

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST EDMUNDSBURY CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124762

Headteacher: Ms J Maurice

Reporting inspector: Mrs M S Summers
25455

Dates of inspection: 8th –11th May 2001

Inspection number: 196496

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	7 Grove Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
Postcode:	IP33 3BJ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body, St Edmundsbury CE Primary School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Merriam
Date of previous inspection:	March 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Edmundsbury's Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary school caters for 211 pupils between four and nine years of age. There are 12 children in the Reception class who are still four years old. Although the intake of pupils into the Reception class has been low this year, this reflects the general trend in the area. Normally, the school is fully subscribed and this shows its popularity and good reputation. About one third of pupils come from outside the immediate area. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. There are more boys than girls in each year group. Only about one per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is low compared with most schools and all of these pupils are fluent English speakers. Twenty per cent of pupils are identified with special educational needs, which is average, and one per cent have statements of special educational need, which is below average. Most pupils begin school with levels of attainment which are above average. Considerable staff changes have occurred since the last inspection, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The chair of governors is also new.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school. The high quality of the school's leadership and management ensures very good teaching and learning and a well-planned curriculum. These factors have led to very high standards in pupils' attainment. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by other staff with management responsibilities, promotes high and improving standards for the pupils.
- High quality teaching, particularly in Years 3 and 4, helps the pupils to make very good progress.
- The school is a caring community and the strong relationships between children and adults help them to become keen and confident learners.
- The school's very good links with parents and the community greatly assist the progress which pupils make.
- The curriculum is very well organised and ensures that pupils cover all subjects in a systematic fashion as they move through the school.
- Assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science are used very well to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are provided with appropriate work which meets their needs.

What could be improved

- There are some items of legally required information missing from the governors' Annual Report to parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made significant improvement since its last inspection in March 1997. The quality of teaching is much better and pupils are reaching higher standards in most subjects. The areas highlighted for improvement at the last inspection have all been addressed extremely well. There are now very clear and fully costed plans for the school's continuing development and there are successful procedures to monitor and improve teaching, learning and behaviour. The headteacher and senior staff now have a great impact on the quality of provision and standards. The curriculum for young children in the Foundation Stage takes account of nationally recommended guidelines. Assessment procedures have been radically overhauled and now provide excellent information to enable teachers to provide suitable work for different groups of children. The school is on course to continue its excellent rate of improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
Reading	A	B	B	B
Writing	C	C	B	B
Mathematics	A	A	A	A

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

The school is maintaining high standards in reading and mathematics and standards in writing have improved. A high percentage of pupils reached well above average levels in the tests in reading and mathematics last year although this figure was only average in writing. Pupils in Year 2 this year are on course to achieve the challenging targets set for them by the school and this includes more pupils reaching high levels in writing. The assessments made by teachers last year showed that pupils were reaching average standards in science. The findings of the current inspection show standards this year to be well above average in reading, writing and mathematics and above average in science. Improvement is due to high quality teaching in these subjects. Pupils read fluently and are able to talk confidently about the plot and characters in their books. Their writing is well constructed and presented and shows good attention to spelling and punctuation. Work in mathematics shows very advanced problem solving skills and the ability to perform mental calculations efficiently. Pupils have a good basic knowledge of scientific facts and well-developed investigative skills. They reach above average standards in information and communication technology, art and design, geography, history and music. Work in design and technology is well above average and is average in physical education.

Pupils make very good progress in Years 3 and 4, because of very high quality teaching, and they reach high standards by the time they leave the school. Their work in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology and geography is well above average for their age. It is above average in all other subjects except for physical education, where it is average.

By the time pupils are five years old, most exceed the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals for children of their age. They achieve particularly well in their personal, social and emotional development and in creative skills.

By the time they leave the school, pupils reach good standards compared with their attainment on entry to the school. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and more able and gifted pupils achieve well because of teachers' careful planning to meet their individual needs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very eager to come to school and are confident and enthusiastic learners. They concentrate fully on their work and this enables them to make good progress in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in class and around the school. This means that no time is wasted and pupils are able to concentrate on their work.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and staff get on very well together and this creates a happy school where learning flourishes. They show high levels of initiative and care and concern for one another.

Attendance	Good. Attendance is above the national average and there are no unauthorised absences. Lessons start promptly and very few pupils are late.
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Pupils' progress is assisted greatly by pupils' very positive attitudes and high standards of behaviour.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in 47 per cent of the lessons observed. It was at least good in 94 per cent per cent of lessons and the remaining six per cent were satisfactory. Teaching and learning are of particular high quality in Year 3 and 4 classes, where a quarter of lessons were judged to be excellent. The overriding strength of the teaching in the school is the dedication that teachers show to their pupils and the commitment they give towards improving their own practice. These factors influence all of their work, from attending courses to improve their own professional knowledge and expertise to their detailed planning to meet the needs of different pupils. They prepare stimulating lessons which gain the children's interest and motivate them to work hard to complete their work to a high standard. They maintain very good relationships with their pupils which help pupils feel confident that their ideas will be valued and that they can ask for help if needed. These high quality relationships also mean that pupils are anxious to please their teachers and that lessons are seldom interrupted by misbehaviour. Teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy are very good and ensure that pupils extend their skills, knowledge and understanding successfully as they move through the school. Teachers plan the use of their learning support assistants very well and the help that they provide has a very beneficial effect on the progress of all pupils, but especially those with special educational needs. The quality of teachers' marking is very good and helps pupils to improve their work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is planned extremely well and ensures that pupils cover all the elements of the National Curriculum in a systematic way as they move through the school. The Foundation Stage curriculum is similarly well planned and ensures that children have a good start to their school life. National strategies for literacy and numeracy have been implemented extremely well and have had a positive effect on standards. All pupils have equal opportunities to take part in all aspects of school life.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The school sets very clear targets for pupils to achieve. They receive very good support in lessons, and teachers and assistants set and guide appropriate levels of work. All pupils who have special educational needs are very well integrated into the life of the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils' spiritual awareness is fostered through moments for reflection in assemblies and in lessons. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and they respond to these very well. Pupils are taught to consider the impact of their actions upon others and to respect and value differences. The school enables pupils to have a good knowledge of their own heritage and of the diversity of other cultures and beliefs.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its pupils extremely well. It has comprehensive health and safety procedures. All adults in the school know the children and take great care to ensure their well-being. This gives them confidence and security which greatly assists their learning.

The school works extremely well with parents, who support their children immensely and this partnership has a considerable impact on pupils' progress. There are excellent links with the community that are used to enrich the quality of pupils' learning. Assessment procedures are very good in English, mathematics and science and systems for other subjects are in preparation.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The excellent leadership and management of the headteacher, who is very well supported by other staff with management responsibilities, give the school a clear and effective focus on improvement and raising standards. There is a strong team spirit amongst the staff, which ensures that the school's aims and values are very well met.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors do a good job. They have good systems in place to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively and judge the effects of their decisions.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. The school carefully analyses assessment data from a range of tests and uses the information successfully to address areas of weakness and improve standards. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored to highlight areas for individual improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Funds are used well to promote the pupils' progress and careful thought is given to linking expenditure to the school improvement plan.

The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources support the pupils' learning very well.

The school's main strength is in the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and senior staff. Staffing levels, including the number of support staff, are very good. All staff provide a high quality service to the school and this, along with the very good accommodation and learning resources, contribute to the very good progress that pupils make. The school ensures that it gets good value for money by obtaining several quotations when major spending is planned. There are some omissions in the governors' Annual Report to parents.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the leadership and management. • Their children like school. • The high quality teaching that ensures their children make good progress. • The high expectations that the school has of their children. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. • The school works closely with parents. • Parents feel comfortable to approach the school with any concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of extracurricular activities offered to the pupils.

The findings of the inspection agree with the positive views of parents. In addition, they find that the provision for extracurricular activities is good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage at levels which are above average for their age. This is confirmed by the results of school assessments in previous years, although this year, their attainment on entry was broadly average, particularly in literacy and numeracy. These children are making good progress and are on course to reach standards which are above average by the time they finish their year in Reception. This is similar to the findings of the school's previous inspection. They achieve very highly in their personal, social and emotional development because of the care and concern shown by adults working in this part of the school and the careful way in which they provide opportunities for pupils to increase their independence. Pupils can all dress and undress themselves and often help one another, for example, to fasten their shoes. They have a keen interest in stories and listen carefully for extended periods of time. Children are confident and take part in discussions eagerly. They are developing a good knowledge of number and most can perform simple additions with apparatus. They reach high standards in their creative development because of the teachers' enthusiasm and the good opportunities provided. They enjoy role-play and acting out stories and love playing musical instruments and experimenting with the sounds they make. They show confidence and a good awareness of space in their movements around the hall and in the small courtyard where they play with large equipment.
2. In the national tests for seven year olds in 2000, standards were above average in reading and writing and well above average in mathematics, compared with schools nationally and similar schools. Standards in mathematics were almost in the top five per cent of schools in the country. High standards have been maintained over the last four years in reading and mathematics and the results in writing have risen significantly. This has been due to careful analysis of data, improvements in curricular provision and better quality teaching and learning. A high percentage of pupils reached well above average levels in the tests in reading and mathematics, although the percentage was only average in writing. The assessments made by teachers last year in science showed that standards were broadly average.
3. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, pupils reach well above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and design and technology. They are on course to achieve the challenging targets that their teachers have set for them in the national tests. More pupils are on course to achieve high levels in the writing tests than last year. Improvements since last year have been due to more opportunities being provided for pupils to practise their reading skills and better quality assessment by teachers. Standards in science, information and communication technology, art and design, geography, history and music are above average. Standards in physical education are average. These findings represent very good improvement since the last inspection, when, although standards in literacy and numeracy were above average, those in most other subjects were average. Overall, the rise in standards has been due to the curriculum being organised more efficiently. This has helped teachers to cover all subjects in a systematic fashion.
4. Pupils listen very attentively in lessons and are anxious to contribute in class discussion, showing questioning minds and logical thinking. In a science lesson in a Year 1 and 2 class, the pupils discussed the different forms a seed could take and gave many suggestions of their own, keenly responding to one another's ideas. Pupils enjoy reading and take their books home regularly to practise their skills. They have a good knowledge of phonics and can use other clues to help them decipher new words in their books. Standards of spelling are very good; children are able to make good attempts at spelling

new words because teachers show them how to break the words up into manageable ‘chunks’ and then use their knowledge of letter sounds to spell each ‘chunk’. Handwriting skills are also well taught and pupils develop a clear style by Year 2. In mathematics, Year 2 pupils work confidently in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and show very advanced problem-solving skills when they work out the length of a school journey, given the starting and finishing times and the lengths of stops on the way. They have a good knowledge of scientific facts, including the properties of different materials and why they are used for different purposes. They have particularly well-developed investigative skills because the teaching of science always encourages practical, experimental work.

