

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RETTENDON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Rettendon Common, Chelmsford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114856

Headteacher: Jacquie Barber

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther  
18814

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

Inspection number: 195790

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Main Road Rettendon Common Chelmsford Essex
Postcode:	CM3 8DW
Telephone number:	01268 732096
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E-mail address:	admin@rettendon.essex.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Graham Coleman
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther <i>Registered inspector</i> 18814	Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage English Art and design Geography History Music	What sort of school is it? The schools results and achievements. How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? What should the school do to improve further?
Susan Cash <i>Lay inspector</i> 9595		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Georgie Beasley <i>Team inspector</i> 27899	Mathematics Science Information and communication technology Design and technology Physical education Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language Equal opportunities	How well does the school care for its pupils? How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

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

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Rettendon is a small, community primary school for boys and girls who are 4-11 years old. It has 93 full-time pupils and four who attend part time in the reception class. Many of the pupils live in Rettendon, but a significant proportion travel from surrounding villages or the nearby Runwell hospital where their parents work. Families have a wide range of social circumstances and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. Overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is below average, particularly in their language and social skills. Across the school, 27 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, for a variety of learning and behavioural difficulties, of whom four have a statement. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is above average. Very few pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, and only one is learning English as an additional language, a low proportion compared with the national picture. Five pupils are from Traveller families.

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

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It has a number of strengths, but there are also weaknesses that are hindering efforts to raise standards. There is a very positive, happy atmosphere within the school that supports pupils' learning effectively. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Achievement is better in the juniors than in the infants. Throughout the school, higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently so that they can achieve their full potential. Currently, attainment in Year 6 is close to national expectations in mathematics, but below expectations in English and science. The quality of teaching is sound overall, and often good for the older pupils. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, though there are weaknesses in its organisation. The new headteacher is providing good leadership and has already correctly identified a number of areas for improvement. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- The school provides an environment in which pupils enjoy their work, behave well and are keen to learn.
- The new headteacher has made a good start in identifying where standards need to be raised.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs is well organised so they make good progress.
- The school cares for its pupils effectively within a close-knit, supportive community.
- Good relationships with parents are successfully promoted.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- In the infants, pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science are not good enough.
- Although the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in some aspects.
- Information about pupils' attainment and achievement is not used effectively to match work accurately to their needs, particularly for the higher attainers.
- The school does not evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses well enough, and written plans for



improvement are not as clear as they should be.

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

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## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected last in June 1997, Rettendon was judged to be a school that did well by its pupils, providing a happy and secure environment for learning. Since then, improvement has been satisfactory. The school has maintained its very positive ethos, though the quality of teaching and learning, and hence pupils' achievements, is not as strong as reported at the last inspection. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is about the same as at the last inspection. Attainment at the end of Year 2 is lower, but a number of changes of teacher for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has contributed to this, and there has been a recent improvement. The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the action points from the last inspection. Standards in music appear to have risen, owing to staff training and the introduction of new teaching materials. Standards in spelling have improved, though this is still an aspect of English that needs to be strengthened. Although the governing body is now more involved in the work of the school, it is not yet sufficiently involved in setting priorities for improvement. Written reports for parents about pupils' progress now meet statutory requirements. With the appointment of a new headteacher, there is now a greater focus on identifying areas for improvement and on taking concerted action to raise standards. This gives the school a satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	A	D	C	C
mathematics	A*	C	B	B
science	A	C	D	D

Key	
highest 5% of schools	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
lowest 5% of schools	E*

**NB** Where only a small group of pupils is tested, the school's results and comparisons with the results of other schools tend to fluctuate.

Pupils' attainment when they start school is, overall, below average compared with what is expected nationally. Their achievements (the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment) are satisfactory during their time at the school, but unsatisfactory in the infants. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 were well below average in reading, mathematics and science, and below average in writing. Pupils' past work shows that the tasks Year 2 are given are often too easy, even though progress made in the lessons seen during the inspection was mainly satisfactory. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated but in 2001 they were close to the national average in English, above average in mathematics, but below average in science. Schools set targets for the percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics. In 2001, the school exceeded its target for mathematics considerably, but just failed to reach its English target.

Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is close to national expectations in mathematics, but below expectations in English and science. This year group is not as able as last year. Pupils' skills in literacy are below average and they are not used and developed sufficiently through work in other subjects. Numeracy skills are sound. In religious education, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory and attainment in Year 6 is below that expected by the locally agreed syllabus.

In information and communication technology, pupils' achievements are satisfactory and they are benefiting from the new computer suite; standards in Year 6 are close to national expectations. In art, design and technology and history, pupils' achievements are sound and standards of attainment in Year 6 are close to those expected for pupils' ages. Too little evidence was available to make secure judgements about pupils' achievements in geography, music and physical education.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic in lessons. They generally listen carefully to their teachers and are willing to work, which provides a good basis for learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond positively to the guidance provided by the staff. Behaviour is very good at playtimes. There have been no exclusions in the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Good overall. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good. Pupils generally work and play well together. They respond positively when given opportunities to take on responsibility.
Attendance	Close to the national average.

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teaching was good in a higher proportion of the lessons observed in the juniors than in the infants. Teaching is satisfactory in the reception class. It is best when the children are taught together, but less effective when a range of activities is organised. Throughout the school, lessons are prepared carefully, teachers have good relationships with their classes and they organise activities effectively. As a result, in many lessons, pupils enjoy their work and make good gains in learning. Where teaching was good or very good, pupils were encouraged to work quickly, the teacher had high expectations of what they could achieve, and a good balance of methods was used. Where teaching had weaknesses, particularly in the infants, tasks were either too easy or too hard, so pupils were unable to take the next step in their learning. Teachers had not assessed pupils' existing skills and understanding carefully enough. In some lessons, the whole-class session lasted too long, and the pace of learning was slow, so pupils did not finish their work. Homework is used well in the juniors. Teaching of literacy and numeracy is sound overall, and good

in the juniors. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils. It is good for pupils with special needs and those learning English as an additional language, but often not challenging enough for higher attainers.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and generally well balanced, though the teaching of some subjects in blocks creates a narrower curriculum at any one time for the oldest pupils. Teaching time for the juniors is just below the nationally recommended minimum, and the organisation of lesson time in the afternoon is not efficient. The reception curriculum has weaknesses because some areas of learning are not given sufficient emphasis. In English, provision for teaching writing is a weaker aspect. A good programme of trips and visits and a satisfactory range of clubs enrich the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The needs of these pupils are identified clearly. They are given appropriate work and support in lessons and generally make good progress. The co-ordinator organises provision effectively.
Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language	Good. The very few pupils learning English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' personal development is a high priority for the school. It is promoted well through good relationships between staff and pupils, within a close-knit community. There is good provision for pupils' moral and social development through lessons and the day-to-day life of the school. Spiritual and cultural development are sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils Assessment	Good. Pupils' care, health and welfare are promoted well within the school, mainly through a range of effective but informal procedures. Procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. However, the use of information about pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding, to ensure that work is well matched to their needs, is poor.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has good relationships with parents and, together, they work well to support pupils' learning and personal development.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher is providing good leadership for the school and a clearer focus on raising standards. She has correctly identified weaknesses that need to be tackled, though largely through informal evaluation. Subject co-ordinators do not yet play a full enough role in monitoring standards in their subjects, or in leading action to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	Governors are supportive, many are experienced, and they fulfil their statutory responsibilities. They have a good appreciation of the strengths of

	the school in terms of the positive environment it provides for learning. As yet, however, they do not have sufficient involvement in monitoring the work of the school, understanding its weaker aspects, and planning future improvements.
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#### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED (continued)

Aspect	Comment
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Some weaknesses have been identified recently, but the school has very few systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of its work. The principles of best value are not used effectively enough.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school planned carefully to correct a financial deficit and has also improved aspects of provision. However, there is not enough planned use of resources to tackle identified weaknesses.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school has sufficient staff. Teachers and classroom assistants work well as a team. The school building is old but adequate, with some spacious classrooms and some rather cramped. The grounds are very good, including an outdoor swimming pool. Learning resources are adequate for most subjects, but there are insufficient good quality books in the library.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Their children enjoy going to school and make good progress.</li> <li>▪ The quality of teaching is good.</li> <li>▪ They are kept well informed about their child's progress.</li> <li>▪ The school is very approachable if parents have concerns.</li> <li>▪ The school expects children to work hard, achieve their best, and helps them to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>▪ Behaviour in the school is good.</li> <li>▪ The school works closely with parents.</li> <li>▪ The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some parents think that their children get too much homework.</li> <li>▪ Some parents feel that there are not enough activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

About a quarter of parents returned the questionnaire, but only three attended the meeting. The great majority of these parents are pleased with most aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support many of parents' positive views. However, inspectors find that the quality of teaching and hence pupils' achievements are not as good as parents think they are. The amount of homework the school provides is reasonable. For a small school, the range of activities outside lessons is good.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. There is a wide range of attainment amongst the children who join the reception class but, overall, the current group is below average compared with what is expected nationally. The attainment of each small group of reception children varies considerably from year to year. The children's achievements are satisfactory during their time in the reception class, in all areas of learning, though teaching and the curriculum are not always matched well to their needs. About half of the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development by the time they start Year 1. One child should exceed the goals, but about half will not reach them. Children with special needs are well supported and make similar progress to other pupils.
2. In the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2, results were well below average in reading, below average in writing, and well below average in mathematics. Based on teachers' assessments, attainment in science was well below average. Although the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 of attainment was close to the national average, very few gained the higher Level 3, which depressed the school's overall performance. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances show that the 2001 results were well below average. Only a small group of pupils is tested each year, which leads to fluctuations in results, so judging trends is difficult. Nonetheless, it is clear that results are lower than at the previous inspection.
3. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 is below national expectations in mathematics, and well below in English and science. Attainment is lower than reported at the previous inspection. Pupils begin Year 1 with skills that are below average compared with what is expected nationally. In mathematics, their achievements are satisfactory during the infants. In English and science, however, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because the work is not well matched to their needs and higher-attaining pupils, in particular, are not challenged sufficiently. The school has identified and is addressing underachievement in this group of pupils. The class had a number of changes of teacher during last year, which interrupted pupils' progress.
4. In the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 6, results were above average in mathematics, average in English, but below average in science. In all three subjects, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 of attainment exceeded the national average but, as in Year 2, fewer pupils than nationally gained the higher level, so the school's overall performance was

depressed. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances show the same picture as the national comparisons. The school exceeded the target it had set for mathematics considerably, but just failed to reach its English target. Bearing in mind considerable fluctuations in results, standards are rather better than at the previous inspection because the school's results have improved at a similar rate to the national trend.

