex

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Norma Sepple

Date of previous inspection: February 1997

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9075	Juliet Baxter	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23056	Teresa Manzi	Team inspector	Science	
			Music	
			Special educational needs	
8002	Lionel Farraway	Team inspector	English	
			Geography	
			History	
22180	Shree Lekha Mistry	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Design and technology	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
			Art and design	
			Religious education	
			English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Parklands Junior School is situated in the northern part of Romford. In the main, pupils live locally in a heavily urbanised area of mixed housing. There are 472 pupils on roll (20 more boys than girls) which is much larger than average. Around 11 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals (below average). Twenty-one per cent have special educational needs (about average) but a below average percentage (0.2) of pupils have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need (0.4 per cent) is below the national average.

The school attained Beacon Status in 1998, for excellence in its professional development programme for staff. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable turnover in the teaching staff. Pupils' attainment on entry has declined steadily over the last few years and is now below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school which offers excellent value for money. The pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. They have very positive attitudes and behave very well, because the school respects and values them all. The school's excellent leadership and management promote high standards of teaching and learning and seek constant improvement. The school has at least maintained, and in some respects improved upon, the very high standards reported at the time of the last inspection.

What the school does well

- By the time the pupils leave the school, they attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. They achieve well above average standards in information and communication technology.
- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Provision for the arts is a particular strength. As a result, pupils attain standards well above those expected for their age in art and design and music.
- The school offers pupils an enriching curriculum to which they respond enthusiastically.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work and behave very well because they are all valued and treated with respect.
- The quality of the school's management is excellent and the headteacher provides inspirational leadership.
- Because of the school's excellent provision for professional development, all members of the school's staff constantly seek to improve their practice.

The school has no significant areas for improvement. There are some minor issues referred to at the end of Part B of the main report to which governors should respond by including them in the school development plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection in February 1997. Standards in pupils' average performance in national tests have improved, there is more high quality teaching and the school has improved its accommodation and provision for information and communication technology. The quality of the school's leadership remains high as does its excellent provision for staff training. Governors have ensured that the issues identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The

deputy headteacher and key subject co-ordinators now have more time allocated to them in order to carry out their duties even more effectively.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In the 2000 National Curriculum tests in English, the percentage of pupils reaching the expected level or exceeding it was above the national average. In mathematics, an average percentage reached or exceeded expected levels and in science, an above average percentage reached the expected level and an average percentage attained higher levels. The relatively lower standard in mathematics, indicated by this data, reflects the much lower attainment in the subject with which pupils entered the school. The average standards attained by this group of pupils in 2000 means that they made at least good progress in the subject during their time in the school.

Results in the tests over the last three years show that, overall, standards have generally been above average, although there has been a relative decline in mathematics, linked to factors referred to in the previous paragraph. The school has set challenging targets in order to maintain or improve its above average standards in English. The very challenging targets for improvement in mathematics test results this year are likely to be achieved, if not exceeded. The school has worked diligently and successfully to address weaknesses in pupils' mathematical attainment and to increase the proportion of pupils attaining standards above the national expectation. Boys and girls perform much better in English, especially in writing, than their peers nationally.

Overall, attainment in the school is above average. There is a difference in average attainment between Years 5 and 6 and Years 3 and 4, which reflects pupils' attainment on entry. Older pupils' average attainment is higher, but all pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Present attainment in English and science mirrors test results, but in mathematics 11-year-olds' standards are much higher than last year's test results indicate. Very good quality teaching and provision result in the oldest pupils attaining well above nationally expected standards in art and design, information and communication technology and music. Year 6 pupils also attain standards above the national expectation for age in design and technology, history and religious education. Standards are at the level of that expected for age in geography and physical education (although standards in swimming are above average). The school promotes literacy and numeracy well across the curriculum. This results in pupils attaining above average standards in these basic skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils greatly enjoy school and have very positive attitudes. Their enthusiasm and interest in their work contribute significantly to their very good achievements and the progress they make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave maturely and sensibly in lessons and around the school or when at play.
Personal development and relationships	A major strength. The respect which pupils and adults have for each other and the esteem in which each individual is held play a crucial part in the school's extremely positive ethos and in the desire pupils have to succeed.
Attendance	Attendance rates are in line with the national average for schools of this type. Unauthorised absence is less than that found nationally.

Pupils benefit greatly from the extremely positive relationships in the school. They feel valued and secure, and are thus encouraged to persevere when faced with difficulties. Because individuals are valued so well, less confident or lower attaining pupils blossom and take a full part in many of the wide range of activities the school offers. Teachers provide a very good role model. They promote high standards of behaviour, encourage pupils to take responsibility and expect pupils to relate well to each other. No instances of oppressive behaviour were noted during the inspection and no pupils have been excluded.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Of the 79 lessons observed, 39 per cent were very good or better, 43 per cent good and 18 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in English, mathematics, science, history, information and communication technology, art and design and music. It is good in design and technology and religious education. In geography and physical education, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Where teaching and learning are at their best, the major strengths are in teachers' very good subject knowledge, excellent organisational skills and very high expectations. The warmth of relationships between teachers and pupils, together with the careful planning and effective behaviour management, are other features of good teaching throughout the school. Because pupils are secure, valued and trusted, they are motivated to learn, confident in using their creativity and imagination and in voicing their opinions, and eager to settle to their work and do well.

Any relative weaknesses in the quality of teaching are linked to a lack of secure knowledge in some subjects, such as physical education and geography, or to setting work which is insufficiently matched to the needs of pupils.

The quality of pupils' learning is very good. A major reason why pupils' attainment is above average in so many subjects is because of their ability to write succinctly and imaginatively, measure accurately and organise data logically. The teaching of pupils with special

educational needs, including those with statements of special educational need, is very good and the quality of their learning and their achievements reflect this. Pupils with English as an additional language also receive very good quality teaching, which enables them to match the achievement of other pupils in the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers pupils an enriching curriculum which is broad and balanced. There is a very wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Each year group has a dedicated special educational needs co-ordinator who works very closely with class teachers, support staff and pupils to ensure that they receive well targeted support both in lessons and when withdrawn individually or in small groups.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils are very well provided for and make very good progress in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development, and their moral, social and cultural development are very good. Although satisfactory, pupils' spiritual development is less well provided for.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils are very well cared for and there are secure arrangements for treating minor injuries. Overall, procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' personal development and their attainment and progress are very good.

The parents think highly of the school because it works closely in partnership with them. They receive high quality information about how their child is getting on, the curriculum their child will follow in the future and the events to be held in the school in which their child will be involved.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher very successfully inspires staff and pupils to give of their best. The deputy headteacher makes a significant contribution to the very good quality of literacy teaching and key subject co-ordinators promote high standards in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their duties well. They are aware of the strengths of the school and its priorities for development, and have a strong role in promoting high standards.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school rigorously analyses its own test results and performance and uses the information to focus on how to improve standards. The school's arrangements for the professional development of staff and governors is exemplary and has rightly been nationally recognised.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes excellent use of its resources to support teaching and learning. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality and the school makes very good use of teachers' specialist knowledge.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching is very good. • The school is very well managed and led. • Pupils behave very well. • Pupils are encouraged to become mature and responsible. • There are very high expectations. • The school works closely with them and they feel comfortable approaching the school with their questions or problems. • They are well informed about their child's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework given to their child. • The range of activities outside lessons.

The inspectors concur very strongly with the positive views of the parents. The percentage of parents who had negative views of the school was much smaller than is the norm. Homework is set according to the school's policy, but the quality of the tasks set varies. Inspectors found the range of after school activities to be wide, inclusive of all pupils of all ages and gender and very well attended by pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds, pupils' standards were above average compared with all schools and similar schools, in English and science. The standards pupils achieved in mathematics were at the average for all schools and schools of a similar type. Evidence indicates that the group of pupils who took these tests entered the school with much lower average attainment in mathematics than in reading and writing. The percentage of pupils attaining higher than expected levels in English was well above the national average.
2. Analysis of the school's results over time shows standards to have been predominantly above average in English, mathematics and science, but with a gradual decline in relative standards in mathematics. The school has acknowledged this. As a result of rigorous analysis of pupils' work and evaluation of mathematics teaching, strategies have been implemented to arrest this decline. Inspection evidence indicates that these strategies have been very successful, especially in increasing the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining higher levels than those expected nationally.
3. In English, mathematics and science, girls outperform their peers nationally. During the period 1998 to 2000 the average standards both boys and girls have achieved in the national English tests, have been considerably higher than other boys and girls around the country. Much emphasis has been placed upon the teaching of English, especially upon improving boys' writing, and this has made a significant contribution to the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in the subject.
4. The findings of the inspection are that in the present Year 6, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. In mathematics, this represents a good improvement upon the standards indicated by last year's national test results. In English and science, above average standards have been maintained.
5. By the time they leave the school, 11-year-olds attain well above average standards in art and design, information and communication technology and music. This is because teaching and the school's provision for these subjects are of high quality. In Year 6, the pupils attain above average standards for age in design and technology, history and religious education. They attain satisfactory standards in geography and physical education. The comparatively lower standards in the latter two subjects result from relative weaknesses in some teachers' subject knowledge and expertise and in some work set for pupils that does not sufficiently match their needs.
6. Overall, pupils enter the school with below average standards. As a result of very good teaching and excellent leadership, both of which promote high standards, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in most areas of their learning.
7. By the age of 11, pupils attain above average standards in their speaking and listening skills. They listen attentively in lessons and are articulate in their responses to questions and in voicing their ideas and opinions. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given extensive opportunities for discussion, which promote these good standards.