5. In information and communication technology, Year 2 pupils can write stories using a simple word processing program, varying the size and colour of text and adding pictures for interest. They have a good knowledge of the use of colour and how different colours complement one another in art and design. Their skills in design and technology are very good: they confidently make paper carrier bags, using a range of measuring, cutting and joining techniques and evaluate the strength of their products, making necessary improvements to their original design. They have a good knowledge of maps, understand simple keys and can explain why different building materials are used in different countries. In history, they have gained a very good understanding of how things change over time, through collecting examples of toys for their ‘Toy Museum’. They sing tunefully in music lessons and have a good understanding of how music can create mood and atmosphere. In gymnastics lessons, pupils devise sequences of movement and show a good awareness of space.

6. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they achieve standards which are well above average for their age in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology and geography. Standards in other subjects are above average with the exception of physical education, where pupils reach average levels for their age. These findings represent significant improvement since the last inspection, when standards were broadly average in all subjects.

7. Speaking and listening skills are very well developed by Year 4 and pupils talk confidently in a range of different situations. For example, pupils were able to explain clearly to inspectors about the work they had been doing in different subjects, expressing their likes and dislikes and, in another situation, were able to discuss and put forward ideas about how recycling can help preserve the environment. Most pupils in Year 4 can read challenging books and discuss the content and characters successfully. Their writing is clear, well presented and shows high standards of spelling and punctuation. Pupils have highly developed numeracy and mathematical skills, and are able to choose and use the correct operations to solve problems. They are extremely confident in the use of different measures and have a good grasp of how to record and present information in graphs. In science, pupils have a good knowledge of how their bodies work and, through lively discussion, hypothesise about the working of their joints and muscles.

8. Year 4 pupils are extending their already advanced skills in information and communication technology by using e-mail and the Internet. In art, pupils successfully evaluate the work of different artists in order to advance their own skills in design. In design and technology, they make very well finished cloth bags after an extensive examination of commercially made examples and a series of attempts to evaluate and refine their designs. They know how the environment is affected by human activity and they gain a good understanding of different countries in their work in geography. They learn about the Ancient Greeks in history and compare, for example, our present day education system with theirs. They perform their own musical compositions, representing different animals with music from a range of instruments. They learn sound games skills as part of their work in physical education that provide a firm basis for involvement in team games later in their school careers.

9. Pupils throughout the school make good progress from the levels at which they originally start in the Reception class. Progress is particularly rapid in Years 3 and 4 where pupils build successfully on the very firm foundations laid in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Very good progress in these classes is due to the very high quality of teaching and learning provided for pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. They receive very good levels of support in class and are given extra help in small groups, or individually, if necessary. Gifted and talented pupils also make good progress because of the challenging work provided by their teachers. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils of different ethnic background or gender. Pupils' good progress overall is linked directly with the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher which has led to a well-organised curriculum and high quality teaching.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The previous inspection found that attitudes were positive and pupils were enthusiastic and this continues to be the case. Pupils are keen, enthusiastic and eager to come to school. They concentrate very well and remain very focused on tasks. Behaviour throughout the school is very good at all times. All pupils know the school and class rules and are well aware of the rewards and sanctions in place. They all know right from wrong and are polite and courteous to all teachers, their peers and to all visitors. In the classroom, pupils have very good attitudes to learning; they work hard and are fully absorbed in their work. They move very sensibly around the school and behave very well on the playground. In assembly and in the dining hall, behaviour is very good, and in the corridors, pupils walk quietly and sensibly. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school. The school had one fixed-term and one permanent exclusion last year and the findings of the inspection show that, in both cases, school procedures were followed carefully.

11. Pupils have very good relationships with their peers and with all adults in the school. They work together very well in the classroom, share books and equipment well and discuss their work sensibly. No examples of oppressive behaviour, sexism or racism were seen during the inspection. Pupils are clear that bullying happens very rarely and are happy that, should it occur, it would be dealt with very quickly and effectively. They are taught to understand the impact of their actions on others, and if that action is inappropriate, are expected to apologise for their actions.

12. Pupils handle resources very well. There are no examples of graffiti or vandalism around the school, and no litter. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities, including taking the class registers round in the morning, and helping in class in a variety of ways.

13. At the Foundation Stage, children show very high levels of personal and social development. They show care and concern for one another and readily share toys and equipment. They work and play well together both in the classroom and the playground.

14. In the previous inspection, attendance was above the national average, and this is still the case. Attendance is still above the national average, and there is no unauthorised absence. Few pupils are late for school. Both these factors mean that pupils miss little work in class and make good progress in all aspects of their development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching overall is very good and contributes significantly to the progress which pupils make and their high standards of achievement. Teaching and learning are generally good in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1, although a high proportion of lessons seen in these classes during the inspection were very good or excellent. At Key Stage 2, more than half the lessons

observed were very good or better and a quarter of them were excellent. These findings show very good improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was judged to be satisfactory overall. At the last inspection, the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory in almost a fifth of lessons and the percentage of very good or excellent lessons was only three per cent. The current inspection found the quality of teaching and learning to be excellent in 16 per cent of lessons, very good in 31 per cent, good in 47 per cent and satisfactory in only six per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. This improvement is due to the high expectations of the headteacher, the high priority given to staff development through monitoring and feedback and the commitment of teachers themselves to refining their practice.

16. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in English, mathematics and design and technology at both key stages, and in geography and information and communication technology at Key Stage 2. It is good in all other subjects.

17. Teaching has considerable strengths, but the overriding factor, which makes it very good, is the commitment of all teachers in the school towards providing the best possible education for their pupils. This shows in the time which they devote to their lesson planning, the preparation of materials to support pupils' learning and the care and concern they show for every pupil in the school. Teachers are not complacent; they constantly strive towards improving their own practice through professional development.

18. Lesson planning is based on the very clear schemes of work for each subject. Teachers adhere to these very well and this ensures that pupils of similar ages in different classes receive similar experiences. Plans include detailed learning objectives and a range of work to suit each pupil's needs. Teachers refer constantly to these objectives during lessons, focusing pupils' attention on what they are learning and return to them at the end, to enable pupils to assess their progress. Such structure to lessons allows teachers and learning support assistants to pinpoint if any pupils are finding difficulty so that teachers can plan to support these children in future lessons. A very good example of this was in a design and technology lesson in Year 2, where the teacher continually drew pupils' attention to the need to strengthen the base and handles on the carrier bags they were constructing and, at the end, gathered them together to discuss their findings. She was quickly able to note those pupils who could be challenged still further and those who required more support. Skilful questioning throughout the lesson ensured that pupils successfully developed their skills in the design, construction and evaluation process.

19. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively throughout the school. National strategies have been implemented very successfully and often the structure of other lessons follows a similar three-part pattern. Teachers have very clear knowledge of these and most other subjects and are able, therefore, to explain concepts and answer pupils' questions clearly. Because of the warm and caring atmosphere in classes and the strength of the relationships between teachers and their pupils, the children feel confident to ask questions and put forward their own ideas and opinions. They are confident and enthusiastic learners and this stems from the value that teachers put on their individual contributions and the interesting and stimulating way that lessons are presented. This was seen in a high quality lesson in the information and communication technology suite, when the teacher challenged her Year 3 and 4 pupils to guide '002 Secret Agent James Turtle' around the shark-infested lake. They had to use their programming skills to control the movement of the turtle on the monitor screen. The lesson had been planned to enable more able pupils to attempt more and more difficult manoeuvres and extend their skills, not only in control but also in estimating angle and length. The pupils readily accepted the challenge, working well in pairs to complete their tasks. They gained a great deal of success and satisfaction from this and talked enthusiastically about the next lesson.

20. The quality of teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is good, and is particularly successful in developing pupils' personal, social, emotional and creative skills and knowledge. All the lessons seen in the Foundation Stage were at least good and half were very good. Strengths in teaching lie in the teachers' calm and caring manner, which ensures that the children settle very quickly into school life and respond well to school and class routines, and in the planning to ensure that all the necessary areas of children's development are fostered successfully. At the time of the inspection, some children had only just begun school full-time and it was difficult to distinguish these from the rest of the class, so confident were they in their actions. The presentation of lessons is stimulating and encourages children to think deeply and form questions in their minds. One such example was when the teacher put a fossil in the middle of the carpet, saying, 'I wonder what this is'. Children quickly came up with a range of sensible ideas, and the teacher developed this well, encouraging them to listen carefully to one another and take on board one another's suggestions. They came to the conclusion, correctly, that it was a sea creature, which was 'very, very old'. Teachers very successfully transmit their own love of books to the children, through very effective storytelling techniques. At the same time, they take every opportunity to encourage the children to take part in the stories, for example, by imagining what they could see on the 'Train Journey'. Children were well motivated to begin to write their own stories about the train and they were supported well by the teacher and learning support assistant who, through skilful questioning, encouraged them to try to spell new words. Whilst teachers keep comprehensive records of their pupils' progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology procedures to assess their development in other areas of learning are more informal. Despite this, teachers know their pupils' extremely well and plan appropriately for the next stages in their development.

21. In virtually all cases, teachers use their learning support assistants very well to support teaching and learning. Teachers brief their assistants at the beginning of the week, and give them very clear plans for each lesson, detailing exactly what they expect them to do and what pupils should achieve. This practice is well established and ensures that no time is wasted and that assistants have a strong impact on pupils' progress.

22. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is very good and shows teachers' good knowledge of their pupils. Comments are clear, constructive and often challenging, encouraging pupils to think deeply about their work and showing them how it can be improved.

23. Teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is very good. In all lessons, work is provided by the teacher that is more appropriately directed towards those pupils with special educational needs, and they usually have extra help from an adult when they break into small groups. The personal development of pupils with special educational needs is supported very well by very good planning, and very well designed targets.

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

24. Overall, the school provides a very good range of relevant and worthwhile learning opportunities that effectively promote pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development and prepare them well for the next stage of education. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are covered and arrangements meet all statutory requirements, including those for sex and drugs education. The previous inspection revealed an imbalance in the time allocated to individual subjects. Appropriate time allocations have now been agreed for all subjects and although some, such as information technology, are taught in weekly lessons throughout the year, teachers sensibly 'block' others, such as history and geography, in order to make optimum use of the time available. Curricular planning is very good and all subjects benefit from clearly laid out long, medium and short term plans. These enable teachers to provide learning opportunities well matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of children,

ensuring that learning takes place in a progressive manner at both key stages. The headteacher has termly meetings with subject leaders to confirm that the necessary breadth, balance and progression are being offered. A programme of continuous rolling review is in place to ensure that subject provision is updated on a planned and regular basis. A policy for personal, social and health education was not in place at the last inspection but it has been included in the current review programme. An audit of existing provision has been carried out and an action plan for development is already being implemented. Even so, the provision for these areas of development is very good: it includes classroom sessions to further social development through open and frank discussion as well as very good opportunities for pupils to work cooperatively.

25. The school has successfully introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and has rightly made these the main priorities in recent curricular development plans. The subject leaders, along with the headteacher, have received appropriate training and this has been shared with all teachers, with additional training given to learning support assistants on their roles during the daily English and mathematics lessons. Basic numeracy skills are developed well and are effectively used to support teaching and learning in other subjects. For example, Year 3 pupils in a geography lesson were able to use mental arithmetic skills to calculate the combined weights of litter collected over a week. Teachers have also been particularly effective in making practical use of skills being taught in literacy. Examples were observed in history and geography, where pupils' advanced skills in reading and especially writing, have enabled them to engage more fully in the lessons planned.

26. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is well planned and links nationally recommended guidelines for young children's learning carefully with aspects of the National Curriculum. This enables those children who make particularly good progress to move quickly to more advanced levels. The facilities are generally well used to support the curriculum, although the Early Years coordinator has identified that the secure courtyard outside could be used more efficiently.

27. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good and they are fully integrated into all aspects of the school. Learning support assistants work very well with pupils who need extra help. There is a commitment to equality of opportunity and inclusion for all pupils who have special educational needs, and class teachers provide very good targets for individual education plans. These are reviewed every term. Some pupils are taken out of lessons for ten minutes of specialised help in literacy skills from time to time, and this works very well. More able and gifted and talented pupils are quickly identified through the school's very good assessment procedures and teachers take great care to ensure that they are fully challenged by the work provided.

28. The school offers a good range of extracurricular activities. These include lunchtime and after school clubs for computers, choir, country dancing, sports, dance, French, Latin and writing. A Key Stage 1 'Play Club' and some individual private music tuition are also available. Further opportunities are provided through visits to a variety of places such as local museums, Hedingham Castle, the Icen village, Sherborne Farm and Nowton. Year 4 pupils take part in a residential visit each year to the Kingswood Centre in Norfolk where they are able to take part in activities with a common thread of information and communication technology. Various visiting theatre and music groups also contribute greatly to this aspect of the school's provision.

29. The local community makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Environmental education, for example, has been extended and strengthened by the school's involvement in community issues. The school has taken part in the council's 'Safely to Schools' initiative to promote sustainable transport policies and a safer school environment. This has resulted not only in a valuable learning experience for the pupils through carrying out surveys, drawing conclusions from the data collected and writing letters to interested bodies, but also a practical outcome for the community, in the form of a traffic sign

designed by the pupils to indicate the need for traffic restraint. Plans are in place to involve elderly residents in various aspects of school life, for example, by attending school concerts and helping pupils to practise their reading in school. The school has also been involved in establishing a local community arts initiative, centred around a local puppet theatre company. Other developments provide children with opportunities to become involved in activities ranging from ballet to a Woodcraft Folk youth group.

30. The school's links with partner institutions also have a positive effect on the children's education. Good links with local playgroups ensure that children's entry to school is smoothly effected. Excellent collaboration with local middle schools prepares pupils well for transfer at the end of Year 4. This includes agreement on curriculum continuity, displays mounted in school to give pupils a positive image of those to which they are going to transfer and pre-transfer visits for pupils to ease the process. The school provides placements for student teachers and these provide a source of new and varied experiences for the pupils and valuable professional development opportunities for the staff.

31. Overall, the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all its pupils. The provision for the moral and social elements is very good, and for cultural and spiritual is good. Overall, provision has improved considerably since the last inspection, when cultural provision was judged to be unsatisfactory. Planning for these aspects is much better than at the last inspection and more opportunities exist for pupils to understand their own cultural heritage as well as that of others.

32. Pupils' spiritual awareness is raised by the time given for reflection in assemblies as well as in some lessons. In one assembly where the topic was 'being special', there was a sensitive moment for reflection at the end where children were encouraged to think about this. In Key Stage 1 classes, there is evidence of pupils reflecting and learning to appreciate the world around them through, for example, walks around the school to notice 'signs of spring' or to examine the creatures in the pond. Pupils are also encouraged to reflect on behaviour; they are encouraged to value one another and consider the effects of their actions. There are good opportunities for prayer during the school day.

33. There are very good opportunities for pupils to work together, both in group and paired work. Pupils accept responsibility eagerly, for example, delivering registers to classrooms and to the school office, and helping with younger pupils at lunchtime. In the classroom, teachers emphasise the importance of sharing and the pupils respond very well. Each class sets regular targets for social development, and there is often a focus for the whole school, such as showing good manners or putting up their hands in class. The value that is placed on pupils' individual contributions encourages them to develop their initiative. For example, Year 2 pupils have formed a 'Save the Environment Club' and meet regularly in the school playground to plan their work.

34. There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. Throughout the school, class rules are firmly in place and routines are well established. Teachers are very good role models and have high expectations of the pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive, as is the management of pupils. Pupils raise funds for a wide range of different charities which helps them understand about others who are less fortunate than themselves.

35. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils often listen to music from other cultures in their music lessons and in assembly. Music is often used to stimulate pupils' imaginations in dance and movement lessons. The school enjoys useful links with different countries through the use of the Internet. In art, pupils learn about a variety of artists' work, and they enjoy visits to local places of interest to support many aspects of their work. They visit art galleries and museums, as well as visiting St Edmund's Shrine and local churches. Visitors to the school include music groups and puppeteers who further stimulate pupils' interest in their own and other cultures

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Teachers know their pupils very well; they care for all the pupils and are aware of their individual needs. This enables them to provide very good and appropriate care and support. Medical and personal needs are identified and dealt with appropriately. A measure of the care and support given to pupils was the comment made by one boy who noted, 'I feel comfortable here – it's just like being at home.'

37. The school has very good procedures in place to identify and deal with any hazards. Both staff and governors regularly undertake health and safety checks, risk assessments and inspections of buildings, grounds and equipment. A high number of staff are trained to administer first aid.

38. The school follows the local guidelines for the protection of children. The headteacher is the nominated officer responsible for child protection matters, and she has arranged for all staff to receive training. All staff, including non-teaching staff, are aware of the procedures and of the need to inform her if they have any concerns.

39. The school monitors attendance very well. Authorised absence is in line with the national average, but there is no unauthorised absence. This is due to the introduction of first day contact, to which parents have responded well. Few pupils arrive late at school. If pupils are late, the headteacher monitors the situation closely, and will refer the matter to the education welfare service if there is no improvement.

40. The school has very good arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and these are very successful. All staff, including the non-teaching staff, use the rewards and sanctions in the policy consistently. Pupils devise their own class rules at the beginning of each year and these are discussed at regular intervals, thus ensuring that all pupils know them and are aware of the consequences of breaking them. Staff and pupils report very few instances of poor behaviour or of bullying. This aspect was noted at the last inspection as needing some improvement and the school has been very successful in addressing the issue.

41. Children in the Foundation Stage are well cared for and are happy to come to school. They share excellent relationships with teachers and support staff which help to them develop confidence.

42. The care and support of pupils with special educational needs are very good. Targets included in individual education plans are appropriate and measurable. Where necessary, outside help is used appropriately for more advice. Reviews of progress towards individual targets are held every term. Pupils with special educational needs have equal opportunities to take part in all school activities, and are integrated fully into the life of the school. They receive very good levels of support from teachers and assistants.

43. Since the last inspection, the quality of assessment and analysis of data have been greatly improved, and this aspect is now a strength of the school. Children are assessed very soon after they enter the school at the Foundation Stage, using a procedure designed specifically for this age range. It builds upon earlier evidence from parents, and provides information for planning to meet their individual needs.

44. The school uses optional tests in other years, to complement those taken by Year 2 pupils for their national tests. These are similar to the national tests, and they are also supplemented by other tests, such as one for reading. Data from all these tests are analysed very carefully and enable the school to set clear and appropriate targets for each pupil, and to see which areas of the work may need extra

attention. Pupils are tracked for their progress in English and mathematics, and teachers can see at a glance where extra help may be needed. The data are also used to see how well the school is doing compared with other schools locally and nationally. Teachers examine samples of pupils' work to check that they all agree on the levels to which they are working.

45. Assessment procedures for English, mathematics and science are very thorough. Assessment procedures for other subjects are being trialled and developed. There is a precise timetable for each subject's focus, and the school is systematically working through the list of subjects. Teachers in all lessons make sure that they tell pupils how they are doing and discuss whether they have achieved the objectives set for that lesson. Pupils are also encouraged to evaluate their own and others' performance. All teachers demonstrate a very clear knowledge and understanding of their pupils and the progress they are making. This is evident in discussions and in the planning they provide for the work in each lesson.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. The last inspection found that there was a very active and involved parent body and this continues to be the case. The responses to the parents' questionnaire and the comments made by the parents at the pre-inspection meeting show that parents are very supportive. A small number of parents were not satisfied with the range of activities provided by the school outside lessons, but the findings of this inspection are that the school offers a good range of extracurricular activities.