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5. Evidence gathered during the inspection shows that attainment in the current Year 6 is close to national expectations in mathematics, but below expectations in English and science. This group of pupils contains fewer higher attainers and a greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs than last year. Given that many pupils start Year 3 with below, often well below average attainment, their achievements in the juniors are good in mathematics and satisfactory in English and science. Higher-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as others because the work they are given is sometimes not demanding enough.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, overall, whether they are working with the special educational needs co-ordinator, with their class teacher or a classroom assistant. This is because the school pays close attention to these pupils' specific weaknesses and provides activities and tasks that are usually matched to their particular learning need, as identified in their individual education plans. On occasion, these pupils make less progress because the task they are given is mundane, such as requiring them to add correct punctuation to a text, or order pictures in a correct sequence. These activities provide too little opportunity for pupils to apply their writing skills through independent work for a good length of time. There are no significant variations in pupils' achievements by gender.

7. In religious education, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory across the school and, by Year 6, attainment is below the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Although higher-attaining pupils recall facts about the customs of some faiths, other pupils have too little knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths including Christianity. There is too much emphasis on pupils learning facts at the expense of developing their understanding about the links between significant religious occasions and their purpose and meaning. Achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory, and much improved since the previous inspection, so Year 6 pupils reach the expected standard.

8. In art, design and technology and history, pupils' achievements are satisfactory across the school and, by Year 6, they reach the expected level of attainment. Good staff expertise in these subjects plays an important part in promoting pupils' achievements. In geography, music and physical education, too little evidence was available to make a secure judgement about pupils' achievements. In geography, evidence from discussions with pupils indicates that attainment in Year 6 is below national expectations, and lower than at the last inspection.

9. Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievements and the standards of attainment they reach have been maintained in the juniors. It is for this reason that pupils' achievements across the school are largely satisfactory. In the infants, however, pupils' past work shows that they have not made enough progress because the teaching and learning did not ensure that pupils built their knowledge, skills and understanding steadily.

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

10. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils have good attitudes to their work and are happy to come to school. They are enthusiastic about many of their lessons. For example, Years 3 and 4 were very interested in a history lesson about the Romans and Queen Boudicca, so they were well motivated to take part in discussions and write about her exploits. Most of the time, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to answer questions. They work well, both independently and in pairs or groups, though some are reluctant to settle to writing tasks. Many pupils also enjoy being part of school teams. Pupils' positive attitudes provide a good basis for their learning.

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11. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Pupils generally do as they are asked quickly and willingly. A few find it difficult to sit still and listen, but they are well supported by classroom assistants and rarely disrupt the learning of others. Some of the youngest children still have to learn to get on well together. Mostly, pupils listen to each other and treat each other with respect, but sometimes they laugh at another's mistakes. Pupils behave very well in the playground, an improvement since the last inspection. This is because they now have a good range of activities to keep them occupied and mid-day assistants teach them games and join in. Pupils enter and leave assembly very quietly and respectfully. They are polite to adults and very caring of each other, as was seen when a Year 6 pupil spontaneously looked after a younger pupil in assembly. Pupils know what behaviour is expected of them and understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions, which are consistently applied by teachers. Older pupils have a clear understanding of why rules are necessary. Pupils and their parents say there is very little bullying and that rare incidents are dealt with well. There have been no exclusions recently.

12. The school fosters very positive relationships between adults and pupils, and so pupils also treat each other very well. Older pupils help to look after the younger ones and join in their games. They value the friendships they make and are pleased to feel they know everyone and are known. Their parents are confident that they are growing into mature and responsible young people. Pupils take on increasing responsibility as they move through the school. For example, the youngest very proudly take the class register to the office, while the oldest pupils prepare the hall for assembly and choose and play the music. There is no forum through which pupils can contribute to the development of the school, though a school council is planned. There are good opportunities in some lessons for pupils to use their initiative, such as when Year 5 and 6 pupils organised their own resources to test the qualities of soils.

13. Attendance levels are broadly similar to those found nationally, but the proportion of unauthorised absence is below average because the school has good systems for discovering why pupils are absent. Some of the absence is due to Traveller families who are away for several weeks a year, some to extended holidays in the country of origin of families who have come from abroad, and some to families taking their annual holiday in term time. Registers are called promptly and efficiently and the time is used well for mathematics or English work. Pupils arrive punctually. This is a similar picture to that found at the last inspection.

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

14. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, but not as good as reported at the previous inspection. Teaching was good in a higher proportion of the lessons observed in the juniors than in

the infants. Teaching is satisfactory in the reception class. It is best when the children are taught together, but less effective when a range of activities is organised. Throughout the school, lessons are prepared carefully, teachers have good relationships with their classes and they organise activities effectively. As a result, in many lessons, pupils enjoy their work and make good gains in learning. Where teaching was good or very good, pupils were encouraged to work quickly, the teacher had high expectations of what they could achieve, and a good balance of methods was used. Where teaching had weaknesses, particularly in the infants, tasks were either too easy or too hard, so pupils were unable to take the next step in their learning. Teachers had not assessed pupils' existing skills and understanding carefully

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enough. In some lessons, the whole-class session lasted too long, and the pace of learning was slow, so pupils did not finish their work. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils. It is good for pupils with special needs and those learning English as an additional language, but often not challenging enough for higher attainers.

15. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in 90 per cent of the lessons observed. It was good or better in 39 per cent, and very good in three per cent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in three of the 31 lessons observed. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, and both are well taught in the juniors. In the infants, although teaching was satisfactory in the great majority of the lessons observed, scrutiny of pupils' work showed that achievements in English and science have been unsatisfactory over time. This class had a number of changes of teacher during the past year, which has affected pupils' achievements adversely. In the lessons observed, the teaching of ICT was satisfactory, which is an improvement since the last inspection. A scrutiny of pupils' work showed that teaching of religious education is unsatisfactory and pupils do not make enough progress in this subject. No judgements were made about the quality of teaching in other subjects because too few lessons were observed.

16. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers make sure that work is closely matched to these pupils' needs so that they can achieve well. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher worked with a small group of pupils, using questioning skillfully to keep their minds on their observation and exploration of soils. This enabled the pupils to recognise different types of soil and to consider which would be best for plants to grow or animals to live in. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from classroom assistants during group work. They follow the targets that have been set and monitor progress closely. Their positive strategies to manage behaviour are particularly effective and this enables all pupils to take part in learning for most of the time. When it sometimes becomes necessary to withdraw pupils who are unable to keep their attention focused in lessons, this is wholly appropriate. Teachers and classroom assistants have good relationships with pupils and keep very clear records of what they can do so that future work can be planned to meet their specific needs.

17. Teaching for children in the Foundation Stage (reception) is satisfactory. Basic skills are taught well in whole-class sessions, which are often lively and interesting. As a result, the children enjoy their learning and are encouraged to take part. Relationships are good. Although there is some assessment of pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding, it is not used effectively to match work to the needs of individuals. As a result, the content of whole-class activities is often too easy or



too hard for many of the children. When learning is organised through a range of self-chosen activities, adults do not target the development of specific skills for individual children, so they do not make the best use of their time. Adults are skilled at taking opportunities for discussion, which develops children's language skills, and strengthens personal and social skills.

18. Throughout the rest of the school, teachers have a sound knowledge of most subjects. In a good history lesson for Years 3 and 4, it was the teacher's confident knowledge about the Romans in Britain that really caught the pupils' interest. They took part eagerly in a discussion about Boudicca and were stimulated to write fluently about her battle with the

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invaders. The teaching of basic skills is effective. The introduction of a new, structured reading programme is helping pupils to make better progress. Letter sounds, spelling and punctuation are all taught in literacy sessions, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to write independently so that these skills can be practised and developed. In mathematics, counting and calculating skills are taught effectively in most lessons. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils learnt how to multiply three-digit numbers by single-digit numbers, exploring and explaining a good range of strategies.

19. Teachers plan carefully for most lessons. Where teaching had weaknesses, however, planning outlined the activities, but did not identify clearly enough what the pupils would learn. As a result, the teaching, and pupils' learning, was not sufficiently focused. For example, the text for a literacy lesson was about a bullying incident, but it was not clear whether pupils were learning about the emotions of the characters or how to write a story. Where teaching was good, clear learning objectives were shared with pupils so that they knew what they were trying to achieve. For example, a music lesson for Years 1 and 2 developed the theme of 'firework sounds' through a range of activities. The teacher had planned exactly what she wanted the pupils to achieve and explained her expectations for each activity, which led to successful performances.