However, in Years 3 and 4 such opportunities are less frequent and, as a result, relative standards, in this aspect, are lower.

8. Overall, 11-year-olds read at a standard above the national expectation for their age. They are fluent and read with good expression. Pupils talk confidently about the books they read, discussing character and plot with good understanding of style and technique. In some cases a lack of guidance, from teachers to pupils, about the level of difficulty of the books they should read, limits pupils attaining even higher standards.
9. By the time they leave the school, pupils attain high standards in writing as a result of the very good quality of teaching of grammar, spelling and handwriting. Pupils use a range of styles to write interesting stories, to report fact, accurately and succinctly, and to persuade the reader to their own point of view. Most pupils take a pride in their handwriting and in the presentation of their work. Boys' attainment in writing has steadily improved over time because the school takes care to provide them with relevant and interesting writing tasks.
10. Eleven-year-old pupils attain average standards in mathematics, with a greatly increased proportion attaining the higher Level 5 than was the case in last year's national tests. Improvements in pupils' ability to solve problems and organise data more coherently have resulted from the school's recognition of these areas of weakness and its successful strategy to rectify them. Pupils accurately calculate in their heads, with good speed. They have a very secure knowledge of the four rules and of number patterns. They apply this knowledge well to solve problems and to predict mathematical sequences. Pupils use mathematical vocabulary precisely and this helps them to select the correct operation to solve more complex problems.
11. In science, pupils, aged 11, attain above average standards. Because teachers alert them to the links between science and other subjects, pupils use their scientific knowledge well in design and technology, geography, history and mathematics to enhance their progress in these subjects. A particular strength is their good ability to design and carry out fair tests in order to question their theories. They use a wide range of scientific vocabulary in context, for instance to describe properties of liquids, solids and gases.
12. A significant strength in pupils' attainment is in the well above average standards for age they achieve in art and design, information and communication technology and music. The school's provision is extremely good for these subjects and the quality of teaching consistently high. As a result, in art and design, pupils aged 11 paint and use other media very effectively to produce colourful and sensitive results. Their breadth of work is extensive. They use the stimulus provided by work in other subjects imaginatively, for example to create their own painted miniatures and sculpted 'busts' of historical characters.
13. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are well above those expected for 11-year-olds. This is particularly true in the way in which they combine text and graphics programs to support their work in a range of subjects. They use control programs in science and data-handling skills in mathematics. Pupils confidently use e-mail to communicate with pupils in other schools, CD-ROMs to gather information to use in projects they undertake, and other electronic equipment, such as overhead projectors, sound systems and video recorders, to support their learning.

14. In music, pupils attain high standards in all aspects of the subject. They sing tunefully in two and three parts with a very good sense of rhythm. They create their own compositions using a range of instruments and appreciate the different rhythms and cadences characteristic of the musical traditions of African and Asian cultures. Many pupils take instrumental tuition and participate in school choirs and productions, which contribute significantly to the very good progress they make in the subject.
15. In Year 6, pupils' strengths in design and technology are the way they carefully match the purpose to which their products will be put to the materials they use to construct them, and the skill with which they use tools for construction. As a result, they attain standards above those expected for their age.
16. In attaining above expected standards for their age in history, pupils in Year 6 use historical evidence discerningly, aware of the influences which might affect its reliability. They have a good knowledge of chronology. In religious education, pupils exceed the expectations for their age of the locally agreed syllabus by the time they leave the school. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the tenets of Christianity, Judaism and Sikhism are good, and they have a good recall of the specific rites and ceremonies of these faiths. Regular visits from representatives of various faiths enhance pupils' attainment and progress in the subject.
17. Pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding and skills are in line with those expected for their age by the time they leave the school. They competently compare differences in land use and know that there are no simple solutions to the successful preservation of the environment.
18. In physical education, pupils attain standards above those expected for their age in swimming. This is because they are always very well taught by specialist instructors. Their standards in gymnastics and in games activities are in line with those expected for their age. A strength in their attainment in games is their sense of fair play and a respect for rules when playing competitively.
19. Because the school has high expectations and places great emphasis upon personal achievement, pupils respond very positively and achieve very well. Over time, the average attainment of pupils entering the school has declined to the extent that the present Year 3 pupils entered the school with standards below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence shows that the school has consistently enabled pupils to make at least good and often very good progress by the time they leave the school. The way in which the school values and respects all its pupils and constantly challenges them to improve, makes a very significant contribution to their very good achievements.
20. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve very well and make very good progress. They attain standards at least in line with their prior attainment and, as a result of very good provision, often attain standards in line with those expected for their age. They are set challenging targets in their Individual Education Plans which they consistently achieve. Particularly good practice, which promotes their very good progress, is in the provision of specialist equipment, which helps those pupils with physical impairment to participate fully and gain success in physical education lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Talking to the pupils at Parklands Junior School is an enjoyable experience for any visitor. They love coming to school and are positive about all aspects of their lessons, extra-curricular activities and play. They are very welcoming and love to share their enthusiasm with visitors. The school's inclusive philosophy ensures that pupils are used to meeting many people outside its immediate environment. They show trust and respect because the school promotes these values strongly. They are courteous, open and friendly. They want to do well and are very keen to extend their learning. They tackle tasks in lessons with enthusiasm and most of them concentrate well during lessons, even when they are faced with difficulties. They respond well to challenge as, for example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, when they got to grips with finding points on the compass and plotting complicated journeys on a grid. They were highly motivated, purposeful and possessed a strong will to succeed. On many occasions during the inspection, pupils responded very positively when challenged. Pupils' enthusiasm and interest in their work contribute substantially to their achievement and progress.
22. Behaviour throughout the school, in classrooms and the playground, is very good. A high standard of behaviour has been strongly maintained since the previous inspection. In assemblies, all pupils behave very well and are aware of the importance of those occasions when the school comes together as a whole for prayer, reflection and celebration. Older pupils prepare the hall for assemblies and take responsibility for awarding points to pupils for their good demeanour and behaviour. At break times, pupils get on very well together and no bullying was observed during the inspection. Pupils play happily in groups of all ages, and the whole school community is harmonious and prepares pupils very well for future citizenship. There have been no exclusions in the school's history.
23. The quality of relationships continues to be an outstanding strength of the school. Pupils trust their teachers and all adults in the school and are warm and friendly with each other. The way in which all staff value the pupils as unique individuals and ensure that they are included in all its work is particularly noticeable. Pupils and staff genuinely care for each other. There is always genuine pleasure when pupils do well, for instance in 'special awards' assemblies. The school is particularly skilled at consulting pupils and listening to what they say, resulting in trusting relationships. One illustration of this is the change in some of the school's procedures to ones that are perceived by pupils as being more fair, for example entry in the 'Best Book'.
24. The way in which pupils develop personally is also outstanding. They take on a variety of helpful tasks around the school and work co-operatively in groups in lessons. They are mature and sensible when sharing resources. Attending a meeting of the school council is an invigorating experience and it is reassuring to witness that so many children fully understand their roles on the way to junior, and then adult, citizenship. Taking part in many festivals and activities in the local and wider community is another way in which pupils' personal development is enriched. Some Year 5 pupils are shortly to commence mediation training. The result of this will be that a number of pupils will mediate in any minor squabbles and disagreements between pupils during the school day. With the excellent relationships that exist in addition to the very high standards of behaviour, the observer could be forgiven for wondering exactly how taxing they will find their new responsibilities.