47. The school provides a very good range of information for parents. Information about the curriculum is posted on notice boards placed at each end of the building, as well as through the Partnership in Learning leaflets which are sent out at the beginning of each term. In addition the school has held workshops for literacy and numeracy as well as a family literacy workshop, where parents worked with their children. Informative newsletters are sent out regularly to parents as well as letters about specific events. Written annual reports for parents are good: they report on pupils' progress and give personal targets for the future. Parents feel able to come in and discuss any problems or issues and there are good formal and informal opportunities for parents to discuss pupils' progress. The school prospectus provides useful information for parents, but the governors' Annual Report does not meet requirements, as there are several pieces of statutory information missing.

48. Parents have a considerable impact on the work of the school. The Friends' Association raises money for new equipment and many parents assist regularly in the classroom, helping to make teaching and learning very effective. The contribution of parents to children's learning at home is excellent. Parents regularly listen to their children read and help with other homework.

49. The school prepares its young entrants very well to start school. Teachers visit playgroups to meet their new pupils and parents, and children have opportunities to visit the school to get to know their teachers and become familiar with their new surroundings.

50. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed very well about the support being given at school, and their views are sought and recorded at annual reviews. Parents are well aware of the school's targets for pupils who have special educational needs, and they are involved in the discussions about them. They have the opportunity to attend parents' evenings, and there is also a special time in order to discuss the annual reports received about their children. Individual plans also include things for parents to do that will help pupils at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The school's leadership and management are very good. These aspects have improved significantly since the school's last inspection, which identified the following areas for improvement:

- planning for school development;
- the impact of the headteacher and other key staff on improving provision and standards;
- how teaching and learning were systematically monitored to identify and address weaknesses.

52. The new headteacher has built an extremely strong team of enthusiastic and hard-working staff, all of whom show tremendous commitment towards school improvement. There is no complacency amongst staff; they constantly strive to do better and to improve all aspects of their work to ensure that they provide the best possible education for their pupils. The headteacher shows excellent leadership skills and is ably supported by her deputy and other staff with key responsibilities. The deputy headteacher has a high profile in the school and works very effectively with teachers to support them and help subject leaders carry out their roles efficiently. The special educational needs coordinator has ensured that provision is well organised and efficient. The coordinator for Early Years ensures that all these young pupils receive a very positive start to their school lives.

53. Strong, yet sensitive, leadership and management have been directly responsible for the improvement in standards since the last inspection. Standards in nearly all subjects have improved, with pupils reaching well above average standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and above average levels in most other subjects. These improvements have been effected by well-planned foci on curricular planning and the quality of teaching and learning.

54. Planning for school development is detailed and well organised. A thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses has been gained by a comprehensive monitoring programme, which includes teaching, pupils' progress and standards. Areas for development are identified and are systematically addressed according to priorities. The school has rightly focused on literacy and numeracy and the results of its efforts are evident in the improved standards of pupils' work. However, provision in other subjects has also been improved, for example, in information and communication technology, and standards have risen accordingly. Science is under the spotlight at the moment and standards here are also rising.

55. The headteacher has enabled staff with management responsibilities to focus clearly on improvement. Termly meetings between subject leaders and the headteacher review past successes and identify further areas for development. These findings are shared effectively with the governing body. Time and funds are made available for subject leaders to collect and analyse data, monitor the quality of provision and plan carefully for the future. Through a comprehensive staff development programme, the headteacher has ensured that all staff feel valued and confident that their ideas will be accepted. Their professional needs are identified through regular meetings and all staff have good opportunities to attend courses to develop their own knowledge and expertise. With the encouragement of the headteacher, some teachers have undertaken courses leading to further professional qualifications and their studies have had a good impact upon school provision, for example, in assessment. Performance management systems are firmly in place.

56. The school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to take part in and benefit from all aspects of school provision. Pupils of different abilities are catered for extremely well by teachers, who provide different work to support and challenge them. Although there are more boys than girls in many classes, this does not affect the girls' opportunities in lessons.

57. The governing body is well organised and good systems have been implemented to enable governors to manage their responsibilities effectively. They receive comprehensive information about

school provision from the headteacher and subject leaders and look regularly at other aspects of school effectiveness, for example, provision for pupils with special educational needs and health and safety. A programme of governors' visits gives them good opportunities to see the effects of their policy decisions. In these ways, they are able to gain a full picture of how the school operates and what needs to be improved. They have a secure system to monitor school spending and how it fits into the overall budget plan. Comprehensive financial systems exist which enable the headteacher, subject coordinators and governors to be fully aware of spending patterns. Funds to support pupils with special educational needs are used successfully to improve the provision for these pupils and the standards they reach. Several different estimates are gained for any major areas of spending so that the school can ensure they get the best value for their money. The governing body meets all its statutory duties effectively, apart from their Annual Report to parents, which has items of statutory information missing.

58. The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources support the pupils' learning very well. Staff, including learning support assistants, administrative staff, lunchtime supervisors and caretaking, cleaning and kitchen staff all have a very positive impact on the work of the school. Their contributions are valued highly and, consequently, they show commitment and enthusiasm in their work. School administration is calm and efficient and leaves teachers free to concentrate on teaching and learning. Learning support assistants provide sensitive and effective help to pupils who need extra assistance. Their work has a considerable impact on the progress of these pupils. The school is kept in good order by the caretaker and the cleaning staff who take pride in their work and ensure that teachers and pupils work in a clean and safe environment.

59. The school's accommodation is very good, with extensive play areas, a separate music room and a purpose built computer suite and library. Teachers plan well to ensure that pupils make best use of these facilities. Similarly good use is made of the wide variety of good quality equipment and books to support teaching and learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. There are no key issues arising from this inspection.

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- The school should ensure that the governors' Annual Report to parents contains all legally required information. (Paragraphs 47 and 57)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
16	31	47	6	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		211
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y4
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		42

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	28	21	49

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	25	27
	Girls	20	21	20
	Total	44	46	47
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (79)	94 (92)	96 (97)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	26	27
	Girls	20	20	19
	Total	45	46	46
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (90)	94 (100)	94 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	1
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 – Year 4

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.9
Average class size	25.5

Education support staff: YR – Year 4

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	122

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
Total income	429,590
Total expenditure	421,664
Expenditure per pupil	2,088
Balance brought forward from previous year	10,702
Balance carried forward to next year	18,628

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	208
Number of questionnaires returned	101

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	29	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	71	26	1	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	40	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	43	5	0	0
The teaching is good.	79	18	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	59	37	3	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	14	0	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	30	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	31	2	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	78	20	2	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	24	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	14	0	5

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

61. Children are admitted to the Reception class at the start of the autumn term during the year in which they become five. Those children born between September and Christmas attend full time and the remainder are part time until the following January or Easter. Most of the children have attended pre-school playgroups or nurseries. Assessment made of the children on their entry to school shows their attainment usually to be above average for their age, particularly in their communication skills and in their personal, social and emotional development. However, the attainment of children this year is broadly average when they start school, particularly in their literacy and mathematical development.

62. The school's planning for these children is based firmly on nationally recommended guidelines which are linked well to the National Curriculum, so that children can progress quickly on to more advanced levels, as and when appropriate. The last inspection noted that improvements were necessary to take account of national guidelines and the school has addressed these recommendations well. Teachers assess children's achievements in their communication, language and literacy skills and their mathematical development well and keep clear records to show their progress. Informal records are kept of progress in other areas of their learning which enable teachers to provide the necessary experiences to help children develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Children respond very positively to the well-organised curriculum, the caring atmosphere and the teachers' high expectations and achieve a good start to their school lives.

63. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils in the Foundation Stage is good and promotes good progress overall. It is very good in the areas of extending personal, social and emotional development and in creative development and in these aspects, children make very good progress and achieve standards which are well above average for their age. In all the other areas of learning for these children, the quality of teaching is good and pupils make effective progress. These findings represent an improvement since the school's last inspection, when the quality of teaching was judged to be satisfactory overall. The children are on course to reach above average levels in all other aspects of their development, including communication, language and literacy, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their mathematical and physical development.

Personal, social and emotional development

64. The children have made very good progress in these aspects of their development since starting school in September. Their behaviour in class and around the school is very good. They are well versed in classroom routines and quickly assemble on the carpet each morning, ready for the teachers to take the register. They work and play together very well and there were many occasions, during the inspection, when children were seen to help one another, for example, in their counting games or when dressing themselves after a physical education lesson. Children are aware of their teachers' high expectations and respond to these very well. For example, during the week of the inspection, the focus was on raising their hands to speak during class discussion. Although the teacher had to remind a few children about this, most of them made great efforts to try to carry out the instructions.

65. The warm relationships and very positive atmosphere which exist in classrooms ensure that all pupils feel cared for and valued and that they approach their learning with great confidence. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and give them personal as well as academic targets to strive for. In one case, a young pupil who had just begun full-time had achieved her target of coming into school in

the morning without becoming upset. This was recognised during assembly, when all the children showed pride in her achievement.

66. The children show great interest and perseverance in their learning. They ask for help when needed and are eager to share their ideas, as when they tried to identify a fossil, brought to school by the teacher. In addition, there are many moments for fun and reflection, which strengthen the developing bonds between teachers and their pupils.

Communication, language and literacy

67. Children make good progress in this area of learning. They talk freely about their families and friends and about things which interest them. They love listening to stories and have good recall of those they have listened to previously. During literacy sessions, they predict what might happen in the story and become excited as they imagine what they might see on an imaginary train journey. A few children know where the 'title' of the book is, and what the 'author' means. Careful planning and very good assessment procedures ensure that the children quickly learn the letters of the alphabet and the sounds which they make. All the children understand that print carries meaning and the vast majority realise that text is read from left to right. Many can recognise common words in stories and are beginning to spell them accurately in their attempts at writing. Many are beginning to write simple sentences with recognisable words and letters and the more able children are beginning to use capital letters and full stops. There is very good liaison between the teachers and parents, who support the school's work extremely well. Homework books provide small task for pupils to work at with their parents and these books also provide an opportunity for parents to note down any comments or concerns.