20. Where teaching was good or very good, teachers had high expectations of what pupils could achieve, and teaching and learning moved at pace. For example, a numeracy lesson for Years 3 and 4 began with an open-ended task to make as many calculations as possible using combinations of single-digit numbers and the symbols + and -. The pupils found this very motivating, and had to work quickly because the teacher set a time target. The more able pupils were stretched by the challenge. In a number of lessons, however, work was pitched to meet the needs of the average-attaining pupils. It was too easy for the higher attainers, or sometimes the task was too routine to allow these pupils to extend their own learning.

21. Teachers use an appropriate range of methods and strategies to promote learning. For example, in a good science lesson for Years 3 and 4, the teacher used discussion and practical activity effectively to help the pupils explore the properties of various rocks. An experiment at the end of the lesson helped the pupils to understand that some rocks are more permeable than others. A good variety of methods resulted in pupils making good gains in learning. All teachers explain tasks and ideas clearly and often in a lively and interesting way that holds pupils' attention and encourages them to respond. The whole-class parts of lessons are usually a good feature. Teachers have good skills in questioning pupils and leading discussions.

22. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively. They have good relationships with their classes, they praise good work and behaviour and, for the most part, pupils respond by listening attentively, concentrating on their work and behaving well. Time was used satisfactorily in most of the lessons observed, but the good and very good teaching had an urgency that encouraged pupils to work hard. For example, in a literacy lesson for Years 5 and 6, the teacher set time targets for all the tasks and the pupils responded by working quickly. A weakness in some lessons was that whole-class introductions lasted too long, and this did not leave enough time for the pupils' tasks. The good skills of classroom assistants are used well in many lessons, for example working with a group, or supporting an individual.

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23. There are weaknesses in the ways in which teachers assess pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding so that they can be sure that their planning and the tasks they set match pupils' learning needs. This is a whole-school weakness, which is being addressed by the introduction of new procedures. Arrangements for homework are satisfactory and good in the juniors. There is a regular pattern of homework, which parents and children understand. The work pupils complete at home makes a valuable contribution to their learning at school. Some parents say that their children get too much homework, whilst others believe that it provides a good basis for secondary school. Inspectors feel that the amount of homework is about right.

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

24. Since the previous inspection, the school has sustained a generally broad and balanced curriculum that is enhanced by provision for educational visits and extra-curricular activities. However, there are weaknesses in the organisation of the curriculum, and a lack of consistency in the way it is taught across classes, which have a detrimental impact on pupils' learning.

25. The school uses nationally recommended schemes of work for all subjects and follows the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. These documents provide a good basis for teachers to plan work for their classes. Medium-term planning is generally thorough, particularly for literacy and numeracy, but short-term planning does not always identify specific learning objectives or set out the structure and development of the lesson clearly enough.

26. The time allocated to subjects other than literacy and numeracy is uneven, particularly in the juniors. For example, the Year 3 and 4 class has a short time for each subject each week, because the teacher believes that this will help pupils to retain knowledge and skills effectively. In Year 5 and 6, however, the subject time is 'blocked' so that there is a greater emphasis on one subject during any week or half term. The teacher does this because she believes that it will be possible to cover work in more depth. The latter pattern of organisation creates a very skewed curriculum. As a result, during the week of the inspection, Year 5 and 6 pupils were taught no art, design and technology, geography or music. Whilst teachers would be expected to promote pupils' learning by organising the curriculum in a variety of ways, the leadership and management of the school are not ensuring that the curriculum provides a continuous learning experience for pupils. In the juniors, overall teaching time is slightly below the nationally recommended minimum. The afternoon break splits the teaching time so that the final 25 minutes is not particularly useful, and this is an inefficient way of organising the day.

27. The curriculum for pupils in the foundation stage is planned around the recommended areas of learning, but does not provide the best balance of whole-class and self-chosen activities that is most relevant for children of this age. As a result, whilst most aspects of children's language and mathematical development are catered for, elements of personal development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development receive too little emphasis. The curriculum for the infants and juniors meets all of the requirements of the National Curriculum. The weakness in ICT identified at the last inspection has been

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solved. There are strengths in curriculum provision for art, but experiment and investigation in science is a weaker aspect. Music was a weakness at the last inspection, but too little music teaching was seen to be able to judge whether this has improved.

28. The curriculum is enhanced by a number of educational visits. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils visited Kentwell Hall as part of their work about the Tudors, and the school has good links with a horticultural centre. The school offers the opportunity for a residential visit for the older pupils, to enhance their social development.

29. A number of the parents who returned the questionnaire felt that the provision of extra-curricular activities was weak. At the present time there are a number of extra-curricular activities, including a family ICT club, an art club where pupils work in clay, netball, dance and football. Some of these are run by outside organisations, so pupils have to pay. Given that this is a small school, inspectors believe that the range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

30. The National Literacy Strategy is well established through the school and the teaching of basic literacy skills is satisfactory. Literacy skills are developed through some work provided in other subjects, but this is not planned for sufficiently. The school has also introduced the National Numeracy Strategy successfully. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing mental calculation skills and teaching is often good in these lessons.

31. The school recognises that pupils need careful support for their personal and social development through a programme of personal, social and health education. Much of this is taught through science and religious education, but there are specific lessons for Years 5 and 6 concerning sex education, where parents can view the video materials that are used. The school has no planned programme for drugs' education.

32. As at the last inspection, provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator carries out regular assessments that inform each pupil's next steps in learning. Plans are diligently followed by teachers and classroom assistants, and monitored by the co-ordinator during her weekly visits. Individual education plans provide good diagnoses of problems and set out practical ways of putting them right. The school has already moved across to new, nationally recommended systems for the identification and support for pupils with special educational needs and these are working well. The very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language receive good support from classroom assistants. Adults make sure that these pupils fully understand what is being said in discussions and what they need to do to learn effectively.

The curriculum provided for higher-attaining pupils, however, is often not sufficiently challenging and consequently they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.

33. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, with support for their moral and social development better than for their spiritual and cultural development. The strong 'family' ethos within the school, which guides and supports pupils well, is a key feature of this provision.

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34. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound. Assembly themes for each half term have usefully been identified. Pupils are encouraged to think for a while about the topic of the assembly and teachers say a prayer, to which many pupils respond. There are sound links with the local church and pupils speak enthusiastically of youth workers who regularly take assemblies. Lessons also make a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Year 1 and 2 pupils were entranced by some beautiful Victorian clothes. In a religious education lesson, some pupils gave moving accounts of special journeys they had made. However, in another religious education lesson about the way people express their faith through art in churches, the opportunity to discuss spiritual and cultural issues was missed.

35. Pupils' moral and social development are promoted well through the good example adults set in the way they talk to pupils and value what they say and do. From their earliest days in school, pupils are taught to share and take turns. They are encouraged to be concerned for those less fortunate and give generously to a number of charities. Pupils who have gone beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour are helped to see why their actions are disapproved of and are expected to apologise. There are good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and groups. For example, in a Year 3 and 4 literacy lesson, pupils discussed in pairs a story they had just read about a bully. Good co-operative learning took place during a science investigation. Older pupils have the opportunity to go on a residential visit to an adventurous activity centre, which extends their social development. A strength of the school is the way older pupils help to look after the younger ones and play traditional group games in the playground. Parents value this aspect their children's education.

36. The school makes sound provision for pupils' cultural development. They listen to music from a number of different cultures but learn little about the key features of major world faiths. Pupils' own ethnic backgrounds are used well, as when a Nigerian pupil talked about the story 'Handa's Surprise'. Pupils visit museums and places of interest, both locally and further afield. Years 5 and 6 pupils have been learning about Carnival customs and making head-dresses from around the world, while the youngest pupils were very proud of the American Indian head-dresses they had made.

37. The school promotes equality of opportunity through the provision it makes for boys and girls, for pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and for pupils with special educational needs. The inclusive nature of the school community is a strength. For example, a Year 2 pupil with special needs required considerable guidance to be able to work with the rest of the class, but all the adults were patient and understanding. The practice of withdrawing groups of pupils with special

educational needs from lessons means that sometimes they miss a crucial part of the lesson. The school tries to reduce this as much as possible by rotating the timetable each half term, but this still means that pupils can miss physical education over a few weeks, or a subject for the whole half term.

38. The school has good relationships with local play groups and secondary schools. A link with one secondary school has resulted in older pupils visiting for extension work in mathematics and science, and French lessons being taught at Rettendon by a secondary teacher. There are also good links with the university from which initial teacher training

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students are welcomed, and a local college that places nursery nurse students at the school. Business links promoted by Ford have resulted in the school developing useful work with a local newspaper.

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

39. The school makes good provision for the care of its pupils within a close-knit, supportive community. The youngest pupils are carefully introduced to school, with visits and part-time attendance for the first few weeks. Older pupils are supported well as they move on to secondary school. The headteacher and staff are alert to health and safety issues on a day-to-day basis. The governors, however, are not fully involved in reviewing health and safety risks and arrangements. Child protection procedures are well known to all staff and the headteacher is shortly to receive more detailed training. First aid is kindly and carefully administered and appropriate records kept. For example, parents are informed if children have bumped their heads or had a more serious injury. Pupils know precisely what to do if there is a fire. The school is cleaned to a high standard. Good attention is paid to road safety because of the very busy road outside the school and good care is taken of the pupils who travel by bus.