25. The rate of attendance shows very little change or improvement since the last inspection and remains in line with the national average. The attendance rate would be higher if fewer pupils took holidays during the school terms. The rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average for primary schools. Punctuality is not a problem in the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

26. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. This makes a significant contribution to the above average standards pupils attain and their very good achievements. Of the 79 lessons observed, 39 per cent were very good or better, 43 per cent good and 18 per cent satisfactory. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection because there is now a higher percentage of good and very good teaching and no unsatisfactory teaching.
27. The quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics (including literacy and numeracy), science, information and communication technology, art and design, history and music is very good. It is good in design and technology and religious education. In geography and physical education, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.
28. In the very best lessons, teachers' deep subject knowledge and expertise, their very efficient use of time, excellent organisational skills and very high expectations promote high quality learning. All of these strengths were demonstrated in a Year 6 music lesson. Because the teacher had very strong subject knowledge, the pupils came to understand the terms 'discordant' and 'concordant' and the pentatonic scale. Pupils had access to a range of well-prepared, good quality resources, which helped them to perform well. They all enjoyed the lesson immensely because they were encouraged by the teacher to experiment and were praised for their success.
29. In the good lessons observed, teachers' careful planning, very effective behaviour management and challenging questioning ensured that pupils were busy, very well behaved and met the high expectations set for them. The warmth of the relationships between teachers and pupils is a feature of the school. This results in trust being established and encourages pupils to try their hardest and to be confident in their learning. In a very good religious education lesson, in Year 6, pupils talked sensitively about initiation ceremonies and acted out a baptism without embarrassment.
30. Teachers encourage pupils to use their initiative and creativity. Many instances of pupils independently taking responsibilities for routine tasks were noted during the inspection. Teachers plan lessons which help pupils apply knowledge and skills acquired in other areas of the curriculum. For instance, in Year 3 and Year 6 gymnastics lessons, pupils applied their knowledge of symmetry and asymmetry when working in pairs on apparatus.
31. Where teaching is satisfactory, the level of teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is not always secure enough to promote good quality learning. This was noted in some physical education lessons. Whilst teachers' use of demonstration initially helped pupils understand techniques for throwing and fielding, teachers failed to reinforce them sufficiently with individual pupils who experienced difficulties.

32. As a result of the overall very good quality of teaching, pupils learn very well. In most lessons, pupils work enthusiastically at a brisk pace because they are motivated and challenged. They concentrate very well, even when not directly supervised. Overall, their knowledge of how well they are attaining and what they need to do next in order to progress is very good. This is because, in most cases, teachers ensure that they receive informative feedback on the quality of their work, both orally and through consistent and thorough marking of written work.
33. Teachers set homework in line with the school's policy. However, the quality of the tasks set varies from class to class. In a minority of classes, pupils of all abilities receive the same tasks. This means that lower-attainers struggle and higher-attainers find the work too easy. In the best examples, all pupils are set work which challenges and interests them at their own level.
34. Teachers promote the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology very well across the curriculum. In many subjects, teachers require pupils to write in many different styles and to extend their reading skills. In literacy lessons, teachers use texts from different subjects to help pupils realise that learning is inter-related. Pupils are required to use measuring skills and to record data in design and technology, science, history, geography and physical education. This reinforces their numeracy skills well. Teachers use information and communication technology widely and effectively to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Good examples of this were observed in English, mathematics and history lessons as well as those specifically devoted to information and communication technology. A minor weakness in the teaching of literacy is that some teachers provide insufficient guidance to pupils about the level of difficulty of the books they read. In a few cases this means that pupils read books which are too difficult for them.
35. In the vast majority of lessons, a feature of teaching is the degree to which pupils of all abilities are set work to help them improve. In lessons in which there are setting arrangements, the highest-attaining pupils are very well challenged. Because teachers generally make good use of assessment information, they are able to target specific weaknesses in pupils' attainment and ensure that their lessons address them. As a result, some weaknesses in pupils' mathematical attainment have been rectified.
36. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Whether supported in lessons or withdrawn for individual or small group teaching, these pupils benefit from well-planned and skilful teaching. The targets set for pupils in their Individual Education Plans are clear, challenging and achievable. Teachers, year-group special educational needs co-ordinators and support teachers all ensure that where necessary they provide resources designed to help pupils overcome their specific difficulties. This was especially evident in a physical education lesson in which pupils, who had more difficulties than most with co-ordination, were provided with equipment which made it easier for them to be included in activities with the rest of the class.

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

37. All pupils have full access to a broad and balanced curriculum which fulfils the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Sex education is taught appropriately and effectively. There is

an appropriate drugs awareness programme. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good, and the planned programme is implemented very well throughout the curriculum. It is very well supported by the positive ethos which permeates the whole school.

38. The National Numeracy Strategy is implemented successfully and the school's dis-application from the National Literacy Strategy has no adverse effect on the English curriculum or on the standards attained by the pupils. The school has taken positive steps to link work in many subjects to literacy and numeracy work, in order to reinforce pupils' basic skills. This has resulted in very good teaching and learning where numeracy and literacy skills are reinforced through other areas of the curriculum, for example in history, art and design, and design and technology.
39. Effective long-term plans are produced, through discussion between teachers in each year group, in accordance with agreed subject policies. Medium and short-term plans are then produced from the schemes of work. Teachers' day-to-day lesson plans are clear and well thought out and include appropriate learning objectives for each lesson. All pupils have equal access to all subjects of the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities and they enjoy equal opportunities in their learning.
40. Curricular provision for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good and statutory requirements are met. The curriculum takes account of pupils with special education needs and teachers help them to catch up on what they have missed when they are withdrawn from lessons. Planning and assessment for pupils with special educational needs are good. Detailed Individual Education Plans are in place and are reviewed and updated regularly. Setting by prior attainment in English and numeracy ensures that all pupils work at appropriate levels. Pupils' work and their progress are assessed, and future work is modified to their individual requirements.
41. Provision of extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning is very good. This contributes significantly to their personal, social and intellectual development. The school provides a wide range of after-school clubs including netball, football, cricket, rounders, athletics, art, drama, French and Latin. Pupils enjoy the opportunities offered by these clubs and attend them in large numbers. Visits from a wide range of people such as church members and a youth theatre complement the formal curriculum well. A talk to Year 5 pupils by a member of the local police force, about criminal responsibility, helped pupils' understanding of right and wrong and gave an opportunity for them to consider other moral issues. Visits to local places of geographical or historical interest are organised, for example to Flatford Mill. Visits and visitors provide added enrichment to the school's curriculum.
42. Links with the community and other local schools are very good. This is a result of the hard work and commitment of all staff involved. Close links exist with the infants' school, whose pupils move on to Parklands, and with the secondary school attended by most pupils when they leave. The pupils raise money for charity and entertain local pensioners at Harvest and Christmas. Most of these activities are initiated and run by pupils with some support from teachers. The combination of extensive extra-curricular activities, visits, visitors and community links has a very positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and social development.

43. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is part of the positive ethos of the school, and is of good quality. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, for their moral, social and cultural development, it is very good. At present, the school does not fully explore the opportunities for spiritual development. There is insufficient planned provision for highlighting aspects of spirituality either in subjects or in assemblies.
44. A sense of strong moral values pervades the school. Teachers offer positive role models, which reinforce pupils' moral development. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong and use this understanding to develop school rules for behaviour, which are displayed throughout the school and adhered to by all. This contributes to the very good behaviour of pupils throughout the school. Issues such as sex and drug education are handled with sensitivity. They are set in a moral framework of self-respect, responsibility to oneself and others, and in the development of stable relationships. Pupils are encouraged to behave, be responsible and work hard by the system of team points, 'super stickers' and the 'Best Book'. In physical education, they learn respect for rules and the notion of fair play.
45. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school creates a very good social atmosphere. Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful and conform well to their own code of conduct. Their social skills are developed in lessons by the many opportunities to work in pairs and groups, and by taking part in extra-curricular activities. They take pride in a range of responsibilities, such as helping around school as prefects, librarians and register monitors. The school council meets regularly and discusses matters of importance to pupils.
46. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. They develop a very good understanding of their own and other cultures through lessons in English, history, art and music. Visits to places of cultural interest are arranged to support learning. There are also many opportunities for pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures. Their knowledge and understanding of cultures of other lands and races are developed well in religious education, through studies of Sikhism, and in geography, through their study of St Lucia. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well. They take part in a range of activities, such as 'history days' on Greek, Egyptian, Tudor and Victorian themes and on World War Two evacuees and in drama productions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. Very good standards of pastoral care are provided for all pupils. High standards of personal and educational support and guidance have been rigorously maintained since the last inspection and make a significant contribution to the very good quality of the pupils' education.
48. Appropriate procedures for child protection are in place. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are the designated officers for child protection and in the unusual event of them being absent from the school at the same time a senior member of staff is designated to take over the role. All staff are fully aware of the school's practices and procedures in regard to child protection and know exactly what to do in the event of serious concerns.