68. Learning support assistants are used effectively to support children's work in small groups. They are extremely well briefed by the teacher and know exactly what the children are expected to learn. They take an active part in assessing pupils' progress. The literacy programme is well structured and linked to the National Numeracy Strategy framework for young children. Their work in the Foundation Stage prepares them well for more extensive work in Key Stage 1.

Mathematical development

69. Children are on course to reach above average standards for their age by the end of the Reception year. All can count to at least 20 and many beyond this. The vast majority can work accurately with numbers up to ten, calculating simple addition sums mentally. The teacher provides good opportunities for children to practise these skills by planning simple games where pupils work in pairs or small groups. Using dominoes, the pupils take turns to add the numbers on each side, telling their friends, 'Three and three make six'. In this way, they practise and consolidate their learning. There are many opportunities for pupils to practise their number skills, for example, when counting the number of children having school dinners or packed lunches. Older Reception pupils extend their number skills successfully and can add on ten or take away two from a given number. Most children recognise simple two and three-dimensional shapes and many can tell the time to the hour.

70. Teachers prepare carefully for this area of learning, using a commercial scheme to enhance their own plans. Work is well planned and fits in appropriately with the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. Correct mathematical vocabulary is used from the outset and teachers provide plenty of practical opportunities for children to learn through structured play. For example, the focus during the week of the inspection was on planting seeds, and the sand pit had been filled with compost and a variety of pots so that children could compare the amounts which each contained. Careful

assessments of children's progress are kept so that teachers can prepare appropriately for the next steps in their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

71. During the Foundation Stage, children develop their knowledge and understanding of their immediate environment through a series of well planned formal and informal opportunities. They are well prepared for the programmes of study in the National Curriculum which commence in Year 1. Following a walk around the school grounds looking for 'signs of summer', the Reception class teacher focused the children's attention on the beauty and wonder of flowers. They all examined a daisy, learning the correct names of the parts, such as 'stem,' 'roots' and 'petals'. They discussed what the roots were for and the children made very mature suggestions such as 'to stop the plant being blown away in the wind'. They compared their daisies to a sunflower, noticing the similarities and differences. The advances in children's learning were due to the very careful planning for the early years curriculum and the good quality of the teacher's presentation. Her good questioning skills and careful management ensured that all children took part in the discussion and learned effectively.

72. Children receive many opportunities to choose from a range of equipment to construct models. They use building blocks and construction materials to make roads and railways. They use scissors and glue to make simple collages. Children know about the environment of the school and older ones have constructed a simple map showing their journey from home to school. They plant seeds and bulbs to observe how they grow.

Physical development

73. Pupils have well developed physical skills and move confidently within a range of formal and informal situations. They show good awareness of space and seldom bump into one another. In a creative dance lesson in the hall, young children in the Reception class acted out the story of 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' showing a variety of high and low movements. The teacher developed their skills well by intervening from time to time to challenge them further, and they responded well to this, for example, when they stretched up on tiptoe to reach the door handle of the giant's castle. They enjoy playing in the small courtyard outside, where there is large play equipment, including wheeled vehicles that they can ride. They handle small objects carefully when they make pictures using pasta and seeds. All the children can dress and undress themselves, fastening buttons and zips, although a few still need help with their shoes.

Creative development

74. Children develop their creative skills and imagination extremely well through a wide range of well-presented and stimulating experiences. In one lesson in the hall, the teacher's excellent story-telling skills enthralled the children and they became part of the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, planting the beans, climbing up the beanstalk and running away from the giant. They sing songs in class and in assembly, showing good knowledge of the words and use musical instruments sensitively to represent movements and feelings. Most already know the correct names of the instruments. They enjoy modelling with play dough and offering their 'cakes' to their friends and adult helpers. They have good opportunities to play in the 'home corner' in class and the 'Wendy house' in the courtyard, which they transform into a café, doctor's surgery or house for the 'Three Bears' with the help of their teacher. They respond very well in these circumstances, showing great imagination as they assume different roles. This aspect of their development is fostered extremely well by adults and leads to children making very good progress.

ENGLISH

75. Attainment at Year 2 and at the end of Year 4 is well above average. This is a significant improvement on the last inspection, when standards at Key Stage 1 were above average and average by the end of Year 4. In last year's Key Stage 1 national tests, the school achieved above average results in reading and writing compared with all schools, and compared with similar schools. Girls performed much better than boys in reading and slightly better in writing. In reading, a high percentage of pupils reached levels well above those expected for their age but this percentage was broadly average in writing. The school analysed last year's results very carefully and identified a number of areas for improvement. These included insufficient emphasis on reading aloud and weaknesses in the teaching of spelling. These weaknesses have been addressed and evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of teachers' planning and analysis of children's work shows much improvement in standards in these areas. The school's high expectations are reflected in its targets for this year's tests, which are set in the context of attainment on entry and subsequent ongoing assessment. Pupils are on course to meet these challenging targets, including more achieving high levels in the writing tests. No differences between the attainment of boys and girls were noted during the inspection. All pupils, including more able pupils and those with special educational needs make very good progress at both key stages.

76. Information from teachers' ongoing assessments and the results of tests in Year 2 are used to set individuals' and school targets for the non-statutory national tests taken at the end of Year 4. These are very challenging, but realistic, targets, as in both key stages the teaching of reading and writing is a significant strength, being carefully planned, monitored and assessed.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good in both key stages, exemplified by detailed planning based on assessment of previous work, teachers' high expectations and the brisk pace of lessons. In a Year 4 class, for example, the teacher had planned to build on learning from previous lessons in the week. Pupils had prepared their own 'bullet pointed' plan for the beginning and middle of a story, which the teacher then used to good effect in teaching the learning objectives for this lesson: how to write in the first person. She secured total involvement of the pupils, who made good use of their earlier learning to suggest ways of completing the task in hand, particularly the accurate use of speech marks. All pupils were able to write their own section of story in the first person to a high standard according to their ability, and within the allotted time

78. Teachers capture the pupils' close attention at the very start of lessons, for example, in a Year 3 lesson, when a simple spelling error ('rong' for wrong) was included in the lesson's written learning objective. The success felt by the pupils when they spotted it immediately engaged them in the following task that focused on spelling words with silent letters. Another strong aspect of the good teaching seen was the ability of teachers to model the process of writing. In a Year 2 class, the teacher had written a section of text herself in preparation for the lesson, which was to write an exciting conclusion to a story begun earlier in the week. She explained how she had decided to use the words and phrases in her text and pupils responded with thoughtful criticism and logical suggestions for improvement. This indicated that the pupils viewed themselves as real writers and not just passive recipients of the teaching.

79. Strong emphasis is rightly placed on the teaching of spelling. The school makes good use of the National Literacy Strategy and daily lessons, particularly for younger pupils, usually have a focus on spelling. In a Year 2 class, for example, the teacher focused on spelling the endings of words. She 'spoke' the sounds herself for pupils to say out loud, and then encouraged them to sound out words themselves, representing the individual sounds on their fingers. In a Year 1 class, pupils used small whiteboards to copy down words and to mark the individual and groups of letters that made the sounds. By asking them to 'show' their whiteboards, the teacher was quickly able to assess the pupils' understanding and adjust the pace of the lesson as necessary. Spelling is taught systematically; pupils are provided with spelling lists grouped in 'families' of words with their own individual words added. They are taught to break up words into 'chunks' to help them spell them and parents are encouraged to use the 'look, cover, write and check' method when helping at home. Pupils readily refer to their spelling lists when writing.

80. The teaching of writing is a strength of the school and has a positive impact on learning in other subjects. At both key stages, pupils reach standards which are well above average in this aspect of their work. From an early stage, pupils are encouraged to write for a particular purpose or audience. They write letters, invitations, instructions and factual reports in a variety of contexts. These range from writing simple labels and lists to promotional pamphlets and persuasive arguments. Younger pupils created labels for a class display on bubbles, and, in Year 2, pupils wrote their own mini-information books, complete with contents page, glossary and index, to be added to the class library. Older pupils have prepared pamphlets in connection with studies of Ancient Greece, have written to the local council to put their views of local road safety issues and have composed pages of information for the school's website. All these experiences in different subjects enable pupils to develop their literacy skills further. Handwriting is well taught and most pupils write in a reasonably fluent, cursive script by the end of Year 2. Pupils' written work is well supported by the teachers' purposeful marking. Pupils know what the teacher will be looking for when the work is marked and are able, therefore, to make best use of the constructive comments written about it. The marking emphasises good aspects of the work, points out particular shortcomings and, importantly, gives guidance on improvement.

81. The enjoyment of reading is fostered throughout the school and, together with systematic teaching in the Literacy Hour and weekly guided reading sessions, is responsible for pupils making very good progress and reaching well above average standards at both key stages. By using a 'big book' version of 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea' in a class of the youngest pupils, the teacher was able to enthuse the pupils with her reading of it and then use the lesson to help them understand that stories follow a sequence, that a good reader uses expression to communicate ideas and that an author chooses certain words for particular effects. Pupils progress through simple story and non-fiction books, reading more demanding stories organised in chapters by Year 2. By the end of Year 4 the most able pupils are reading challenging books, for example 'The Secret Garden,' fluently and with a good understanding of the literal and implied meanings in the text. The range and condition of books available are good and positive steps have been taken since the last inspection to provide books that reflect a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Steps are taken to ensure that texts used in the literacy hour extend pupils' experience of people whose way of life and beliefs differ from their own. The school is fortunate to be well supported by parents who encourage their children to read at home.

82. Speaking and listening skills are well above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 4. Pupils listen very well in lessons and respond thoughtfully in discussions with adults. Conversations with classmates are characterised by co-operation and a mutual respect for ideas. Around the school the pupils speak politely and clearly to adults and are confident enough to offer candid opinions when requested. The role models presented by both teaching and support staff underpin the pupils' high achievement in this aspect.