40. The school has good systems for monitoring and promoting pupils' attendance. If no reason for an absence has been received, parents are contacted around 9.30 am to check on the whereabouts of the child. A termly record of absence is kept for each pupil so that frequent absences are noted. Registers are carefully marked and annotated. Despite the school's efforts to discourage it, several families take their holidays in term-time. There are useful reminders, for example in newsletters, about the importance of regular attendance and letting the school know reasons for absence. A late book is kept. The school works closely with the Education Welfare Officer when the need arises.

41. The school also has effective systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Pupils are proud to receive weekly 'seals' for good behaviour and they value the caring and supportive atmosphere within the school. They discuss why rules are necessary and must be kept, and understand the sanctions that will be applied if behaviour falls short of teachers' expectations. A log book is kept of more serious incidents. Parents are involved at an early stage, to help provide support alongside the school before serious problems develop. If incidents occur at lunchtimes, mid-day supervisors report to class teachers. Their expectations of behaviour and dealings with the pupils are now consistent with those of teachers during lessons, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Bullying is rare but when it does occur, the bully is dealt with firmly and good support is also provided for the victim. Teachers gather pupils in a circle to discuss behaviour and other issues when they feel it would be a useful way of dealing with particular concerns in their class.

42. The home-school link books provide a very good way of monitoring pupils' personal development. Teachers write a comment about each child every week. Seals, for good work, good behaviour and homework completed, are recorded in them each week. These contribute to certificates every term and prizes at the end of the year, which motivates pupils. Every child is known by name by all members of staff. They are quickly alert to any concerns about a pupil. Pupils say they would easily find an adult to talk to if they had problems or were upset. As at the time of the last inspection, the school provides good support for pupils.

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43. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic achievement are satisfactory. A computer program to track pupils' achievements has just been introduced and is beginning to identify how much progress pupils make in English and mathematics. As time permits, information on other subjects will be added and this will give teachers a much clearer picture of pupils' achievements when compared to national standards and expectations. Careful records are kept of pupils' achievements in reading and certain aspects of mathematics, but these are not yet used effectively to identify next steps in learning and to plan work that is appropriately matched to pupils' needs.

44. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum development is currently poor. Answers given by pupils in national tests have not been analysed closely enough to identify any strengths and weaknesses in curriculum provision. The headteacher is very aware of this and is already taking steps to rectify this situation. Information about pupils' knowledge and understanding is being collected, which will enable focused targets to be made and monitored closely. The new computer program will identify immediately any pupil who has not made the progress predicted, so the school will be able to put additional strategies and provision into place. Analysis of pupil assessments is not used sufficiently well to identify targets for school improvement.

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

45. The school has good relationships with parents and, together, they work well to support pupils' learning and personal development. Parents expressed positive views about the school. They said that they would feel very comfortable coming into school to talk about any concerns, and this was confirmed during the inspection. Parents have easy access to teachers and are welcome in school. They are kept well informed about what is going on in school through regular newsletters. They are supplied with an overview of the curriculum for the term and then given week-by-week information about what is being taught in each subject through the home-school link book. This enables them to support their children's learning at home.

46. Parents responding to the questionnaire expressed mixed views about homework. Over a quarter think pupils are given too much. Almost half are aware that it stands pupils in good stead when they move on to secondary school. The school provides a wide range and quantity of homework, which is relevant to what the pupils are doing in class and is interesting. Teachers do not expect pupils to complete all the homework set if, for example, they have out of school activities to attend, but they do encourage its completion. Homework makes a good contribution to the achievement of those who do it, particularly the progress they make in reading. Some parents could be more supportive of the school.

47. Parents are invited into school each term to discuss their child's progress and almost all attend. End of year reports now include information on attainment in foundation subjects as well as in the core subjects, an improvement since the last inspection. However, they are completed using a computer statement bank of National Curriculum learning objectives and are not very easy for parents to understand. The amount each teacher writes varies from class to class. The comments which teachers write about each pupil's general progress and attitudes to school are good. The ongoing dialogue about targets and achievements, through the home-school link book, is a strength.

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48. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are kept well informed about their progress. Regular reviews take place to which parents are invited. Many parents take full advantage of these opportunities to discuss and support their child's learning at school and at home.

49. The school also invites parents to attend special events such as Harvest Festival, Christmas plays and class assemblies. The school tries hard to involve parents in its work. The new headteacher has introduced a termly questionnaire to parents about their views of the school, and she responds to the comments raised in the subsequent newsletter. This is good practice. The Friends of Rettendon School (FRS) organise a good range of social and fund-raising events, aiming to involve the whole family and the wider community. Pupils were excitedly discussing their costumes for the forthcoming Hallowe'en disco. FRS raises large sums of money, which are used to improve school resources. For example, funds are used to keep the swimming pool functioning, provide equipment for the adventure playground and the computer suite. These extras make a significant contribution to pupils' education.

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

50. The new headteacher, staff and governors provide satisfactory leadership, which ensures that the school maintains its positive ethos and friendly atmosphere. The headteacher is providing good leadership and has a clear vision of what the school must do to raise standards. She has put into place a clear action plan to raise pupils' academic achievement, particularly in the infants, and she recognises that this is the most urgent priority for school improvement. However, the action plan is not yet part of an overall, strategic school improvement plan, which is currently a significant weakness. The school's aims for pupils to develop their full academic potential are not yet fully reflected in its work. However those related to developing pupils' personal development are achieved admirably.

51. The subject co-ordinators' role is not developed as well as it should be. As a result, there is too little sharing of the responsibility for improving standards, so the co-ordinators' contribution to school development is currently unsatisfactory. Co-ordinators have only recently been given responsibility for the development and improvement of their subjects. Although some action plans have been written outlining areas for improvement, these are not yet incorporated into an overall school improvement plan, so they are not yet having a positive effect on raising pupils' academic standards and achievement. Due to good relationships between all staff, the shared commitment and determination to improve is strong.

52. The management of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Although she has only a small amount of time in school, the co-ordinator does a good job in ensuring that pupils' individual learning programmes, and the support they receive, is suitable and matched appropriately to their needs. The governing body monitors the school's provision for pupils with special

educational needs appropriately, through regular reports. These discussions effectively inform the deployment of classroom assistants. Very good relationships between the special educational needs co-ordinator and classroom assistants enable support to be effective.

53. Governors know the school's strengths well. They are right to be proud of the school's positive ethos and welcoming atmosphere. However, they are not as aware of weaknesses,

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and they are not involved sufficiently in planning for improvement. This remains a weakness from the previous inspection. They visit regularly to see the school at work and report their findings to the full governing body. Following such visits, governors supported the recent development of a computer suite and, currently, they are working very hard to plan and develop a nursery on the school site. The governors have a suitable committee structure, which discusses curriculum, finance and staffing matters, but they are not yet well informed enough to act as a critical friend or to play a full part in shaping the direction of the school. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and report to parents through a suitable report every year.

54. Whole-school development planning is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient monitoring of pupils' attainment and achievement, so evaluation of this information does not inform what the school should be doing to improve. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is monitored infrequently, so weaknesses are not detected and tackled. Appropriate systems are in place for the performance management of teachers, which identify objectives for professional development and are suitably linked to training requirements. This has happened only recently. Training to update teachers' knowledge in ICT is already having a positive impact on standards in the juniors. The school does not yet use assessment information well enough to identify what the school does well and what needs to be improved. Targets for Year 6 pupils' attainment in English and mathematics are agreed with the local education authority, but these are not sufficiently informed by performance information to predict potential and individual targets.

55. Financial control and management are satisfactory. The school has successfully planned its way out of a deficit budget and now has the means to move forward and base financial decisions on identified school priorities. The school is already developing a flexible five-year plan to meet any unforeseen changes in circumstances, which can be put into place at a moment's notice. A very competent office manager uses the computer to manage the finances effectively and this allows the headteacher and governors to monitor spending carefully. Funds available to support specific purposes are targeted well. For example, pupils with special educational needs receive good support and the new computer suite is already beginning to raise standards in the subject. The recommendations of the recent audit report have been addressed satisfactorily. Because there are no formal monitoring systems in place, however, spending is not yet evaluated to see whether it is being used to best effect. The use of ICT to support school management is satisfactory. A new computer program has recently been introduced, which allows teachers to track the progress of individual pupils.

56. The school has a team of teachers and support staff who work well together for the benefit of all pupils. The school building has a suitable number of classrooms. While the classroom for the oldest pupils is spacious, the Year 3 and 4 classroom and activity areas for the reception class are rather cramped. Furthermore, the shape of the reception class makes the organisation of learning more difficult than normal. There is an adequately sized hall used for lunch, assembly and physical



education activities. The grounds are very good and provide the pupils with spacious play space, which is used very imaginatively during playtimes. The attractive area between the Year 5 and 6 class and the main building provides a suitable space for pupils to sit and chat. The adventure playground provides a valuable space for pupils to develop their outdoor and adventurous skills as well as developing confidence to climb and balance. The computer suite is a good facility, which enables pupils to use computers regularly to support their learning.

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57. There are sufficient resources of a satisfactory quality to support the curriculum, except in religious education and geography. Although the school often borrows relevant resources from a local organisation to support religious education, these are not always available during the rest of the year should teachers need to use them. The quality and quantity of books in the library is weak, but the school has recently bought a new reading scheme, which the younger pupils find interesting and enjoy reading.