49. Three members of staff have up-to-date training in first aid. Fire drills take place regularly. Support staff deal with minor injuries and ailments and there are very good procedures in place to ensure that parents are immediately informed if their child sustains a potentially serious injury. There are satisfactory arrangements and accommodation for treating minor ailments.
50. Governors are vigilant with regard to health and safety when they carry out their thorough risk assessment. Any serious concerns are reported to the full governing body. The site manager and his assistant oversee health and safety matters on a daily basis and deal with any issues immediately.
51. Pupils are well known to all staff and this ensures high standards of personal support. Evaluations of pupils' behaviour and personal development are recorded on their personal profiles. Awards at special assemblies give a clear indication of how pupils are progressing in this aspect of their development. Implementation of the behaviour policy by staff is absolutely consistent across the school and this is one of the reasons why behaviour is very good in the school.
52. Every week, administrative staff monitor attendance rigorously. Registers are completed correctly by all class teachers and meet requirements. Reasons for absence are the usual childhood illnesses and a quite considerable amount of absence due to holidays taken during school time. The school requests parents to limit the amount of time they take pupils out of school for family holidays but efforts to reduce the incidence of these occurrences have not been wholly successful.
53. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils who use English as an additional language, and teachers develop very good relationships with such pupils. Those with special educational needs have Individual Education Plans, which contain targets relating to academic, social and behavioural aims. Various specialists, such as the educational psychologist and speech therapist, give teachers good suggestions as to ways to meet these pupils' needs. Targets are reviewed regularly and parents are invited to contribute. Teachers know their pupils well and take very good care of them. Behaviour management in most classes is very good. Teachers encourage the more able pupils to support those with difficulties. This is very successful, as the 'pupil helper' is very sensitive to the needs of their friend. This was particularly noticeable in music and science where pupils helped their friends sensitively and naturally.
54. The school has very effective procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science. A comprehensive database of regularly up-dated test results is the basis of the extensive assessment and recording system. Assessment information is used effectively to monitor the progress of year groups, class groups, gender groups and individual pupils. The information is used to organise pupils into ability groups for some of the English and mathematics teaching and to identify where teaching may be improved. For example, in science, the school identified and rectified a weakness in the teaching of the use of graphs.
55. The school makes very good use of assessment information to provide guidance and support to individual class teachers and to provide appropriate whole school, teacher and pupil targets. Class teachers keep accurate and comprehensive records of pupils' attainment and progress in most subjects. They are aware of the needs of individuals and take account of them in their lesson planning. Whole-school

monitoring procedures for geography and physical education have not been fully implemented this year because of other more pressing priorities for school development. Teachers have yet to develop formal procedures for monitoring and recording progress in some subjects, apart from annual reports to parents. The lack of secure systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress is linked to pupils attaining lower standards in physical education and geography than in other subjects.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents value the school highly as was reported at the time of the last inspection. A secure partnership between parents and the school has been established over a considerable number of years, resulting in a strong contribution to the standards achieved by pupils and the very good progress they make. Responses to the parents' questionnaires contained virtually no criticisms or concerns about the school, and comments from parents at the pre-inspection meeting were very positive. The school's inclusive philosophy ensures that parents are genuinely valued for what they have to offer in support of their children's education.
57. If the school decides, as it has done often in the past, that it needs to raise money for a project, then parents will willingly help and provide overwhelming support. Parents are also vigorously involved in encouraging their children's learning at home. Reading records show that they nearly all hear their children read most evenings and that they are active in supporting their children's homework projects. This support provides an effective means of communication between parents and the school.
58. The quality of information provided by the school for parents is very good. The school's prospectus is clear and helpful to new parents, and newsletters are sent home regularly. At the end of each summer term, parents receive information about the topics their children will study in the forthcoming academic year. Formal open evenings for parents are held in October and February and parents can choose to discuss their children's annual reports at the end of the summer term. Annual reports are of good quality and inform parents clearly about what their children know, understand and can do. Parents receive regular information on pupils' progress and their targets throughout the year. Useful information sessions have been held on a number of issues including the raising of standards, support for parents of children with special education needs, mathematics, English, information and communication technology, drugs education and parenting skills. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in annual reviews of progress and they comment upon the progress made.
59. Parents and the local residents regard the school very highly and it is a community school in the widest sense. It is a very popular choice with parents not only because of the high standards it achieves but also for its warm welcome to visitors and its commitment to inclusion and involvement. The strong and genuine partnership between parents and the school reported at the last inspection is as effective and mutually supportive now as it was then.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. Overall, the quality of the leadership and management of the school is excellent. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. As a result, the school has a most positive ethos and all who work and learn in it seek successfully to achieve high standards. A particular strength of the leadership of the school is the headteacher's determination to constantly improve the school's provision. Despite having achieved Beacon School status and a glowing inspection report in 1997, there is no sense of complacency and standards have continued to rise. This has been achieved despite evidence that there has been a steady decline in the average attainment of pupils entering the school at the age of seven.
61. The headteacher is ably supported in her promotion of high standards by her deputy headteacher and other senior staff. One of the strengths of the school is that all staff are encouraged to take responsibility. Even the most inexperienced teachers shadow more senior members of staff in order to gain knowledge and understanding of management roles and responsibilities. The deputy headteacher is a key player in promoting the development of writing throughout the school, and has been particularly successful in helping the teachers to improve boys' writing. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators have extensively evaluated the quality of teaching and learning through systematic and rigorous lesson observations and by analysing pupils' work. As a result, teachers have improved their practice and weaknesses in pupils' work, for instance in mathematics, have been addressed.
62. Governors make a good contribution to the leadership and management of the school and fulfil their statutory duties well. The Chair of Governors is deeply involved in the school's work. She visits the school frequently, works with pupils to support their learning, and is influential in the school's promotion of high standards. The governing body has efficient systems for training newly appointed governors and for up-dating longer serving members. Governors monitor standards rigorously and compare the school's results with schools nationally, locally and of similar type to ensure that standards are maintained. They are involved in setting priorities in the school development plan and have set challenging performance targets for the headteacher.
63. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance are excellent. In addition to those systems referred to previously, the school makes very good use of new technology to analyse its test results. In mathematics, for instance, the school has identified reasons why its mathematics results had relatively declined compared with other schools and has successfully raised attainment in the subject this year. Testimony to the school's determination to monitor its own performance is its openness in subjecting itself to external scrutiny and evaluation. It has attained Investors In People and Beacon School Status, and a Basic Skills Award and is currently seeking an Arts Mark Award.
64. The school's arrangements for professional development are excellent and have been held up as a model for other schools. As well as very effective strategies for inducting newly qualified teachers and for helping to train student teachers, the school recognises and caters for the need to continually develop teachers' skills. Much of the training provided is delivered 'in house' and is of high quality. As a result, teachers are trained to monitor standards, help pupils learn more effectively and to work successfully within a team. Teachers receive comprehensive feedback when

their lessons are observed, have targets for development and opportunities to discuss their professional ambitions and development needs. As part of the performance management of the school, all teachers and support staff are jointly targeting successful completion of nationally funded training to improve further their already very good teaching of information and communication technology. This is resulting in pupils experiencing an increasingly broad curriculum in the subject and achieving high standards. Such high quality provision ensures that there is a genuine commitment, throughout the school, to a continual improvement in the quality of education pupils receive and the standards they achieve.

65. The school's use of its resources and its systems for ensuring secure financial control, are very good. Funds allocated to support pupils with special educational needs are used very effectively to ensure that these pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. Special educational needs provision is enhanced as a result of the appointment of four special educational needs co-ordinators, one dedicated to each year group. Governors monitor the budget regularly and rigorously to ensure that spending is in line with forecasts. Financial planning is linked closely to the priorities in the school development plan, which reflects the aims of the school and always puts pupils' achievements first. The school's administrative staff work in close harmony with the teaching staff and governors to ensure that the main work of the school proceeds smoothly and very efficiently. The school makes excellent use of new technology to aid its evaluation of its own performance, to communicate with partner institutions and to promote learning.
66. In its efforts to attain best value in the standards it achieves, the school is part of a nationally funded local consortium of schools which seeks ways to secure value for money services and to maximise specialist support and expertise. The school consults with its pupils through the school council and with parents through the parents' steering group, which advises on ways in which the information provided for them can be made more 'user friendly'. The latter has resulted in more specific information about the pupils' test results being made more regularly available to parents. Initiatives such as these have promoted closer ties with parents and resulted in them having a very high regard for the school and in parents fully supporting their children's learning at home. However, the school's efforts to discourage some parents from taking their children out of school, in term time, for family holidays have not been wholly successful.
67. One of the outstanding strengths of Parklands Junior School is its staff. The match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the National Curriculum is good. Considerable improvement has been made to the school buildings since the last inspection. A new administrative block has been created and extensive refurbishment has taken place in the demountables. Further improvements in the form of a new information and communication technology suite and much-needed enlargement of the staff room are planned for the near future. The school uses its accommodation extremely well in spite of some classrooms being small for the number of pupils they contain and the hall only just able to accommodate the whole school at one time. The buildings are kept clean and safe for pupils. The grounds are extensive and extremely well maintained. They are kept free of litter and there are flowerbeds planted in profusion, resulting in bright colour at most times of the year. Displays throughout the school are of excellent quality and provide a rich learning environment for all pupils. The high quality of the environment provided for pupils is another indicator of the respect and value the school's leadership and management places on them all.