83. The English coordinator, supported by the headteacher, provides a very strong lead through her own practice and the professional development activities she provides for both teaching and support staff. Her professional knowledge, currently being developed through a Master's degree, is an effective part of the school's determination to drive up standards. Rigorous termly assessment of pupils' work, combined with realistic but ambitious target setting, has been a major factor in the improvements brought about since the last inspection. After careful analysis of test results and scrutiny of work, the coordinator and headteacher have identified weaknesses and have put in place effective action plans to address them. The coordinator's action plan for the coming year takes into account the review of the Literacy Hour at national as well as school level. It identifies priorities, such as developing writing through modelling and demonstration and extending the use of information technology in the teaching of literacy, to further develop the subject's many strengths. The requirements of the National Curriculum are very well met.

MATHEMATICS

84. In Year 2, pupils attain well above average standards in numeracy and all other areas of the mathematics curriculum. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, because standards have moved from above average, to well above average. The results of the national end of key stage tests in 2000 show that compared with all schools, and similar schools, nationally, standards were well above average. The findings of this inspection are in agreement with these results. Progress at the time of the last report was judged to be good, and this standard has been maintained well, with pupils making good progress in Key Stage 1. Pupils who have special educational needs also make good progress towards their own targets.

85. In Year 4, standards are well above average, and this represents very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were judged to be average at this age. Progress and achievement are very good. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress towards their targets.

86. At Key Stage 1, teaching and learning are very good. The majority of pupils work well above their expected levels within the mathematics curriculum, except for a small minority of below average pupils and those who have special educational needs, who find the work more challenging. Most pupils can recall addition and subtraction facts for numbers up to 20, and many can go beyond this. Year 1 pupils were seen working on basic subtraction, with numbers up to 15. Most were able to use appropriate terms such as 'difference', 'equals' and 'take away'. They quickly grasped this new concept, and proceeded to work through examples of their own by throwing dice to give them the new numbers to work with. In Year 2, where teaching and learning are excellent, pupils were observed working on addition, and most were clearly able to work in their heads, even with more complicated problems. Pupils are totally absorbed in their work and delight in their mathematics, sharing the teacher's enthusiasm and giving of their best. They solve number problems using money for 'shopping', and time, based on such things as a school journey, being given the time of setting off, the time taken, and then calculating how long the whole journey took. More able pupils are always given extension work and those who have special educational needs are set tasks which help towards their own targets. Pupils are able to work in all four operations by the end of Year 2, and they successfully use standard units of measure such as kilograms, and non-standard units, understanding such terms as 'heavier than' or 'lighter than'. They have conducted a survey on how each pupil spends time on different things such as eating, playing, school, and watching television. They record their findings on simple bar charts or use a graph made up with pictures.

87. In all Year 3 and 4 classes, teaching and learning are generally very good, with some that is excellent. This is promoting very good progress for all pupils and many make very good advances in

their learning. This represents very good improvement since the last report when attainment in Year 4 was said to be average. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and how to teach it are very good. The National Numeracy Strategy is being taught very well, and is having a very good effect upon attainment. Teachers plan very well and include appropriate work for pupils who have special educational needs. All sessions of mental mathematics begin with a brisk starter, with quick fire questions and answers. The lesson's objectives are shared very well with pupils so that they know exactly what is expected of them.

88. In classes with pupils from Years 3 and 4, teaching and learning are excellent. Pupils are excited about mathematics and most work well above average levels. Teachers offer a very high level of challenge and spur these young mathematicians to greater efforts. For example, in one lesson, problems of addition and subtraction had been set using details about the school, even involving the school trip about to start. These problems involved multiple steps and required very clear thinking by the pupils. One very able pupil wrestled with an addition problem involving adding the numbers represented by the dates of several days together. Pupils are asked to share their methods of working with the whole class at the end of the lessons. Teachers' planning is excellent, and the methods used are designed to draw out the best in the pupils, with shared commitment from both class and teacher to see that learning objectives are fully met. Pupils are very well able to describe three-dimensional shapes and talk about their properties such as how many faces, edges and vertices. They work confidently in standard units of measure such as kilograms and centimetres. They have carried out some extensive research into what kind of pets the class has, and then recorded the findings on pie charts and graphs. In one class of older pupils, they discovered ways of recording data without using charts and graphs and used Venn and Carroll diagrams instead. Pupils in Year 3 solve 'real life' problems such as one involving multiple darts scores. They know their two, three, four, five, and ten times tables, and work with angles and symmetry confidently. They use pictures on charts to record some of the survey work they do, such as pupils' favourite colours.

89. The school has successfully combined a commercial programme of mathematics with the demands of the National Numeracy Strategy and this results in a very good curriculum. The requirements of the National Curriculum are very well met. Pupils cover all the work expected, and most are encouraged to greater attainment levels than those expected for their ages. Mathematical skills are developed well in other subjects, for example when pupils take measurements for scientific experiments and draw graphs to show their findings. The subject is very well led and much work has been done to set out these schemes of work and coordinate the whole of the mathematics curriculum. The results of the national tests and other assessments are very carefully analysed and used to help in future planning. Teachers can see any areas that pupils find difficult, and plan accordingly to rectify them. These are the reasons why standards have improved in recent years.

90. Mathematics is a success story for the school and has been the subject of close focus for improvement. In all classes there is an air of excitement and enjoyment over mathematics, and pupils actively want to work, which is a success in itself. When this is added to the well above average results produced by the school, mathematics is seen to be one of its many strengths.

SCIENCE

91. Standards in science are above average at the end of Year 2 and in Year 4. This represents good improvement since the school's last inspection and since last year, when teachers' assessments at the end of Year 2 showed standards to be average. The school carefully analysed the results of teachers' assessments last year and found that teachers lacked confidence in assessing pupils' attainment. Work is currently being done to ensure that teachers assess pupils at the correct level. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the subject. There are no

significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, both of whom achieve above average standards. Since the last inspection, detailed plans have been drawn up by the subject leader and have been implemented enthusiastically by teachers and this has led to overall improvements in provision and standards.

92. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages and promotes good progress. In all lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning was at least good, and in some it was very good or excellent. Pupils are excited about their learning because teachers present lessons in an enthusiastic and interesting manner. Pupils constantly ask questions of their teachers, showing lively and enquiring minds and great confidence, and this is fostered well by teachers, who treat all their contributions sensitively, within an atmosphere of mutual respect. A good example of this was in a lesson in a class of Year 1 and 2 pupils in which they were learning about how plants reproduce. Skilled questioning by the teacher reminded the pupils of what they already knew about the subject and extended their knowledge successfully. They began to realise that seeds occurred in a variety of different forms but that they all reproduced a particular plant, given the correct conditions. They worked in groups to consider the best conditions in which plants grew and, by the end of the lesson, had set up experiments to test their ideas.

93. A very good feature of teaching in science is the stress on developing pupils' investigative skills. All science lessons are practically based and focus upon pupils finding things out for themselves. Because of this, pupils have very well developed skills of predicting, hypothesising and drawing conclusions from their work. Many pupils in Year 2 already understand that they must make their tests fair in order to make accurate conclusions. Teachers use the school environment well to make learning interesting and relevant; for example, Year 2 pupils have visited the pond in the school garden to examine the creatures. Follow up work included learning about the life cycle of a frog and a caterpillar.

94. Pupils continue to develop good investigative skills and further extend their scientific knowledge when they move to Key Stage 2. In lessons in Year 3 and 4, pupils used their well-developed mathematical skills to take accurate measurements of, for example, their necks and wrists to see if there was any relationship between the two. The teachers linked this extremely well with previous homework where they had taken different measurements of their family members. Skilled questioning by the teachers encouraged them to hypothesise about their results and then further measurements were taken of class members to see whether these were true. By the end of the lesson, pupils were able to state clearly their conclusions, for example, 'Your wrist is about half the size of your neck'. Pupils are always encouraged to record their results in a systematic fashion and teachers develop these skills well as pupils move through the school. They provide younger pupils with worksheets on which they write, 'What I want to find out,' 'Materials I will use' and 'What I discovered'. Older pupils are encouraged to develop their own formats for recording and to write more extensively about their results. In this way, their literacy skills are developed and they consolidate their understanding of new vocabulary. Other aspects of science are covered well; for example, when pupils investigate 'Which kitchen towel is the strongest?' and 'What is an electric circuit?' they gain a solid understanding of the properties of different materials and of how electricity works.

95. Pupils with special educational needs are supported extremely well by learning support assistants and make good progress. Their teachers often provide more appropriate worksheets or alter the task slightly to ensure they gain success and develop their learning. However, this does not mean that teachers have lower expectations of these pupils. In a class where almost one third of the pupils were identified with special educational needs, nearly all were working at above average levels for their age. Work in pupils' books shows high quality marking by teachers. Challenging comments such as, 'Is this

the result you expected?’ and ‘What do you think might have happened if...?’ encourage pupils to think deeply about their work and further develop their skills of enquiry.

96. The teaching of science is well supported by clear and detailed plans for the subject. Work in pupils’ books shows that the whole science curriculum is covered appropriately and meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum. The Foundation Year prepares pupils well for their National Curriculum studies and many pupils already have above average skills and knowledge when they enter Year 1. The subject leader has worked extremely hard to improve curricular planning and clear assessment procedures and his efforts have led to high quality teaching and learning throughout the school, which have, in turn, led to improved standards.

ART AND DESIGN

97. Pupils’ work in art and design, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is above average throughout the school. This is similar to the standards reported in the previous inspection at Key Stage 1, but an improvement on the average standards reported in Year 4. This improvement is due to refinements in curricular planning, better quality teaching and well-focused leadership of the subject.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is good at both key stages and ensures that pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject, and this ensures that pupils learn the basic skills of drawing, designing and painting well. Teachers’ high expectations mean that pupils move on from basic art techniques quickly. For example, pupils soon learn how to mix secondary from primary colours in Year 1. They move on swiftly to learn about which colours complement one another and make attractive circular designs using paint. In Year 2, they learn how to combine various techniques, for instance, when they make wax resist pictures of ‘People who help us’. Teachers plan interesting activities within other subjects so that pupils can practise the skills which they have learned in art. In Year 2, they use their well-developed drawing skills to produce leaflets to advertise the ‘Toy Museum’ in which they have collected toys from the past as part of their history work.