58. At the time of the previous inspection, the quality of leadership and management was reported as good. The leadership from the new headteacher and the commitment of staff and governors give the school a satisfactory capacity to achieve further improvement.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

59. The school provides a positive environment for pupils' learning but aspects of teaching, the curriculum and the management of the school have weaknesses. To raise standards, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- ◆ Improve pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science during Key Stage 1, by:
  - ensuring that the range and quality of experiences provided for children in the Foundation Stage prepare them fully for all aspects of the National Curriculum;
  - increasing the emphasis on teaching pupils to write confidently, particularly the substantial proportion who are lower attainers;
  - continuing the improvements already made in supporting pupils' developing skills in reading, including involving parents fully;
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate in mathematics and science.

*(paragraphs 1-3, 27, 61, 71-72, 74-75, 78, 81, 86)*
- ◆ Raise the standard of teaching in the lessons where there are weaknesses, by:
  - ensuring that lesson planning identifies clearly what pupils will learn rather than what they will do;
  - ensuring that the tasks given to pupils are well matched to their needs, and help them to take the next step in their learning, particularly the higher attainers;
  - striking an appropriate balance between whole-class teaching and individual or group work, so that pupils have sufficient time to complete tasks;
  - injecting more pace into teaching;
  - ensuring that all adults have a clear teaching role during group and independent work;
  - enabling all teachers to observe and learn from existing good practice.

*(paragraphs 14-23, 76, 83, 88)*

- ◆ Use the information gathered about pupils' attainment and progress more consistently to:
  - identify areas of weakness in pupils' attainment;
  - set challenging targets for pupils' achievements;
  - monitor pupils' progress towards the targets set.

*(paragraphs 43-44, 62, 77, 84, 90)*

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- ◆ Adopt a more systematic approach to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning, by;
  - establishing an agreed policy that identifies shared criteria for good teaching and learning;
  - the headteacher and subject co-ordinators carrying out more rigorous monitoring, in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning;
  - formulating a clear strategic plan, with all staff and governors, to guide improvement;
  - ensuring that all staff are fully involved in the action needed to raise standards.

*(paragraphs 50-51, 54, 77, 84, 96)*

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. Each is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- ◆ Improve pupils' achievements in religious education. *(paragraphs 7, 117-120)*
- ◆ Increase teaching time for the juniors by restructuring the timing of lessons in the afternoon. *(paragraph 26)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

31
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

24
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### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		1	11	16	3		
Percentage		3	35	52	10		

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

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

YR – Y6
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Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	95
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95
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Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	7
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7
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Special educational needs**

YR – Y6
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Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
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4
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Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	27
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27
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#### **English as an additional language**

No of pupils
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Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
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1
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#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

No of pupils
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Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
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7
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Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10
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### **Attendance**

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	5.2

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

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### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	10	10	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	8	10
	Girls	6	9	8
	Total	15	17	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	75 (92)	85 (83)	90 (100)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	10
	Girls	7	7	9
	Total	16	17	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (83)	85 (100)	95 (100)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	5	9	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	5	5
	Girls	6	8	8
	Total	11	13	13

Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (80)	93 (80)	93 (93)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	5	5
	Girls	6	8	7
	Total	10	13	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (67)	93 (87)	86 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	78
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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: YR– Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	26

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	81

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	300636.00
Total expenditure	288771.00
Expenditure per pupil	2725.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	8772.00
Balance carried forward to next year	20637.00

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	100
Number of questionnaires returned	24

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	29	8	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	38	8	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	46	4	4	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	25	21	8	0
The teaching is good.	42	50	8	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	42	4	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	21	8	0	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve	63	38	0	0	0

his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

46	42	8	0	4
50	42	4	0	4
38	63	0	0	0
21	54	17	4	4

Only three parents attended the meeting but they were positive about all aspects of the school's work. They feel well informed about events at school and the work their children are doing in lessons. The home/school link book encourages good dialogue between parents and teachers. They said that staff are very approachable if parents have concerns. They recognised that homework, particularly for the older pupils, can be demanding, but felt that this stood children in good stead when they transferred to secondary school. These parents are pleased with the progress their children are making, including those who have special educational needs. They feel that the school promotes good attitudes and values, and that behaviour in school is very good. Since the last inspection, these parents feel that a number of valuable improvements have been made to the building, for example the computer suite.

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

60. There is a wide range of attainment when children join the reception class but, overall, the current group is below average compared with what is expected nationally. Attainment on entry varies from year to year. At the time of the inspection, there were 10 children attending full time in the reception class, including two of the youngest Year 1 pupils. For two days each week, four younger reception children join the class, on a part-time basis. About half of the children are on course to attain the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development by the time they start Year 1. One child should exceed the goals, but about half will not reach them.

61. At the last inspection, the children in the reception class were said to be making good progress. Since then, with the introduction of the Foundation Stage curriculum, expectations have changed, and the school has not responded fully to new requirements. The curriculum includes a range of activities that cover all areas of learning. Whole-class sessions are usually lively and interesting, and basic skills in language and mathematics are taught systematically. The staff make good use of opportunities to develop the children's language, curiosity and practical skills. However, they do not provide the best balance of whole-class and self-chosen activities that is most relevant for children of this age. In many of the lessons observed, adults led the learning, so there were too few opportunities for children to select activities independently, or spend an extended period of time

experimenting and exploring, with adults supporting learning. As a result, whilst most aspects of children's language and mathematical development are catered for, elements of personal development, knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development receive too little emphasis. Nonetheless, children's achievements are sound during their time in the reception class.

62. Baseline assessment results are used to guide future planning of activities, but there is little systematic use of assessment to identify specific and appropriate learning objectives for each child. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to guiding children's learning, and there is careful support for children with special educational needs. A well-planned induction programme enables children to make a smooth start at school and begins fruitful and supportive links with parents.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

63. Sound teaching supports the needs of individuals and helps all children to make steady progress. Most are confident, interested and keen to learn. For example, the children really enjoyed making American Indian head dresses. They concentrated on the activity, shared resources fairly, and wore their finished head dresses with great pride. Relationships between children are variable. In some situations they work and play well together, for example when two boys were making a tunnel in the sand tray. At other times, they find it difficult to share and take turns. Behaviour is generally good, and expectations are high, but some children misbehave when they have to sit for too long. There is a wide range of attainment in self-care,

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as seen when most children needed assistance putting on their socks following a music and dance lesson. There are clear expectations, which help children to develop their understanding of right and wrong. Staff also show empathy for the emotional needs of young children, and are very positive about any achievements. The preponderance of whole-class sessions, however, means that children's skills in working independently and making choices are not promoted sufficiently.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

64. Teaching, and children's achievements, are sound in this area, though there tends to be more emphasis on whole-class activities than on developing children's language skills as part of their wider learning. In literacy sessions, most children listen attentively to stories, speak confidently and clearly, and many are beginning to recognise letter sounds. For example, when the teacher read the story of 'Goldilocks and the three bears', many children knew that 'bears' began with 'b' and 'porridge' began with 'p'.

65. All the children handle books appropriately, and most are beginning to understand that it is the print that tells the story. About half of the children have made a good start reading simple texts and they should exceed the early learning goal in this aspect of their skills. Almost all of the children write their own first name independently, but with varying degrees of accuracy and control. When children were engaged in a range of independent activities, there were good examples of them having opportunities to read and write, such as when they made 'A cat in a box', inspired by the story book. Adults do not always take these opportunities to teach the next steps in reading and writing because they have not planned to do so. The role play shop provided good opportunities for making 'shopping lists' but, around the classroom, children do not have enough access to books, paper, pencils and other equipment that would encourage them to incorporate reading and writing in to their play.



## **Mathematical development**

66. Teaching is sound in this area of learning. Most of the children are confident counting to 10, and many can count beyond. They are less confident counting groups of objects, though higher attainers do so accurately, such as when one child counted the heads, then the arms, then the legs of the four gingerbread men he had made. Many of the children are also beginning to grasp the idea of 'one more than'. The practical activities seen provided good opportunities for developing the children's concepts of size and shape. For example, there was much debate about the relative sizes of the bears that the children made from salt dough. Because there is a wide range of ability, a weakness in the whole-class sessions is that work can be too hard for some children and too easy for others. Lesson planning does not always identify learning intentions specifically enough, and does not include practical activities that are needed for the children to grasp the concept.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

67. Teaching is sound in this area, with a satisfactory range of experiences to develop children's knowledge and understanding. For example, they made 'magic glasses' with coloured cellophane and were fascinated by the way these changed their vision. During this activity, the children noticed that they could see through some parts of a cleaning cloth, but not others, and this was exploited well by the teacher to test the cloth against various coloured papers. This activity generated a good deal of discussion and new vocabulary, which enriched

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children's language. The children are confident when investigating, but do not have enough opportunities to do so independently. During the inspection, children made a range of things, from head dresses to threading squares of fabric to make 'autumn leaves' for a 'tree'. They showed sound early skills in selecting materials, cutting and joining. All the children are confident using a computer and benefit from sessions in the school's computer suite. They use a mouse well to control a range of simple programs. The lack of a computer in the classroom means that they cannot consolidate and extend these skills as part of self-chosen activities. The children showed a developing sense of time when they sequenced events during the day, though about half found this too difficult. Photographs of a recent visit to Danbury Lakes show that children are introduced to different environments. The work on American Indian culture, though music, dance and art, provided a practical way of understanding some aspects of a different culture.