68. The school uses its resources prudently and maintains them well. The quality of learning resources is very good in English and music, good in history, physical education, science, art and religious education, and satisfactory in mathematics, design and technology, geography and information communication technology. The school has invested wisely in good quality furniture and similar equipment. It also looks upon outside speakers and organisations, for example, the Basildon Youth Education Service, as additional high quality resources that support the school.
69. The excellent leadership and management of the school make a very significant contribution to the high quality of education the pupils receive and their very good achievements.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. In order to raise standards of attainment still further the following minor issues should be considered by the school.
- (1) A few pupils choose books to read which are too difficult for them because they are not given sufficient guidance.
(Paragraph numbers 8, 34, 76)
 - (2) Procedures for assessing and reporting pupils' attainment and progress in geography and physical education are not as good as in other subjects.
(Paragraph numbers 55, 105, 126)
 - (3) The school does not fully exploit opportunities for pupils' spiritual development.
(Paragraph number 43)
 - (4) Although in line with the national average, the school's attendance rate does not reflect the high standards it achieves in most of its work.
(Paragraph numbers 25, 52)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	68

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	35	43	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	472
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	97

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	40
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	61	58	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	49	48	57
	Girls	54	43	54
	Total	103	91	111
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	87 (80)	76 (81)	93 (84)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	41	44	52
	Girls	44	45	46
	Total	85	89	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (68)	75 (75)	82 (70)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	3
Indian	4
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	454
Any other minority ethnic group	7

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	1023546
Total expenditure	1016573
Expenditure per pupil	2010
Balance brought forward from previous year	32666
Balance carried forward to next year	39639

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	474
Number of questionnaires returned	130

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	48	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	43	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	55	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	57	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	61	39	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	43	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	32	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	22	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	52	44	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	68	32	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	38	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	42	45	10	0	3

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

ENGLISH

71. By the time pupils are 11, attainment is above the national expectation for their age. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in the end of key stage tests in 2000 was above the national average and well above the average for similar schools. Although girls perform better than boys as a whole, both boys and girls reach standards above the national average. Inspection evidence reflects the test results. The school has maintained these high standards for the past four years.
72. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school. The principal reasons for this steadily rising progress are the way the school structures the teaching of the curriculum, the regular reading, spelling and handwriting practice and the effective way the school assesses pupils' attainment and progress and uses this assessment to guide teaching. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language make very good progress and reach standards commensurate with their capabilities. These pupils are provided with effective additional literacy teaching in small groups and through in-class support.
73. By the age of 11, pupils' standards in literacy are above national expectations for their age. Literacy levels in each year group are sufficient to support learning in all curriculum subjects. The school adopts a range of effective strategies to improve literacy. For example, teachers discuss lesson objectives at the beginning of lessons, issues as they arise during lessons and pupils' success at the end of lessons. Teachers provide pupils with lists of subject specific words and encourage the use of dictionaries and thesauri. There are appropriate lists of common words displayed and examples of writing across a range of styles. Teachers use effective strategies to support the composition of writing: for example, modeling writing as a whole class; practising writing the beginning, middle and end of stories and, in Year 6, pupils drafting and redrafting their own writing. Pupils learn to structure their writing through a wide range of writing in other subjects, for example in science, history and geography project work.
74. By the time most pupils reach the age of 11, their speaking and listening skills are above national expectations. Most pupils listen carefully and respond to others confidently and articulately. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 construct well-organised arguments in support of their point of view. The previous report described standards throughout the school as well above national expectations. Overall, standards during this inspection were lower. A reason for this is that in some Year 3 and 4 lessons teachers do not always provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop their oral skills. Pupils enter the school with below-average speaking and listening skills.
75. The quality of most pupils' writing is above national expectations by the age of 11. The previous report described the teaching of grammar, spelling and handwriting as 'exemplary' and this remains the case. At best, pupils write interestingly, fluently and with style in a wide range of written forms. Most pupils write neatly and take a pride in the presentation of their work. However, writing is sometimes characterised by accuracy rather than by flair and inspiration. A reason for this is in the tasks set for writing. Evidence from pupils' work indicates that a few teachers set all pupils the

same writing task, expecting more or less written work according to a pupil's ability. However, teachers are addressing the discrepancy in the standard of writing between boys and girls. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, as a writing stimulus, girls were given a passage about Florence Nightingale whilst the boys read about Henry Ford. The different texts provided both boys and girls with the motivation to improve their writing.

76. By the time most pupils reach the age of 11, attainment in reading is above national expectations. In Year 3, reading is below national expectations and this reflects the standards with which pupils entered the school. By Year 4, most pupils make good progress in their fluency and word recognition and re-tell the story of the book they are reading. In Years 5 and 6, most pupils read independently. They read fluently, with expression and show an understanding of the books they read. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in their reading and make very good progress. Although most pupils read regularly and have read a wide range of books, not all their reading is appropriate. A sample of pupils' reading indicates that in one or two classes there are some pupils who read books which are too difficult for them. Although the school's reading strategy is very good in most respects, there is insufficient guidance provided by a few teachers on the choice of books pupils read.
77. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. The school has sustained the high quality of teaching described in the last report. Almost all the teaching is of a good quality, a significant proportion is very good and some is excellent. The high quality of planning, class management and command of subject has a significant impact upon learning. When, as is often the case, these qualities are linked with high expectations, pupils have the confidence to try out ideas and take risks within a secure learning environment. For example, in a challenging lesson in Year 6, pupils were given the task of taking simple statement sentences and making them more powerful by introducing similes and metaphors. Pupils were prepared to share their ideas and thus enhance their own learning and that of others. A strength of teaching is the use of imaginative and sensitive approaches, which motivate pupils. For example, Year 6 pupils discussed the characteristics of an author's books, read several in class and then wrote a 'Mr Men' story of their own. In another Year 6 lesson, a teacher focused on the appreciation of a poem to stimulate pupils' own poetry writing. Another excellent lesson, in Year 4, on creative writing, began with a dramatic presentation, by teachers, of the diary of a missing person. Overall, the quality of marking is good but not consistently so. In most classes, teachers' marking supports pupils' learning with positive and helpful comments and grammar and spelling mistakes noted and corrected. Homework is regularly set and supports pupils' learning well.
78. There are other factors which contribute significantly to the very good quality of pupils' learning. Almost all pupils enjoy their lessons, and their very positive attitudes enhance their learning. They work hard and their constructive working relationships with teachers and fellow pupils contribute to the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Behaviour is very good. The school has developed a very effective assessment system. In English, this enables the accurate identification of the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups in reading, writing and spelling. In the vast majority of lessons, assessment is used to guide planning and teaching more closely to the needs of pupils and is having a significant impact upon the raising of standards. For example, teachers adjust the composition of teaching groups and set individual targets for pupils. Teachers regularly provide for parents very detailed and clear analyses of their child's attainment and progress in reading and examples

of their writing, which is graded according to criteria set within the National Curriculum.

79. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupils are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. The school is integrating the teaching of information and communication technology into English class teaching. For example, pupils access appropriate web sites for research as part of the learning process in the classroom. In a Year 6 class, pupils used the Roger Hargreaves and 'Mr Men' sites to support their project work. Dramatic activities are taught not only in English lessons but also in other subjects across the curriculum. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers take opportunities to discuss and share experiences, for example discussing keeping pets at home, the poem 'The Iron Man' or the morals in the 'Mr Men' books. The extra-curricular provision enriches the school curriculum. There is a drama club and an annual production – this year 'Guys and Dolls'.
80. The leadership and management of the subject throughout the school is excellent. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection. The school has maintained high standards because of the continued professional development of teachers, the further development of assessment and monitoring procedures and an expansion of learning resources.

MATHEMATICS

81. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds the school's results were in line with the average for all school and similar schools. Compared with all schools and similar schools, the percentage of pupils reaching higher than expected levels was also average.
82. Since 1997, the school's standards have relatively declined in comparison with schools nationally. Despite this the school's average performance has been consistently higher than that nationally. The relative decline is linked to the lower average attainment of the pupils entering the school. However, the school acknowledges that compared with pupils' performance in the English and science tests, too few pupils reached higher levels in the subject in 2000. It has set challenging targets as a result and inspection evidence indicates that there is likely to be a considerable increase in the percentage of pupils reaching these higher levels in the national tests this year.
83. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in the current Year 6 are above the national expectation. Standards of numeracy are high and improving. Pupils achieve very well. Their understanding of number across the curriculum is very secure. They have many opportunities to apply this understanding in a range of subjects. For example, in design and technology, they use their understanding of number to measure materials accurately for models and, in Year 4, pupils count in Japanese.
84. By the age of eleven, pupils calculate mentally quickly and accurately. They use a range of strategies to work out problems mentally and explain them clearly, using the correct mathematical vocabulary. They calculate the area of a rectangle, using a formula which can be applied to rectangles of any size. They accurately name two and three-dimensional shapes and know their properties. They have a secure knowledge of place value, and are confident in using different methods to divide and multiply three and four digit numbers. Higher-attaining pupils are confident in

converting decimals to fractions and *vice versa*, and express them in tenths and hundredths. They recognise equivalence between the decimal, fraction and percentage forms. Pupils organise data well and calculate ratios, percentages, angles and areas competently. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning, especially when they are helped by good quality support from additional adults in the classroom. There is no measurable difference in attainment in mathematics by pupils for whom English is an additional language from those for whom it is their first language.