99. As they move into Year 3 classes, pupils refine their skills well. Their sketching is of good quality as they produce drawings of musical instruments and real and imaginary kitchen implements. Teachers give them good opportunities to improve their work by encouraging them to practise particular techniques in sketchbooks before using them in their work. In this way, they are able to try out different ways of, for example, adding texture to their drawings. They develop their skills of modelling successfully when they make Ancient Greek masks from clay to complement their work in history. Teachers ensure that pupils learn about the work of a range of different artists by using examples to stimulate pupils’ work in, for example collage and printing. Pupils in Year 4 worked carefully to construct pictures and prints to represent patterns found in nature. In this lesson, pupils were expertly supported not only by their teacher, but by the headteacher, a student doing initial teacher training, a learning support assistant and various parents. Pupils visit the local art gallery to further extend their understanding. Teachers throughout the school plan their lessons well, so that pupils spend the maximum time available engaged in practical activities. Although they listen carefully to their teachers’ explanations and instructions, pupils are always eager to begin their tasks and teachers maintain these high levels of interest and motivation by constant encouragement, praise and careful individual teaching points. In this way, each pupil’s skills are developed successfully.

100. The well organised plans for the subject ensures that pupils cover all aspects of the subject in a systematic fashion as they move through the school. Plans meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum and good links with other subjects make art relevant and interesting for the pupils. Clear and detailed plans have been developed by the subject leader and provide very good support to teachers in each year group. Standards are monitored regularly and the subject leader has a clear picture of future developments required. One of these focuses on developing clearer systems of tracking pupils' progress to inform end-of-year assessments.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

101. Standards in design and technology are well above average throughout the school. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection when standards were average. This improvement is due to very effective leadership of the subject, better curricular planning and higher quality teaching. The rate of progress for pupils, including those with special educational needs, is very good at both key stages.

102. The quality of teaching and learning is very good at both key stages and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum fully. Because of the very high quality plans for the subject, teachers are very clear about what they have to teach and how they should teach it. This results in very structured lessons which move at a brisk pace so that pupils' interest and involvement are maintained. The huge amount of preparation which goes into the lessons beforehand, ensures that pupils have the correct materials readily available and are able to spend the maximum time available working on their tasks. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson, where pupils worked extremely hard to construct a prototype carrier bag to carry two apples the length of the corridor. Following clear explanation of the task by the teacher, pupils settled quickly to their work, choosing from the various materials available. Their attention had been drawn to the previous lesson in which they had examined a range of different carrier bags to assess their effectiveness. They were able to transfer this knowledge to their own work and realised that they had to pay particular attention to making the base and the handles strong. The teacher intervened from time to time to make particular teaching points and the high level of support provided by the learning support assistant and parent helpers ensured that pupils enjoyed a great deal of success in their efforts. Teachers always draw the pupils together at the end of lessons to evaluate what they have learned and what they must remember for the next session. A major strength of the planning is that the units of work always enable pupils to consider possible improvements for their product and an opportunity to try out their ideas in a future lesson.

103. The high quality of teaching and learning is consistent throughout the school. In Year 3, pupils developed more sophisticated skills of evaluation when they examined a range of commercially produced sandwiches in preparation for making sandwiches for their friends. A whole lesson was devoted to examining the various sandwiches, making detailed and labelled diagrams, taking the sandwiches apart and finally tasting them. Teachers drew pupils' attention to the packaging and presentation and, in this way, the pupils learned the importance of the design process. By the time pupils are in Year 4, they produce very well finished bags to hold, for example, a calculator. Their design skills are well developed, with pupils making clear and detailed sketches and listing materials and techniques they will use. They learn more advanced skills of finishing their products, using a range of embroidery stitches. Pupils have excellent opportunities in design and technology lessons to develop their social skills when they work in groups. They discuss their tasks sensibly, listen with interest to one another's ideas and help one another to cut and join materials.

104. The subject is expertly led and managed and, even though design and technology has not yet come up in the school's development plan for detailed review, the commitment and enthusiasm of the subject leader has ensured the high quality of the provision while it has been in 'maintenance mode'.

She has ensured that the plans for the subject provide sufficient support for teachers and has transmitted her enthusiasm successfully to her colleagues. Resources have been carefully audited and increased to support all the units of work. She is trialling new assessment procedures to track pupils' progress more efficiently throughout the school.

GEOGRAPHY

105. Pupils' attainment in geography is above average by the end of Year 2 and well above average by the end of Year 4. This shows good improvement since the last inspection which found that attainment was average throughout the school. All pupils at Key Stage 1, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in the subject and those at Key Stage 2 make very good progress in the subject. Improvement has been due to more systematic planning to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met.

106. The youngest pupils begin by developing awareness of where they live in relation to the school and this develops into looking at, and creating, simple plans of the school and surrounding area. They understand that the quality of people's housing can vary according to environmental and economic circumstances and that different building materials may be used in different countries. By Year 2, through their work on maps, pupils show understanding and make effective use of vocabulary such as 'key' and 'environment' and can, for example explain clearly the difference between a sign and a symbol and justify why both are needed. They work enthusiastically to draw objects in plan and side views and understand why maps are drawn in plan view.

107. In Key Stage 2, good use is made of the locality to develop pupils' understanding of the environment and how it is affected by human activity. In a study on recycling, pupils carried out surveys of the amount of rubbish produced in school in a week and calculated the proportion of it that was recycled. During the lesson, they learned to query the data they had collected to establish why certain days produced more rubbish than others, and to question why more of the rubbish was not being recycled. Geographical enquiry skills are developed by encouraging pupils to investigate the quality of their immediate surroundings; they have monitored the amount of noise in the school, drawn conclusions from their findings and suggested practical improvements which led to changes. Pupils compare their own locality with that elsewhere in the world through a study of a village in India. A valuable Internet and e-mail link with a school in Ghana, made as part of the 'On the Line' project to celebrate the Millennium, has further extended pupils' geographical knowledge and understanding of different cultures. In both key stages imaginative use is made of a school mascot, Edmund Bear, which is taken by pupils and staff to holiday locations. Postcards sent by him are used well by staff to stimulate interest in the locations concerned.

108. The quality of teaching and learning is good at Key Stage 1 and very good at Key Stage 2. Teachers' planning is comprehensive and supports the high expectations they have for the pupils' learning. Pupils learn skills and acquire knowledge systematically, as in a Year 2 lesson on maps when they handled classroom objects and viewed and drew them from different angles before moving on to drawing them in plan view. Teachers encourage them to think critically of their world, enabling Year 3 pupils, for example, to propose a coherent argument for recycling paper. Teaching and learning are most successful when they are related to the pupils' immediate environment and personal experience. Practical involvement in a local issue to promote sustainable transport policies and a safer school environment required the pupils to carry out surveys and use the resulting data to propose changes to the Borough Council. It also enabled them to achieve practical changes to their own environment and the creation of a commercially produced road sign based on their own design.

109. Geography teaching has carefully planned links with other subjects, including mathematics and information and communication technology where data is obtained, analysed and frequently presented in graph form. Practical activities such as writing letters to the council develop persuasive writing in English, and social, moral and multicultural learning all benefit from the issues raised in studying the environment.

110. The subject is led very well by a coordinator who has been active in developing her own expertise and knowledge in the subject. She liaises well with middle school colleagues to ensure that the curriculum in Years 3 and 4 prepares the foundation for further learning at the pupils' next school. Together with the headteacher, she ensures that teachers' planning is detailed, covers all aspects of the subject and makes excellent use of the immediate locality. The school plans to update its policy for the subject and to address the need for an effective assessment procedure in the next academic year.

HISTORY

111. During the week of the inspection, only one history lesson was being taught. On evidence from observation of this lesson, from scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils, the attainment of pupils in both key stages is judged to be above average. This represents improvement since the last inspection when attainment was average. This is due to better quality plans for the subject which ensure that all the relevant programmes of study of the National Curriculum are met. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

112. In Years 1 and 2 pupils compare their own homes and possessions with those of previous generations as far back as Victorian times. They compare homes by looking at and drawing local houses, with more able pupils making detailed pictures showing, for example, decorative plaster work. Through a study of toys, pupils are able to appreciate the changes to commonplace objects that take place during a single generation as well as over longer periods of time. With simple computer programs they are able to sort and classify toys in their class museum. As pupils move through the school, they become increasingly adept at relating the present to the past so that, by Years 3 and 4, they are able to compare Ancient Greek schools with their own and to understand differences and similarities between the ancient and modern Olympic games. A study of the Battles of Marathon and Salamis presented pupils with opportunities to learn about the realities of ancient warfare and to reflect on the tactics used. In discussion, a Year 3 girl was able to voice the opinion that people of different ages are likely to have different views on an issue, for example, the redevelopment of historic buildings in Bury St Edmunds, and that lessons learnt from history have a bearing on present day attitudes to things such as punishment.

113. Analysis of pupils' work and teachers' plans show that the quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers bring history to life for their pupils by using historical artefacts for pupils to compare with the modern day equivalents. The use of a Victorian flat iron and sugar tongs in one lesson ensured that pupils were interested and responded with enthusiasm, relating their own knowledge and experiences to enrich the discussion. Previous first hand experience of artefacts through local museum visits or museum loan collections had resulted in an extended project culminating in class toy museums. This work involved the pupils in collecting their own exhibits, researching information about them from adults and eventually writing descriptions and labelling them. The project developed historical knowledge and skills and reinforced basic skills in English when pupils composed questionnaires and wrote letters inviting parents to visit their museum.

114. Teaching is very well planned and opportunities to link history with other subjects are exploited. In English, for example, pupils were able to practise writing for different purposes by

producing pamphlets to advertise the ancient Olympics, and to produce bullet pointed lists to describe aspects of Greek life.