## **Physical development**

68. Progress in this aspect is restricted because the outdoor area is small, so children cannot readily develop skills in running, jumping, climbing and balancing. Nonetheless, staff make best use of the facilities they have, using the hall and an adventure play area. In a dance lesson, the children used space well, moving in a variety of ways and responding to the beat of the music. Teaching for this aspect of physical development is sound but physical activity is too infrequent. In other activities, children's skills in using and manipulating a range of tools develop well and, overall, these skills are good.

## **Creative development**

69. Teaching is sound in this area. A range of activities enables children to make sound progress in developing their creative skills, but mainly in a fairly structured way. Children sing a variety of familiar rhymes and songs, though music teaching is not a strong feature because the staff are less

confident in this area. Art activities, such as making a collage of a tree, provide good opportunities for children to develop their creative skills, as well as the personal skills of sharing resources and taking turns. However, there is no ready access to a range of musical instruments, or constant opportunities for art activities, which would help all children to use their imagination and build their early creative skills. During the inspection, whenever children could choose their own activity, they were very keen to dress up because some of the clothes were very attractive. However, opportunities to extend and develop their play were not taken. The role play shop was used imaginatively by a number of groups of children.

## **ENGLISH**

70. Standards of attainment have fallen since the previous inspection, particularly at the end of Year 2. Although making this comparison is difficult, owing to variations in the ability of each small year group, pupils' achievements across the school have also deteriorated from good to satisfactory, and are unsatisfactory in the infants.

71. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 were well below average in reading, and below average in writing. They were worse than results gained by schools in similar social circumstances. Results have fluctuated in recent years. For example, the reading results were close to the national average in 2000. However, very few pupils reach

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the higher Level 3 of attainment and this depresses the school's overall performance. National test results in English at the end of Year 6 were close to the national average, about the same as those gained by similar schools, but just below the school's agreed target.

72. Inspection evidence shows attainment in the current Year 2 to be well below national expectations in both reading and writing. The class had a number of changes of teacher during last year, which interrupted pupils' progress, and there is a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group than is usual for the school. Nonetheless, pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory during the infants. The work they are given is not matched closely enough to their needs so that they can take the next step in their learning. Attainment in the current Year 6 is below national expectations, but these pupils' achievements have been satisfactory in the juniors, compared with their results in the Year 2 national tests. There is a small group of high attainers, and their needs are not always catered for effectively. Tasks are often too easy, or are posed in a way that does not allow these higher attainers to extend their skills in reading and writing. Work and adult support are targeted better for pupils with special educational needs, and their achievements are good.

73. Attainment in speaking and listening is close to national expectations. Most pupils listen attentively in lessons and answer questions clearly. For example, in a lesson for Years 1 and 2, the pupils enjoyed listening to the story 'Handa's Surprise' and answered questions about the characters and the plot. Many of the answers were well expressed, such as when one pupil explained that the purpose of the 'ring' on Handa's head was to support the bowl in which she was carrying fruit. In each class, there is a small group of pupils who are reluctant to speak, but teachers draw them into discussions skilfully. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed that they could discuss the content of a text in pairs. They worked out how the main character Tim felt when he was being

bullied, and shared their views with the class. At the end of the lesson, pupils read out their own stories confidently and the rest of the class listened carefully. Having read the poem 'Block City' by R L Stevenson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 explained that the poet is describing an imaginary world, and a higher-attaining group compared the style with another, similar poem. Too many speaking and listening activities are teacher led. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to speak and listen in paired and group work for a variety of purposes.

74. Most pupils enjoy reading. In Year 2, however, standards are well below national expectations, with three-quarters of the pupils reading below, often well below, the level expected for their ages. The few higher attainers read easy novels fluently, with good understanding of the text, but lacking in expression. The average attainers read simple books competently, have a good pool of known words, and use letter sounds, pictures and the plot to help them read unfamiliar words. About a third of the pupils are still at the early stages of reading and need considerable support to read simple texts. These pupils are not reaching their potential. During the past few years, it was the school's policy not to let pupils take home the book they were reading in school. This has been reversed, and evidence from pupils' home/school link books indicates that more progress is now being made. However, pupils still do not read frequently enough with an adult in school, and the next step each child needs to take in developing reading skills is not identified clearly enough. By Year 6, higher attainers are reading difficult texts accurately, with good expression, and reasonable comprehension. However, they have a limited range of favourite books and authors, so their

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tastes in literature are not being extended sufficiently. The average attainers are reading a little below the expected level, but with good comprehension. About a third of the pupils still struggle with fairly simple texts, but they have a good range of strategies to read unknown words. All have a fair knowledge of how to find information using non-fiction books.

75. Throughout the school, the range of writing tasks is too narrow. There is too great an emphasis on exercises and worksheets and too little focus on pupils writing as much as they can independently, for a range of purposes. As a result, pupils are not building up the confidence and stamina they need to be writers. The lack of focus on independent writing also means that teachers cannot easily assess pupils' existing skills and decide what they need to learn next. In Year 2, standards are well below national expectations, with only about a fifth of the pupils writing at a level close to that expected for their ages. They write a structured series of ideas, with well-formed handwriting and accurate spelling, though punctuation is weak. The rest of the pupils write only simple words or phrases, with handwriting, spelling and punctuation all weak. The better tasks amongst the Year 2 work are when pupils write directions to get to the church or instructions to make a gingerbread man. By Year 6, attainment is below national expectations. Higher attainers write confidently, such as a description of the 'Black Death', using a range of imaginative vocabulary, or a fluent description of a pet cat. About a third of the pupils, however, write a limited amount, and handwriting, spelling and punctuation are weak. There are too few opportunities for pupils to improve a first draft of their writing.

76. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1, but satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all of the six lessons seen, even though there were weaknesses in some. However, evidence from pupils' work, and the standards they have reached indicates that

teaching has been unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1. The standard of teaching has fallen since the previous inspection. Good features of many lessons were the positive relationships between teachers and pupils, lively whole-class sessions in which pupils were involved effectively, astute questioning, and good explanations of tasks. For example, in a good lesson for Years 5 and 6 exploring types of nouns, the teacher shared the learning objective with the pupils so that they knew exactly what they were trying to achieve. The task was explained clearly and pupils were given a time limit in which to complete their work. As a result, the pupils were focused on the task and made good progress. In some lessons, what the pupils were to learn was not clear, because teachers' planning described tasks and not learning. As a result, it was not possible to judge the success of the lesson. A common weakness was that the whole-class session lasted too long, leaving insufficient time for pupils to work independently. Some of the tasks given to pupils were not well matched to their needs, such as when higher-attaining Year 2 pupils copied out 10 sentences and added capital letters and full stops. In some lessons, classroom assistants were used very well to support pupils' learning, but in others they spent too little time working with pupils.

77. The literacy strategy is established throughout the school, but teachers do not use the format flexibly enough. Most classes have two year groups and a very wide range of ability. Literacy lessons are not always tailored to meet the needs of all the pupils. Planning for literacy work in subjects other than English is not systematic, though pieces of writing produced in ICT are of good quality. The pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing are assessed, but the information is only just being collated and evaluated so that it

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can be used to identify what individual pupils need to learn next. The school is to receive intensive literacy support from the local authority. Organisation of the subject across the school is unsatisfactory because there has been very little monitoring of the standard of teaching and learning and the only plans to raise standards concern spelling.

## **MATHEMATICS**

78. Results of the 2001 national assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2 were well below the national average and well below average compared with results gained by similar schools. Although an average proportion of pupils attained the expected Level 2, very few pupils reached the higher Level 3, which depressed the school's performance. Inspection evidence indicates that teachers' expectations were too low for this group of pupils. Assessment information was not used enough to ensure that work was sufficiently challenging, and the work pupils were given did not require them to use a range of strategies to solve problems. These results were lower than those reported at the last inspection.

79. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were above average when compared to all schools nationally and when compared to similar schools. This was because a higher proportion of pupils than nationally attained the expected Level 4 or higher, and indicates good achievement in the juniors. These test results were higher than those reported in the last inspection.

80. Inspection evidence indicates that, despite a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs than last year, attainment is close to national expectations in the current Year 6. Attainment is below expectations in the current Year 2 owing to the very low number of pupils who are likely to

achieve Level 3. During the past four years, standards in Year 6 have gradually improved at the same rate as the national trend. Overall, this means that pupils' achievements are satisfactory across the school.

81. Scrutiny of work indicates that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are better with number than other aspects of mathematics. Most pupils add and subtract 2, 3, 4 or 5 to and from 10 and can identify when a number is odd or even. Higher-attaining Year 2 pupils order and sort larger numbers, deciding whether they are greater than or less than 100 and at the same time whether they are odd or even. This represents average standards in number, but too little mathematical work involves pupils in investigating number problems so that they find out about relationships and patterns between numbers. Work on shape and measures is of a lower standard than number. The work is at too simple a level so all pupils are working at the same standard regardless of their previous learning.

82. Pupils in the juniors are challenged immediately they start Year 3. The level of work is appropriate and they are given suitable support to make sure that they understand work at this level. They make immediate good progress and are soon working at expected levels. They are particularly good at deciding on the best strategy to use to work out their answers to calculations and to solve problems. By Year 6, pupils work confidently with numbers up to and greater than 1000. They add, subtract, multiply and divide using a range of methods and can do this mentally to 100. Many pupils know their tables and use these quickly when being introduced to new work, as demonstrated in a lesson when they were asked to find a quarter of any number, and they knew to divide by 4, using their four times table.