85. The school is implementing the National Numeracy Strategy successfully and teachers plan their lessons very well. They plan in year groups, which means that activities are matched well to the needs of pupils and that all pupils receive their full entitlement.
86. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. All teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. The quality of their lesson planning is high. All teachers follow a similar format when teaching mathematics. This effectively ensures that all pupils know what they are expected to learn and receive a good balance of oral and mental work at the beginning of a lesson, before the main activity takes place. Each lesson ends with a plenary session, which evaluates what has been learnt during the lesson. Appropriate and challenging activities are planned, and timely interventions by the teachers keep pupils working without loss of concentration or interest. Their support and praise for pupils' achievement in lessons provide additional motivation for them and pupils respond well to this by working hard and with interest. Teachers use probing and open-ended questions to check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson. They set challenging work for higher-attaining pupils - for example 'crack the code', in a lesson on fractions in Year 6. Teachers mark work regularly and pupils know how well they have achieved. They set clear and challenging targets so that pupils know how to improve the quality of their work. In lessons where teaching is only satisfactory, teachers do not make the most effective use of time available in the lesson and set tasks which lower-attaining pupils sometimes find too difficult. This slows the pace of learning. Teachers make good use of regularly set homework to reinforce pupils' basic number skills.
87. Pupils have very positive attitude towards mathematics. They listen attentively and contribute eagerly to class discussion. They show sustained concentration and determination to complete activities when working. The majority of pupils enjoy mathematics. The presentation of pupils' work is good.
88. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is good. The introduction of the national numeracy strategy has established a clear direction for the subject. An appropriate range of suitable resources has been developed. The mathematics co-ordinator and the school's assessment co-ordinator have closely analysed the end of key stage national tests and other test results, and as a result have addressed some weaknesses in provision. Pupils' achievements are assessed regularly and, where appropriate, pupils move to an alternative teaching group. Very good records of pupils' attainment are kept. Year groups are organised into groups based upon prior attainment for mathematics for part of the week. The evidence is that this arrangement enhances the pupils' progress and has contributed this year to pupils attaining higher standards. Resources are adequate, used appropriately and are easily accessible. All National Curriculum requirements are met.

SCIENCE

89. The schools' test results in the end of Key Stage 2 national tests in the Year 2000 show that standards were above the national average. They were also above the average for similar schools. Just over a third of pupils achieved a higher level than that expected nationally. Standards improved significantly compared with 1999, when they were average, which was lower than the norm for this school. Generally good standards have been maintained over the last five years and the rate of improvement is in line with the national trend. Inspection evidence shows that this year the standard of pupils' work is above average, especially in the upper school where pupils build on the skills and knowledge gained in Years 3 and 4. This represents good progress.
90. By the time that pupils leave the school at the age of 11, standards in science are above the national expectation for their age. A strength in Years 5 and 6 is the good development of the experimental aspect of the subject. Across the school, pupils present their work neatly and use their literacy skills to good effect. Standards of work have improved since the previous inspection.
91. During their time at the school, pupils make good progress. When they start in Year 3, they have average knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject. By Year 6, the standard of work is good in all aspects of the subject. For instance, in Year 3 pupils predict the results of experiments, but by Year 6 they conduct fair tests and record and analyse their results well. They choose their own methods to record results. Each group records its findings differently but all are valid and clear. Pupils understand the need to check results by repeating tests. They also give perceptive and thoughtful interpretations of results. One of the pupils' strengths is their ability to design and carry out fair tests in order to question their theories in investigations. They correctly use a wide range of scientific vocabulary in context, for instance to describe properties of liquids, solids and gases.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In a third of lessons observed teaching was very good and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils, not only benefit from the good and often very good teaching by their class teachers, but their learning is also enhanced by visiting specialists who share their expertise and varied resources with them. In the very best lessons, teachers share their enthusiasm for the subject with pupils and make learning fun. Teachers show their good subject knowledge and use the appropriate scientific vocabulary such as 'solution', 'indicator' and 'acidity'. As a result, pupils use these terms correctly. Teachers provide a varied range of interesting activities, matched to pupils' levels of need, and challenge them to think for themselves. Although the teaching observed was always at least satisfactory, on one occasion some pupils were insufficiently challenged and the work sheet given was confusing. Teachers share their high expectations of behaviour and quality of work with pupils. Generally, teachers' plans are very good. The special educational needs co-ordinators help plan work for each year group. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs are set appropriate work to help them make very good progress. The teacher assistants are used very well to support these pupils. In the majority of lessons, teachers use time well and link science with other subjects, such as mathematics and design and technology. The pace of lessons is brisk, which maintains pupils' interest and increases their work rate. Sufficient time is given to enable pupils to complete set tasks. They are organised well into groups and

their behaviour is well managed so that the pupils plan and carry out their experiments effectively in an orderly manner.

93. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and works very hard to help other teachers. She has been successful in ensuring that there is a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum and there is good consistency in the provision for classes within the same year group. The school has provided the co-ordinator with sufficient time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and this contributes well to the very good provision in the subject. The co-ordinator also provides a 'science club' where 20 pupils work towards a national award. These pupils have the incentive of a visit to London University to receive these awards. Good links have been established with a secondary school. Teachers effectively challenge Year 6 pupils and prepare them for future work. Pupils respond very well to their science lessons. They work very well together, help each other, question and concentrate. They enjoy their lessons and take pride in their work.

ART AND DESIGN

94. Art remains a strength of the school. Very effective display of pupils' artwork in the school and photographs of pupils' recent paintings, drawing, models, together with lessons observed, all show a very rich range of work in which their standards are well above the national expectation. Pupils have an average range of art skills and understanding in Year 3, as seen in a lesson based on Breughel's work. Pupils drew and developed characters from one of his complex paintings into three-dimensional models. Pupils' range of techniques and skills develop very well, so that many aspects of their work are well above average by the end of Year 6. This is particularly so in two-dimensional work. Pupils use paint and other media very effectively to produce sensitive results in colour in a range of styles.
95. The stimulus for pupils' artwork often arises from other curriculum areas. For example, three-dimensional models based on Tudor characters they have been studying in history form the inspiration for Year 6's current sculptures of head and shoulders portraits. Projects such as this often include both two and three-dimensional aspects, with Year 6 pupils' 'miniatures' paintings and collages of similar characters showing high levels of skill using different media. Some of the current sculptures show interesting individual character and expression in their facial features. All pupils make very good progress. The highest-attaining pupils have opportunities to develop greater finesse and detail in their project work. Pupils with special educational needs, helped by their teachers, make well-proportioned 'busts' of their characters with a good standard of construction. Pupils in Year 5 produced good quality painting in the style of Van Gogh. These pupils talked about aspects of the artist's life and work, and used thick paint very well to produce good compositions based on his 'Sunflowers' still life. Here pupils used the whole paper to achieve a similar balance of space to the original. A wide range of artists' work informs pupils' two-dimensional studies. Picasso-style pastel work in Year 3, Matisse-based studies in Year 4 and Kandinsky style abstracts from Year 6 represent a few of the sources of inspiration. Pupils are highly competent in working in the style of these and other artists to achieve very good effects. For example, they use colour palette, create motifs based on studies of canal-barge art, and co-operate in large-scale group work related to an Africa project. Pupils' three-dimensional work is good, but it is in two-dimensional colour-work that standards are well above average, with many very high

quality paintings. These are framed and on display in public areas of the school in order to celebrate pupils' high standards.

96. Pupils of all abilities enjoy their art and design greatly and are very proud to see their paintings and models on prominent display. They work hard on their paintings, drawings and other work, listen carefully to teachers' instructions, and learn with interest about the artists they study. They co-operate very well, valuing and respecting the work of other pupils.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers now have a good scheme of work to ensure the development of pupils' skills through the years and very competently carry out detailed plans to achieve the high standards. Teachers very effectively introduce pupils to an interesting variety of historical sources, especially related to two-dimensional work and to topics in other curriculum areas. Teaching observed was consistently good, with wide evidence that the teaching of two-dimensional work is very good. Pupils' techniques and skills are developed well, so that mark-making in different media is well understood. Classes are managed exceptionally well. Restricted accommodation in some of the classrooms constrains the development of large-scale work. The subject is managed well and the very good quality training provided for teachers has made a very positive contribution to maintaining high standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. The standards of pupils' work at the age of 11, are above the national expectation for their age. Pupils carefully design their own work, remember to consider the order of the work and list the tools and materials needed.
99. In Year 3, the majority of pupils acquire good skills in planning, designing and communicating ideas. They create attractive borders with repeated pattern for their samplers. They know the difference between running stitch and cross-stitch, and decide which stitch to use when they embroider their initials. Year 4 pupils learn about different types of bread and their ingredients. They taste, describe and allocate marks out of 10. They give reasons for their likes and dislikes. Pupils in Year 6 produce annotated designs, with some success, for building controllable vehicles. They develop good skills in measuring, cutting and shaping in a range of materials. They learn to evaluate their work as it develops and show good understanding of what is required to ensure that designs will be successful. Pupils choose tools and techniques appropriately, to make working models. These models demonstrate good evidence of designing and making tasks that utilise a range of materials, including mechanical components.
100. All pupils are enthusiastic in their work and show sustained concentration when designing and making objects. The older pupils show good perseverance in overcoming problems. Pupils are well behaved, motivated and keen to discuss their work with adults. All pupils handle tools safely and sensibly and take responsibility for choosing and collecting the tools and materials they need. They share and take turns when using them.
101. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject which underpins thorough planning. The activities given to pupils effectively ensure that all aspects of the subjects are covered. New skills are taught to groups of pupils and individual support is offered to help them refine these skills.

Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, secure that work is purposeful and give pupils good opportunities to investigate how everyday objects work. Good use is made of members of support staff to ensure that pupils receive as much individual help as possible. Displays are used well to support and celebrate pupils' learning and achievement. Tasks are presented in a challenging way, but with methods that make learning fun. Pupils know and understand specialist terms correctly, such as, 'repeated' pattern and 'appliqué'. Pupils work well together and help one another to improve their work. Consequently, they all make good progress, including pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language.

102. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator is very keen and enthusiastic and works successfully to raise standards in the subject. Curricular planning denotes clear plans for activities and varied experiences across the age range. Good support is offered to teachers to help them plan and develop skills. The monitoring of the subject is effective by reviewing plans and evaluation of pupils' work. Well-organised resources are of satisfactory quality and quantity and they are readily available to pupils during lessons.

GEOGRAPHY

103. By the age of 11, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. Most have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the areas they have studied. For example, pupils in Year 3 have drawn maps to show how land is used on the school campus and begin to develop an awareness of environmental issues. In their study of St Lucia, pupils compare and contrast our climate with that of the tropics. In Year 4, pupils identify weather symbols and translate a written description of the weather on to a weather map. Pupils locate the countries which make up the United Kingdom and know the eight points of the compass. In Year 5, pupils know the factors affecting the growth of Romford and some distinguish the differences and the reasons for them, when comparing an old and a new local map. In Year 6, pupils determine changes in land use by comparing a recent photograph of views around Flatford Mill, with Constable paintings, and have an understanding of what is meant by 'sustainable' in terms of the environment. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their understanding of weather and climate, the growth of settlements, local geography and environmental issues. Pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Their attainment is in line with their capabilities.
104. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most teaching is satisfactory but some is very good. One reason for the variable quality of the teaching is the use of resources in lessons. In two lessons, the maps proved difficult for pupils to access and the teacher's questions were not sufficiently well thought through, whilst in another lesson the materials were appropriate and stimulated pupils' interest. Where teachers have a good command of subject, lesson planning is of a high standard and activities are appropriate. More generally, there are some imaginative approaches to teaching with effective links to other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils wrote and illustrated letter cards imagining life in St Lucia and Year 6 studied two Constable paintings. Learning is enhanced by field trips; for example, Year 6 visited Flatford Mill. There is a good balance between direct teaching and independent learning. A particular feature of geography teaching, which contributes significantly to pupils' learning, is the good use made of information and communication technology. Pupils use the Internet link in the classroom as an

established research tool. In one class, pupils used a local map and in another found information from the Flatford Mill web-site.

105. Pupils' attainment and progress are enhanced by their positive attitudes to work. Behaviour is very good. Most pupils enjoy geography, work hard and co-operate effectively in groups. There has been no formal school monitoring of pupils' work this year because of staff training. The quality of assessment is satisfactory overall but the school has not sufficiently identified the key skills which pupils need to develop from year to year. This means that when marking pupils' work or assessing their annual progress, teachers do not have a secure base upon which to make their judgements.
106. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and is broad and balanced. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to discuss issues that promote their personal development. For example, in one lesson there was a discussion about environmental, social and cultural issues affecting change in the local area. There is a good range of school visits that complement class lessons and enrich the curriculum. For example, there is an extended school journey to Shropshire each year and a number of field studies. These provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding.
107. The management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory. Although standards have not risen since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements. For example, teaching plans have been rewritten in the light of National Curriculum changes and the use of information and communication technology has been further developed to support learning. There is a clear policy in place and resources have been expanded and re-organised. The current curriculum is under review.

HISTORY

108. The majority of the evidence for this report is drawn from an examination of subject documents, pupils' previous work and discussions with pupils and teachers. Lesson observations were limited to Year 3.
109. By the age of 11, pupils' attainment is above national expectations. Generally pupils have a good understanding of the topic areas studied during the year. For example, Year 3 pupils understand the work of an archaeologist and the concept of evidence. Year 4 pupils have covered a wide range of topics on Ancient Egypt, and just as Year 3 pupils write their names using the Anglo Saxon rune alphabet, Year 4 pupils have made their own cartouches. Year 5 pupils have a good understanding of some aspects of life in Victorian England. They attended the Braintree museum to experience life in a Victorian school and considered the differences between employment practice now and then. Year 6 pupils produced some very good work on the Tudors. All pupils have completed a Tudor diary. These are well organised and indicate good use of research skills. Pupils make good progress, for example, in learning the value of the proper use of evidence, in developing a sense of chronology and in developing their own research skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also make good progress and achieve standards commensurate with their capabilities.

110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are well planned and the lesson objectives are explained at the beginning of lessons, enabling pupils to have a clear idea of what they are expected to achieve. In the lessons observed, teachers had high expectations of pupils, who rose to meet the challenges set for them. A feature of teaching throughout the school is the imaginative and creative approach to learning. For example, pupils devised telegrams from Howard Carter informing Lord Caernarvon of the finding of Tutankhamun's tomb and they make Roman mosaics and Greek pots. They dress up for the 'theme' days organised to support each topic studied. In Year 6, for example, pupils learn court dances. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the use of information and communication technology. All classrooms are connected to the Internet and the use of the web for research is a well-established aid to teaching and learning. For example, Year 5 pupils contact a 'Victorian nurse' at the Computer Centre. Visits are effectively used to complement classroom work. For example, there are visits to Colchester Castle (Romans), the Globe Theatre (Elizabethans) and the Imperial War Museum (World War II). There is a very good balance between directed teaching and independent learning.
111. Pupils' behaviour is very good and their positive attitudes to work contribute to their learning. Most pupils enjoy lessons, work hard and concentrate well. Assessment of pupils' project work is satisfactory and contributes towards raising standards. Teachers assess against established criteria and evaluate pupils' project work to ensure that consistent standards are maintained.
112. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides equal opportunities for all pupils. It is generally broad and balanced. There are very good links with other subjects, for example with art and design. Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers take opportunities to discuss issues as they arise; for example, how differently people think and behave in circumstances such as the period of the Second World War. Most pupils work co-operatively in groups.
113. The quality of the management and leadership of the subject is good. The subject is well organised with a clear policy and sufficient resources. The way the curriculum is taught is currently being reviewed. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory because the school has maintained standards, and further developed the curriculum and the use of information and communication technology.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology and their application of skills are well above the national expectation for their age by the end of Year 6. Lessons observed in Year 3 show pupils entering the school with broadly average attainment. They make very rapid progress in discrete information and communication technology subject skills and, very importantly, in their understanding of the application of these skills across the whole range of the school's curriculum. Whilst the previous report was extremely positive, the school has made huge improvement in its provision for, and management of, the subject since 1997. Very good provision for training opportunities for staff has improved their skills considerably. Funds have been used well and staff have a highly positive attitude to the subject because of their own highly effective acquisition of skills and understanding about computers. As a result, teachers are much more confident. This has resulted in significant improvements in the standards and quality of pupils' work at all levels and in all years.