115. The recently appointed subject leader manages the subject appropriately and is actively seeking to increase her effectiveness through in-service training. She has discussed the Key Stage 2 curriculum with local middle schools to ensure the topics taught in Years 3 and 4 do not overlap with those in Years 5 and 6. With the headteacher, she monitors teachers' planning on a termly basis and has begun preliminary work on a system for assessment. The Internet is being increasingly used to supplement the school's resources by researching pictures and information. The coordinator has identified a need to develop the subject further by updating the school's policy, acquiring additional artefacts to support teaching and by putting in place a system for assessment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

116. Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is well above average by the end of Year 4 and above average at the end of Year 2. Progress, including that of pupils with special educational needs, is very good throughout the school. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when attainment was average throughout the school. Improvements are due to better planning and teaching and increased levels of resources.

117. Young pupils make a sound start; they understand how to log on and off the computer and operate the mouse. They use simple programs for basic word processing and they make name labels, use a word bank and progress to writing simple sentences about themselves, changing font size and style. They learn how to store and retrieve data, for example about how quickly people dress. They enter text with confidence and some are becoming adept at amending their work by varying the shape and colour of text. In Year 2, pupils are developing confidence in copying and pasting images. They use the computer to create simple pictures of, for example, themselves or a field of flowers.

118. In Key Stage 2, pupils develop confidence in handling data and use these skills well in other subjects, for example, in geography, where information on the way people travel to work was collected and displayed as part of a local study. They learn to use the computer to control a floor turtle. The school is developing this strand of information and communication technology to include the use of computers to monitor external events such as fluctuation in room temperatures. Pupils are developing an understanding of the wider impact of information and communication technology through the use of e-mail and the Internet. The school has its own website, to which pupils contribute examples of their own work, and they use e-mail to respond to comments from parents. Some have sent their own writing, composed on a computer at home, to their teacher's e-mail address for him to correct.

119. On the evidence of five lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning is very good in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 1. The teaching of the subject meets fully the requirements of the National Curriculum. All teachers have high expectations of the pupils and their planning is a major strength. This ensures that pupils acquire new skills systematically and learn to apply them in other subjects such as design and technology where, for example, they create repeating patterns for Christmas wrapping paper. Teachers have good knowledge of the programs being used by their pupils and are able to explain their use clearly for the purpose of the lesson being taught. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as seen in a Year 2 lesson where a pupil with literacy difficulties was the first to complete the set task of finding, copying and pasting and finally adding a title to a picture of an animal. The best teaching and learning was observed where teachers had greatest personal expertise with computers and were able to present the lesson in a very dynamic and interesting way, for example when the screen turtle becomes a secret agent on a mission to be guided across a shark-infested lake by pupils in a Year 3 and 4 class.

120. The subject contributes to high quality learning in other subjects. In mathematics, pupils use computers to analyse and present data, for example, from surveys about favourite pets, in graphs and pie charts, whilst a history project in Years 1 and 2 was enhanced when pupils used computers to prepare questionnaires and written invitations for their parents to visit class museums. The pupils' multicultural understanding has benefited from Internet links with a school in Ghana as part of the 'On the Line' project developed to celebrate the Millennium.

121. The subject is led strongly by an experienced and knowledgeable coordinator who is able to set a high standard of teaching and personal use of information technology for colleagues to follow. He has been actively supporting both teaching and support staff in the development of their skills through school-based training and the careful introduction of government funded training. Very good management has ensured that an effective policy, including a policy for the use of the Internet, and schemes of work are in place and that the carefully planned use of the considerable budget allocated to the subject has enabled the school to provide an excellent resource in its computer suite. With the planned allocation of money from the school budget and government grants, the school is on course to meet the national target of one computer for every eight pupils by 2004.

122. The school is aware of the need to develop the curriculum and resources in two areas. The first is to enable the pupils to use computers to monitor external events, for example a simple alarm system, and the second is to strengthen their competence in the retrieval and manipulation of information to support other curriculum areas. The school is already actively addressing these issues. It is anticipated that continued development of the skills of staff in Key Stage 1 will raise the standard of achievement to match that of Key Stage 2.

MUSIC

123. The findings of this inspection are drawn from observation of a small number of lessons, teachers' planning, curricular documents and recorded tapes, together with discussions with staff and pupils. Pupils were also observed singing in assemblies and in the school choir.

124. The indications are that attainment is above average at both key stages. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, especially since, at that time, some pupils were judged to be making unsatisfactory progress. Progress now, for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, is good. Pupils enjoy their music lessons and singing in assemblies. They are enthusiastic and work as a 'choir' well.

125. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 1 is good, and this is an improvement since the last inspection where it was found to be satisfactory. Lessons are well planned with a broad range of musical activities that pupils enjoy and find stimulating. They sing a variety of songs and hymns tunefully and with good control, following the conductor's instructions well. They sustain the rhythm and keep good time. Pupils in Year 2 were observed learning about dynamics, and they understood the need for quieter, louder, faster and slower music. They knew that these could help the interpretation of the music, and convey sadness or happiness. They were able to give some examples of this, such as "Silent Night". They listen to music and are able to appreciate the mood or the purpose. For example, in Year 2, they heard "Agnus Dei" by Barber, and were immediately able to say that it sounded like church music. The whole class caught the calmer mood from the teacher's very quiet and careful speaking, setting the scene very well so that they understood that they too must respond quietly. In the Key Stage 1 assembly, they learnt a new song very quickly and were able to clap in time throughout the verses and chorus.

126. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is good, with some that is very good. Pupils in Year 3 were exploring pentatonic scales and they were well informed about the kind of music these produced, such as Chinese music. They were enthralled to learn that they were going to make up a dragon story and put it to music. The teacher very skilfully led them to make their own suggestions about the dragon, such as hard scales and sharp teeth. They were excited to hear that maybe they could make up a dance to this as well and perform it for younger pupils in the school. Planning is very good and the use of resources enhances pupils' learning very well. In the dragon lesson, the teacher had brought some dressing gowns with Chinese dragons embroidered on them, and a pop-out book about dragons. In discussion with pupils, they were able to talk well about some of the music they have studied, and all had a favourite instrument, such as bongo drums, recorder or tambourine. They talked excitedly about some of their compositions in small groups and then performing them for the rest of the class. Some also recalled how they had used a drum to represent an elephant, or the rain-stick to remind them of a snake.

127. Planning for the subject as a whole is very good, and the elements of listening and appreciation, creating music and performing, evaluating their own and others' work, and exploring different cultures are all very well addressed. The subject is very well led by a music specialist who plans carefully, and offers colleagues any help they may need. Schemes of work are in place, and overall, the curriculum is well-organised, which is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. The coordinator has monitored some teaching and learning and there are plans to extend her role. She has trialled some forms of assessment, but these are not fully in place as the subject is to receive prominent focus in due course, when every aspect of it will come under review. However, teachers are constantly telling pupils how they are doing, evaluating performances with them, and discussing how these might be improved. There is very full on-going assessment of this sort all the time. Resources are very good and are used well. These very good facilities, coupled with the expertise of the co-ordinator, help pupils' attainment and learning to be above average.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

128. A limited number of lessons were observed, and so these findings are based upon those, together with the subject planning and discussions with staff and pupils.

129. The indications are that, in general, pupils' attainment is average for their ages. Some are more able at certain skills such as throwing, or batting, while others find the co-ordination required for these skills difficult. In Key Stage 1, pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve generally sound standards. At Key Stage 2, although some pupils make good progress and achieve well, the majority make sound progress and reach average standards.

130. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and reach good standards relative to their previous levels of attainment. These judgements are similar to those made at the last inspection.

131. At Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching and learning overall is good. This shows good improvement on the findings of the last inspection. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson on gymnastics, the teacher set a very good tone for the lesson by arranging for pupils to change while quiet music was played. This encouraged them to change very quietly and quickly and they arrived in the hall very well prepared to start their lesson. The teacher's control and enthusiasm were infectious and pupils soon caught the mood, warming up well and finding spaces in which to work, and taking great care to respect others' space. They stretched and balanced, moving smoothly from one position to another working very well and with very good behaviour throughout the lesson.

132. A highlight of Key Stage 1 lessons is the pupils' evaluation of each other's work. They are clearly very used to expressing opinions about what they see, but it is always constructive and well mannered.

133. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils responded very well to the teacher's method of encouragement. She awarded a "Super Star" award for changing, the work in the lesson, and the return to the classroom. Behaviour again, in this class, was very good, and pupils made good use of the space available, stretching and curling and generally responding very well to the routines that the teacher had established. They were able to make short sequences of balance and travel movements, and once again evaluated each other's work very well.

134. At Key Stage 2, teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan well and explain the objectives of the lesson clearly. They encourage pupils to demonstrate good practice and share their work with the class as a whole. In the lesson about striking and fielding, pupils enjoyed this basic form of cricket, and worked in small groups learning how to bat, bowl and field. There were varying levels of skills but all managed to achieve at least one part of the activity. This work is laying good foundations for a complete game later on. Teachers achieve a good balance between demonstration and playing, sometimes demonstrating themselves and sometime using pupils who are doing well.

135. Swimming is taught later in the year, and discussions with teachers show that last year only ten pupils out of the Year 4 group who were leaving could not swim at least 25 metres. Pupils are well aware of the effects of physical education on the functions of their bodies, and can discuss heart rate and blood flow. They understand the beneficial effects of warm up and cool down. Pupils who cannot take part in the lessons for various reasons are given tasks related to the work, such as keeping a note of the teams, or some evaluation of what has happened. In this way, they are made a part of the proceedings.

136. The management of the subject is very good and the coordinator has worked very hard to produce well-organised plans. These have been compiled from several sources and cover all the expected areas. The school has a good-sized area for outdoor work, and the hall is also large enough for indoor classes. These two facilities, plus the good resources, enable pupils to experience many aspects of physical education. Storage of equipment is a problem and all the apparatus has to be left on view in the hall. However, teachers ensure that all pupils are aware of safety rules when moving through the hall, or when moving apparatus. Various forms of assessment have been tried and a whole school system recently agreed.