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83. The quality of the teaching observed in the infants was satisfactory, though there have been a number of changes of teacher in the last few years, and pupils' past work shows that their achievements have been unsatisfactory. The planned work follows that outlined in the National Numeracy Strategy and this ensures that the pupils receive a balanced curriculum, but work is often either too easy or too hard. Many skills are taught through suitable games, which keep the pupils' attention and interest. However, when the teacher talks for too long in whole-class sessions, the pupils lose concentration and behaviour becomes more difficult to manage. Teaching in the juniors is good and pupils achieve well. Teachers' have high expectations in these classes and plan tasks which the pupils find challenging. Pupils are expected to solve problems using their own strategies and good opportunities are provided for them to explain how a particular strategy was used. This enables pupils to find the best strategy to solve a particular problem. As a consequence, higher-attaining Year 5 and 6 pupils find what fraction £37.50 was of £45 by using division and their knowledge and understanding of reducing fractions to their lowest form.

84. The organisation of mathematics across the school is satisfactory. Regular assessments are carried out to find out what pupils can do, but as yet this information is not used well enough to match planned tasks to pupils' individual abilities. The information is used to measure pupils' progress but is not used well enough to set targets for achievement or to find reasons why some pupils are not achieving as well as they should. A new computer system for recording pupils' progress has been introduced recently and this gives teachers useful information on which pupils have not achieved their targets. There are plans to use this system consistently across the school. Although the co-ordinator has monitored pupils' work closely and has noticed the lower standards

and achievement of pupils in Years 1 and 2, no monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place. Therefore, possible reasons for lower standards have not been identified or included in a whole-school improvement plan.

## SCIENCE

85. Attainment has fallen significantly since the previous inspection and is now below average overall. This represents unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Teacher assessments in 2001 showed that, while a very high proportion of Year 2 pupils attained average standards, no pupils achieved the higher Level 3 and fewer pupils were assessed as achieving average standards in their scientific enquiry skills.

86. Inspection evidence shows that standards in the infants are well below average. Pupils are expected to do the same work regardless of their age and ability, so higher-attaining Year 2 pupils are doing the same work as lower-attaining Year 1 pupils. For example, when measuring the size of their hands, feet and the circumference of their head, all pupils were expected to use cubes for a measure when several pupils clearly understood and could use centimetres. Planned tasks are based too much on the content of the scheme of work and are rarely matched to the learning needs of pupils. The level of task is set too low for pupils to achieve high standards. Achievement is, therefore, currently unsatisfactory in the infants.

87. Results of the 2001 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were below average. This is the same as the previous year so a downward trend seems to have been halted. Inspection evidence also indicates that standards in the current Year 6 are below average.

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Pupils carry out careful observations and are beginning to draw conclusions from these about their findings. However, little work was seen which involved any form of measuring and, therefore, it is difficult for pupils to achieve higher than average standards. There is a broad range of scientific topics in pupils' books and these are linked closely to the new scheme of work recently introduced. Pupils talk knowledgeably about planets and space and have a good knowledge of famous scientists and their work. Some pupils have developed their research skills through surfing the Internet. Achievement is satisfactory in the juniors.

88. The quality of teaching in the infants is unsatisfactory. Teachers expect too little of pupils and do not plan work which is challenging enough, especially for higher attainers. During the one lesson seen, pupils were asked to record what they already knew about plants and animals and no new learning took place. This finding is supported by the work seen in books, which was identical in content for all pupils and did not extend learning far enough. Relationships are good, however, and this, coupled to the good management of behaviour, enables the class teacher to move around the groups giving support where required. During the one lesson seen, this involved pupils having the opportunity to look closely at a worm and woodlouse and to notice and talk about the different features of each one. The pupils were clearly fascinated by this.

89. Teaching in the juniors is good. More emphasis is given to pupils finding out about scientific knowledge and concepts through investigating and carrying out experiments. Pupils are learning to question, and to test materials and physical processes to solve problems and find a scientific

explanation for things that happen. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were fascinated by their study of a range of rocks and were keen to find out which ones soak up water and which ones do not. They are developing an awareness of fair testing, and are beginning to realise that things must be done in the same way each time. They are developing good social skills when they take turns and share the equipment being used. Pupils are interested in lessons because they are actively involved in finding out why things happen and how things work. Pupils talk eagerly about the range of activities in which they have taken part. Homework is used well in Years 5 and 6, for example when pupils are given a practical research project linked to their work on microorganisms.

90. In the infants, assessment information is not used well enough to identify what pupils need to learn next, in order to improve, so the match of work is unsuitable for many pupils. There is too little emphasis given to the learning of scientific enquiry skills and this means that pupils often have no idea how to investigate and explore scientific problems without a great deal of teacher direction and support.

91. The co-ordinator has begun to monitor the quality of pupils' work and has noticed the dip in standards in Years 1 and 2. Assessment information has been put into a new computer program and this has enabled the school, for the first time, to see how much progress pupils have or have not made. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory because steps are being taken to remedy weaknesses. Computers are used on occasion to support learning in science. However, this is not yet formally identified in the scheme of work and so teachers do not use ICT consistently in lessons. For example, pupils are not familiar with light, sound and temperature sensors to measure their investigations carried out in science, even though these resources are available to teachers.

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## **ART and DESIGN**

92. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is close to national expectations. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory across the school, as noted at the last inspection. Only one art lesson was observed, so judgements are largely based on an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and staff.

93. Pupils complete work using good range of techniques, including drawing and painting, collage, clay, fabric and printing. They learn skills, and focus on different aspects of art, such as colour or texture. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were beginning a theme about portraits. They considered portraits painted by a variety of famous artists. To explore their own ideas, they sketched self-portraits of different expressions using a mirror, and made features on plasticine faces. Their subsequent paintings of happy faces show good attention to detail and an appreciation of the use of colour to show mood. Clay houses, made earlier in the year, are of high quality. The pupils sketched the schoolhouse and looked at the shapes and patterns of windows, timber and masonry. The results of their careful observation are clear in the finished pieces, which have considerable detail and are complemented by attractive glazes.

94. Printing by pupils in Years 3 and 4 shows a sound appreciation of pattern and colour, and the crisp quality of many of the prints shows good technique. The pupils experimented with repeating patterns on paper and later contributed fabric panels to an attractive hanging. In Years 5 and 6, pupils considered photographs of a range of headdresses from various cultures around the world. In their sketchbooks, they experimented with ideas for the shape, colour and decoration of their own

headress, and then drew a design. The finished pieces are impressive, and use a good range of materials and techniques to create a wide variety of effects. A fabric hanging of 'The legend of Robin Hood' shows a good range of skills in printing, embroidery and appliqué.

95. In the one lesson seen, the quality of teaching was good. The teacher drew well on the work of Paul Klee, which stimulated the pupils to think about symbolic ways to represent a journey. Pupils worked in sketchbooks to capture their initial ideas, and the teacher skilfully encouraged them to refine their first attempts. During painting, the teacher provided good support and advice, whilst allowing pupils to make their own decisions about colour and content. Discussion with pupils revealed that they enjoy their art lessons.

96. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work to plan the curriculum. A good feature of the work seen is the way in which teachers encourage pupils to develop their work through a series of stages, building creativity and skills. The use of sketchbooks is developing. A number of ICT programs help pupils to experiment. Organisation of the subject across the school is sound, and the co-ordinator provides resources and advice to colleagues. However, evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning is largely informal and there is no plan to show how standards can be raised further.

## **DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY**

97. Attainment in design and technology is close to national expectations at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Pupils' achievements across the school are satisfactory. These judgements are based on looking at display and talking to pupils about their work. No lessons were seen during the inspection, so no judgement is made on the quality of teaching and learning.

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98. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have been involved in a range of cooking activities linked to their work on senses in science. They have designed and made fruit salads and vegetable stir-fries and evaluated them in terms of their smell and taste. They have a sound understanding of how to design, make and evaluate their tasks, and they talk about their activities with obvious enjoyment.

99. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 have designed and made purses, which are finished to a good quality. Pupils have used buttons, press-studs, a drawstring or a flap to act as a fastening. These add individuality to each purse and make it fully functional. Blanket, running and overstitching skills have been developed well and the neatness of finish reflects pupils' positive attitudes and amount of care taken. Pupils have been given good opportunities to choose from sequins or beads to decorate their purses. Some pupils have used embroidery to finish the purses to a good standard. The work reflects the design process in full and pupils have clearly planned in detail the different steps in the production of their purses.

100. The headgear in Years 5 and 6 demonstrates clearly the level of independence developed in designing and choosing the materials. Careful evaluation is recorded using a digital camera and this has been successfully inserted into a word processing package on the computer for pupils to add a written commentary about the quality of their work. This also reflects the sound knowledge they have of their own performance and learning.



## **GEOGRAPHY**

101. Too little evidence was available to make secure judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. No lessons were observed during the inspection, and there was very little of pupils' recorded work because, in the juniors, the school organises the curriculum in blocks and no geography had been studied in the first half of the term. Evidence from discussions with pupils indicates that attainment in Year 6 is below national expectations, and lower than at the last inspection.

102. In the infants, pupils have studied a topic called 'Global Eye'. They found out about the ways in which charities help people around the world whose sight is failing. An attractive display of their work shows that they are beginning to understand how people's lives are very different in the developing world. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 revealed a very scant knowledge of the topics they had studied. Map work skills are sound, including the use of co-ordinates and the interpretation of features and symbols on large scale maps. However, pupils had very little recollection of any work involving places that are different to their own locality, apart from a few facts about a village in India that they had studied the previous year. They particularly remembered the monsoon climate, and that people have to travel long journeys to fetch clean water. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work, but the organisation of the curriculum is not helping pupils to build their knowledge, skills and understanding steadily.