115. In Year 4, for example, very good teaching of programming led to pupils' extremely good understanding of control operations, which enables them to write simple instructions to program a 'screen-turtle' to make a variety of shapes. The school's provision of a wide range of opportunities to learn and apply skills is very good. In small groups in Year 4, pupils work with classroom assistants or in pairs with other adults to ensure that their skills develop well. As a result, all pupils make very good progress. Pupils in Year 6, for example, produced a complex pamphlet, using a publisher program, about a Tudor character. Higher-attaining pupils used an impressive range of skills when importing pictures and text from the Internet, CD-ROM or other sources, adding their own comments to produce a well-polished final product. Such pamphlets show that lower-attaining pupils achieve the same outcome with a somewhat narrower range of applications. Pupils in Year 3 evaluate their own competencies in information and communication technology and already use an impressive range of skills. These include writing, sending and receiving e-mails and accessing Internet sources, with confidence. Several pupils spoke of receiving e-mails from classroom assistants to tell them who should go to small-group work on the computers. Pupils use overhead projectors, sound systems, video recorders and digital cameras, skilfully and creatively, to support their learning. At all stages, pupils' progress in the subject is very good.
116. Pupils' attitudes towards information and communication technology in their studies are very enthusiastic. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils eagerly seize and use opportunities to reinforce and extend their range of skills and to put them into practice to find and use information in other subjects. Their creativity is promoted through the use of art programs and they apply themselves to any work in pairs or groups with relish. In Year 5, pupils co-operate very well together, enjoying the 'games' they play, for example, in mathematics to reinforce their knowledge and understanding of fractions.
117. Pupils' very good standards and highly positive attitudes arise from very good teaching and leadership and management of the subject. Teachers instil into pupils a very positive 'can do' attitude. They believe in their ability and in the usefulness of new technology as a tool to help them. The learning support assistants, some of whom have received training and have expertise in the use of technology, help pupils greatly and assist when difficulties arise using machines or programs. Teachers' skills have developed very well since the previous report. The variability of practice and confidence described at that time has evened out significantly so that all teachers are now very competent. Teachers and pupils benefit greatly from the committed attitudes to the subject from the headteacher and governors. Planned development includes the imminent extension of accommodation into a larger and better resourced computer suite. The development of the existing information and communication technology centre, adjacent to the new library, represents improved provision from the time of the previous inspection. The development of the subject has a very high priority in the school's development plan. The investment in hardware and software and in staff training has had an extremely beneficial effect on pupils' attainment and progress. The recent appointment of a technician to develop the school's use of information and communication technology further is an important indicator of the on-going commitment to keep the school well ahead of most similar schools in its use of modern technology.

MUSIC

118. By the time that pupils leave the school, the standard of their work in music is well above that expected for their age. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous inspection. Music remains a strength of the school and the curriculum has been enriched as a result of the introduction musical productions for Years 5 and 6. This year's production of 'Guys and Dolls' has a large cast and pupils very willingly stay after school to rehearse. Their standard of performance, singing and speaking is excellent.
119. Pupils sing in tune and rhythmically. They make their singing louder and softer and their articulation is very good. Both the lower and upper school choirs sing well in two parts and sing competently in three. In lessons, pupils work well in groups to create their own compositions and use a variety of percussion instruments. They know that a repeated pattern is called 'ostinato.' They are always encouraged to use the correct terminology and are keen to improve. Pupils are aware that music from Indonesia has its own characteristics, techniques and is interesting. An eighth of all pupils have instrumental tuition, which includes clarinet and cello lessons. Specialist teachers take these lessons and pupils make good progress and enjoy playing in the school orchestra. This orchestra has a varied repertoire, which often links with the topics studied within the school. For instance, the orchestra played a piece of contemporary music when pupils study the Tudors. The orchestra and choirs consist of an almost equal number of boys and girls. Overall, pupils make very good progress. This is accelerated in the upper school where the specialist co-ordinator teaches Year 6 classes.
120. The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good. Most lessons observed were taught by the enthusiastic subject co-ordinator, who has excellent subject knowledge. The school uses his expertise very well and he works very hard to provide extra-curricular opportunities and shares his enthusiasm, knowledge and skills with pupils and staff. He has very good relationships with pupils and this enables them to use constructive criticism in order to improve. The school is fortunate to have another specialist music teacher and together they give other members of staff good support and ensure that standards of music throughout the school are very good. Higher-attaining pupils also sensitively help their classmates. Pupils with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language have their talents in music recognised and are included in all activities.
121. The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced. The quality of leadership and management is very good. Standards are high and pupils enjoy the subject and try very hard to do their best. The very good range and quality of resources available make a considerable contribution to the standards pupils attain and to their motivation to learn. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural awareness. In addition to musical productions and frequent opportunities in school assemblies to listen to European classical music, pupils play African and Asian instruments. The specialist music room provides very good accommodation, which enables pupils to give full rein to their performances.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

122. By the time pupils leave the school at age 11, they attain above average standards for their age in swimming. In games and gymnastics pupils attain average standards. Nearly all pupils safely swim 25 metres unaided by the time they leave the school. Pupils are confident in the water, and a higher proportion than normal use strokes such as front and back crawl with good style. Their good ability to follow instructions means that they synchronise arm, leg and trunk movements to move smoothly through the water. Standards are similar in swimming to those reported in the last inspection but appear to have declined in other aspects of the subject.
123. The school makes good use of specialist swimming instructors to ensure that pupils are taught effective techniques and are challenged to improve their style and speed. Both the specialist instructors and the class teachers who support them provide great encouragement to those pupils who are less confident in the water. It was evident, in a Year 5 lesson, that as a result of such encouragement, pupils gained much more confidence in floating and submerging. The highest-attaining pupils generate power and speed through the water by the correct use of body position and breathing technique. Instructors and teachers use stimulating methods to motivate higher and average-attainers to constantly improve. Boys and girls are equally represented in the highest-attaining groups.
124. Pupils' throwing and catching skills and competence in ball games are in line with those expected for their age. The attainment of pupils in different classes and the quality of their learning is directly linked to the subject knowledge and expertise of individual teachers. Whilst the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, it does vary from class to class. A well-taught Year 5 lesson, designed to improve pupils' throwing skills, was conducted at a good pace and the teacher helped pupils improve their bent and round arm throwing through clear demonstration and instruction. As a result, all pupils made good progress, both in the distance they threw and in the technique they used. However, in a Year 6 games lesson, in which pupils played non-stop cricket, there was a relative weakness in the organisation of the lesson and in the teaching of the games strategy. As a result, pupils tended to get in each other's way and did not place themselves in the right place to prevent runs being scored.
125. A particular strength is the school's provision for pupils with physical impairment and/or poor co-ordination. Special equipment, which makes it easier for them to catch or throw, is provided, and support staff often give them extra help to enable them to play a full part in lessons and make similar progress to their classmates.
126. Overall, the school's accommodation and learning resources support teaching and learning well. A good-sized hall and a spacious playing field provide pupils with ample room to work and practise their skills. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has supported newly qualified teachers strongly by teaching demonstration sessions and offering helpful advice. However, procedures for assessing pupils' skills are under-developed and this means that teachers do not always fully meet the needs of individual pupils in lessons. Many staff give generously of their time to organise a wide range of after-school activities for all age groups. During the week of the inspection, well over 100 pupils were involved in netball, girls' football, athletics and games clubs.

127. The school has had considerable success in competition with other schools and in the district, winning cups for football and netball. As a result of these experiences, pupils have a very good sense of fair play and respect for rules. Activities such as orienteering, canoeing and rock climbing, which they experience on annual residential visits, contribute very well to their physical, personal and social development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Attainment in religious education is above that expected in the locally agreed syllabus. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the previous report. In a lesson observed in Year 3, pupils understand the concepts they are taught, for example the importance of certain items in Sikhism, such as the Kara, the Kacha and other 'Ks' presented. Furthermore, from this early stage, pupils understand the symbolism of these artefacts, because they have a good understanding of the notion of 'belonging' to a group and the implications for family and the local community. They understand the importance of preciousness implicit in items of clothing and treasured toys. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils have a very good level of knowledge and understanding of concrete and abstract ideas about Judaism and Christianity, which together with Sikhism, form the three major religions covered by the school's curriculum. This was well-demonstrated in a lesson in Year 6 with visitors from the local Church. Many pupils demonstrated their good knowledge of the meaning of baptism and used appropriate vocabulary related to acceptance and initiation.
129. The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is very good overall. Teachers plan lessons very carefully and sensitively, so that pupils learn facts about different faiths. They emphasise very effectively the deeper meanings of the derivation and symbolism of these facts. The more abstract concepts are very clearly and thoughtfully explained. Teachers ensure that even the youngest pupils understand, often through association with known ideas, concepts such as that of 'belonging'. In Year 5, pupils' knowledge is extended well by the use of drama, to exemplify different ways of responding to misdemeanour. Here the teacher set up a series of well-planned alternative scenarios to respond to accidental breakage in the home. Pupils experienced and rationalised the moral issues involved, for example the implications of lying about the incident or blaming others, as opposed to confessing and buying a replacement. The very good variety of teaching methods used to highlight such issues offer all pupils opportunities to explore the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the subject and to articulate and discuss them with confidence. Pupils' good level of competence in literacy skills contributes well to their ability to engage in these discussions
130. Pupils' attitudes to lessons in religious education are very good. Pupils in Year 4 were very interested in the symbolism of the special clothing worn at a Bar Mitzvah, and the idea of this ceremony as a 'rite of passage' in their study of Judaism.
131. The curriculum conforms well to the locally agreed syllabus. The quality of leadership and management of the subject is good. Resources and artefacts are appropriate and are used exceptionally well to provide pupils with a very meaningful and thoughtfully constructed experience in religious education.