## **HISTORY**

103. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, but evidence from pupils' recorded work, teachers' planning and discussions indicates that pupils' achievements are satisfactory. By Year 6, attainment is close to national expectations, though pupils' knowledge of the topics they have covered is better than their skills in interpreting historical events. Standards are similar to the previous inspection.

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104. In the infants, pupils study famous people from the past, most recently Florence Nightingale. They make good use of pictorial evidence to identify the differences between the clothes people wore 150 years ago and those of today. They are beginning to grasp the idea of chronology because they know that Florence lived long before their own grandparents, and they have a good factual knowledge about why she was famous and the work she did nursing soldiers in the Crimean War.

105. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 study the Romans and they know a good deal about their way of life and the invasion of Britain. They are fascinated by the story of Boudicca, the warrior queen who fought the Romans. They understand that the Romans defeated Boudicca, despite being outnumbered, because their army was better organised. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 had just started their work on the 1960s, by studying popular culture and the Beatles. Their accounts of being adoring fans show a good understanding of what it would have been like to be at a Beatles' concert, and make a good contribution to strengthening literacy skills. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 showed that they have a sound factual knowledge of a range of topics they have studied, including the Romans, Tudors, and World War II. They remember details such as the diary of Ann Frank and how this is valuable evidence about a particular period in history. Overall, however, Year 6 pupils have a limited understanding of how evidence can be conflicting, how society changed during periods they have studied, or how an event can cause later changes.

106. In the two lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers used good resources to capture pupils' interest, such as the cape and cap that the teacher wore when telling the story of Florence Nightingale. Good knowledge of the subject, clear learning objectives and skilled questioning helped pupils to make good progress in both lessons. A good variety of tasks, matched well to the pupils' needs, ensured that they were interested and worked hard. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work. 'History days' and visits to places of historical interest such as the Tudor Kentwell Hall enrich the curriculum. The potential of local history is not much exploited. Sound use of ICT supports pupils' writing, and they deepen their understanding of some topics through programs that simulate life in the past. There is little assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Organisation of the subject across the school is satisfactory, though the co-ordinator has another subject to manage, which has been the main focus recently. As a result, there has been little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and form plans to raise standards further.

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

107. Since the previous inspection, there has been a considerable improvement in resources for ICT. The new computer suite provides good opportunities for pupils to practise skills and to increase their knowledge and understanding of computer software and the possibilities created by the Internet. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory, and those in the current Year 6 and Year 2 attain standards that are expected for their ages.

108. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 used computers independently to write their evaluations of how they made their headgear in art and design. They added interest to their work by changing the font size, colour and style. They successfully imported a photograph of themselves wearing

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their headgear and organised their writing around this to improve the presentation. All are able to log on, save work to their own file and print out the work independently. Suitable support enables them to get on with their work quickly. All pupils are familiar with the Internet and can find an appropriate website when researching any given topic. Activities are interesting and relevant and pupils are keen to use computers to present their work. They particularly liked applying their skills of using spreadsheets to plan their own party, many deciding to visit Alton Towers for the day with a group of friends. They are now aware of the full costs for such a visit and whether they can afford it.

109. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Activities are well planned and suitably based in interesting activities, so pupils are motivated to learn. There are plans to develop an assessment sheet, which will better inform teachers of the skills that pupils should be using. At present, though pupils take part in a series of interesting activities, these do not focus closely enough on the skills that they should be developing. As a result, though pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoy practising their addition and subtraction skills through a number of interesting programs, they do not extend their computer skills beyond using the mouse button to select from a choice of answers on screen.

110. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are more confident and familiar with a number of CDs, which allows them to research a range of topics. For example, they use 'World Explorer' independently and enjoy finding out about countries. When the teacher told the pupils that they had won a holiday

competition, they were intrigued to find out what was written on the ticket, which told them where they were going. This interesting context sparked their imagination and motivated them to find out more about their given country, how to get there and what they would find when they arrived. They were able to turn up the volume so that they could hear the animal and other sounds associated with their given country, and use the keyboard confidently to write their names in their passports.

111. Co-ordination of the subject is good. A suitable action plan identifies strengths and areas for development in the subject. These include some teachers' lack of confidence and expertise, and suitable training has been planned to overcome this. The school does not yet monitor the use of the suite closely enough. Although the lack of use by the Year 1 and 2 class has been identified, the school is not yet insisting on the suite being used for all or most of the timetabled slots. Suitable links are made to use computers and other ICT to support learning in other subjects but, at the moment, this is left too much to individual teachers, so that the full range of possibilities is not always used.

112. The quality of computers is good and, though there are enough for pupils to work in pairs in most classes, one class has too many pupils for this to happen. The teacher concerned makes sure that difficulties are overcome by planning and preparing the same work on a laptop, and pupils working with this are given suitable support. There are enough suitable resources for covering the curriculum except data-logging equipment. The school is aware of this and is effectively providing relevant resources as the scheme of work is implemented.

## **MUSIC**

113. Too little evidence was available to make secure judgements about pupils' achievements or the quality of teaching and learning. Only two lessons were observed during the inspection, both in the infants. Pupils sang enthusiastically and tunefully in assembly. It is

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not possible to judge whether standards of attainment have improved since the previous inspection when pupils were said to make unsatisfactory progress across the school. Resources have improved and there has been staff training.

114. In the two lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was sound in one and good in the other. In the better lesson, a good range of activities was well planned. Pupils listened to some firework sounds and then made the sounds themselves. They followed the teacher's 'conducting' to make the various sounds in varying tempo. After some time experimenting with percussion instruments, groups of pupils performed their firework music. The teacher organised a busy lesson effectively, making good use of other adults. The pupils had good opportunities for listening, composing and performing, and thoroughly enjoyed the lesson.

115. The school uses a nationally recommended scheme of work. A number of pupils learn guitar or piano taught by a visiting specialist. Special events such as Harvest Festival and the school production provide opportunities for pupils to perform. The co-ordinator is very recently appointed and has had no opportunities to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning across the school or to formulate plans to improve standards. As a result, co-ordination of the subject is currently unsatisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

116. No lessons were seen during the inspection so no judgements are made on standards, pupils' attitudes and the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with pupils, looking at teachers' planning and photographic evidence show that there is a broad and balanced range of physical education activities in which pupils take part. The curriculum covers all aspects of the National Curriculum. Pupils take part in a range of outdoor and adventurous activities throughout the juniors and have further opportunity during the residential visit in Year 6. Swimming takes place in the summer in the school's own pool. However, time for physical education lessons is lower than in most schools and, during the week of the inspection, the Year 5 and 6 class had no planned lesson. This was because other subjects were being given priority within a 'blocked' curriculum. These arrangements are unsatisfactory because pupils are not getting sufficient physical education regularly enough.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

117. Attainment by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is below the expectations outlined in the locally agreed syllabus for the subject, and lower than at the previous inspection. Although higher-attaining pupils recall facts about the customs of Islam and Judaism, other pupils have too little knowledge and understanding of a range of faiths, including Christianity. One pupil asked, "Who is the Virgin Mary?" when the class was looking at the persons depicted in the picture of a stained glass window. Lesson content is often based too much on pupils learning facts rather than developing the skills as outlined in the agreed syllabus. As a result, some pupils fail to make the links between significant religious occasions and their purpose and meaning.

118. The moral content of the agreed syllabus is handled rather better. Pupils are often engaged in discussions about moral issues, for example regarding the care of the

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environment. Year 1 and 2 pupils understood fully the meaning of 'precious' when they all successfully managed to identify something that was precious because it was expensive and another object which was precious and cost nothing at all. This was due to the teacher's careful questioning and thoughtful planning, which kept the whole-class session focused on this concept throughout. Two items chosen by the teacher were placed in boxes, which were in turn placed strategically in the centre of the circle. This was good management because all the pupils wanted to find out what was inside the boxes.

119. The quality of teaching over time is unsatisfactory. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are too low and, consequently, pupils are not challenged enough to consider the religious significance of beliefs, festivals and celebrations. Individual work often requires pupils to draw and colour pictures rather than to build on from whole-class teaching sessions. The teaching of moral issues drawn from the agreed syllabus is more successful. Whole-class teaching sessions can be good. When talking about the birth of Jesus, one pupil was encouraged to talk about a personal visit to a church where she lit a candle on entry. This was fully exploited by the teacher and enabled the class to consider the significance of the symbol of the candle. This was linked skilfully to journeys and pilgrimages taken by people to places of religious significance. In other lessons, learning was less successful as the teacher did not involve the pupils in discussion or in the suggested question and

answer activities outlined in the scheme of work. Pupils soon lost interest and paid too little attention to learn successfully.

120. Co-ordination of the subject is unsatisfactory. The co-ordinator is newly appointed and as yet there has been no opportunity to evaluate strengths and areas for development. There is a new scheme of work, but this is not matched sufficiently well to the agreed syllabus so the co-ordinator is not sure which aspects have been covered and when. Festivals are studied regularly and this aspect shows signs of improvement. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of a range of different faiths is weak, however, owing to the fragmented organisation of learning. The contribution of religious education to pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. The range of resources for learning is unsatisfactory. Although the school borrows relevant resources from a local organisation, these are not available at other times when they may be needed. There has been no monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. There is no suitable plan to inform the action required to raise standards.