

INSPECTION REPORT

SOMERS HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Ockendon

LEA area: Thurrock

Unique reference number: 114847

Headteacher: Keith Richards

Reporting inspector: John Lilly
12487

Dates of inspection: 26 – 29 November 2001

Inspection number: 196695

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Misra

Date of previous inspection: 23 June 1997

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Somers Heath is a primary school of average size with 246 girls and boys on roll between the ages of three and eleven. It is one of five primary schools serving an extensive estate originally built to re-house people from London. Although much of the housing is now owner-occupied, most pupils come from families that are much less economically and socially favoured than the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Most children join the school aged three with very low attainment, especially in speaking and listening skills. The school has recently received an Achievement Award for improved standards. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is high, although an average number have Statements of those needs. No pupils are learning English as an additional language and the number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the expected stages is average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic cultures and all are English speakers.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Somers Heath is a good school with many of the strengths of a very good school. Working closely with parents, it offers a very caring yet firmly led community in which pupils develop very well as mature and confident young people. Leadership is strong, management is good and standards are improving. Teaching is good, and very good in the nursery and in Years 1 and 2. Pupils make good progress, joining the school with very low attainment and leaving with attainment that broadly matches national expectations for pupils aged eleven. Even so, standards by the age of eleven need to be higher because they are below average when compared with schools of a similar nature. This is because standards in literacy are much too low. A powerful feature of the school is that all pupils are welcomed and all staff are determined that each one will succeed. Considering the revenue of the school, the very good personal development and the good progress of pupils, the school offers good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very good leadership of the headteacher;
- The strong determination and commitment of all staff to help every pupil succeed;
- The very good provision for personal development that leads to very good behaviour;
- The good teaching overall, and very good teaching in the nursery and Years 1 and 2;
- The very good and productive partnership with parents;
- The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- The very good provision for children in the nursery;
- The good care for the welfare of pupils;
- The very good relationships between adults and pupils, and amongst pupils;
- The very good contribution of the community, including parents, to the pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- Standards in literacy and especially in speaking and listening;
- The use of assessment to raise standards;
- The quality of teaching;
- Attendance of a minority of pupils;
- Equality of opportunity concerning reception education.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. Since that time standards have risen steadily, and especially by the end of Year 2. Standards in art and design, information and communication technology, and religious education have risen because subject management and teaching are better. Standards in writing have not improved enough, even though the school has made strenuous efforts to raise attainment. Teaching has improved significantly and governors are now very involved with the life and work of the school. Improvement has been good and the school shows the determination and skills to improve much further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	E	E
Mathematics	B	D	E	D
Science	C	D	E	D

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

Standards in National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 have improved rapidly and in 2001 matched the national average in mathematics and science, but were below average for reading and writing. These results overall were higher than the average for similar schools. Standards in these tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were very low and were below average for similar schools. Standards in literacy, and especially speaking, listening and writing, were well below average. Attainment of current pupils has improved and most pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Current pupils in Year 6 attain nationally expected standards in most areas of the curriculum, although standards of literacy are still not high enough. Underachievement by boys remains, especially in Years 3 to 6. Standards overall show average improvement. The governors set challenging targets but need to give more consideration to standards in very effective schools serving similar communities.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes towards their work and life in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good with very little bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Attendance by a minority of pupils is unsatisfactory.

The very good personal development and relationships are at the heart of the school's success. Most pupils attend well and arrive punctually for school, but a minority do not. This holds back these pupils' progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	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.

Teaching is very good at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. It is good between Years 3 and 6 but standards vary; some classes are well taught and some very well. Numeracy is taught effectively, but improvement is needed in the teaching of English, especially speaking, listening for understanding and writing. Girls and boys of all levels of ability are well taught, and those with special educational needs are taught especially well. Consequently, most pupils make good progress, but their progress is hindered by low literacy skills, especially in Years 3 to 6.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' present and future lives. A very good range of outside class activities and the very good contribution by the community, including parents, considerably enrich the pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is very good overall; it is very good for moral development and excellent for social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for its pupils.

The working partnership with parents is a strength of the school and the contribution made by the Parents' Support Group excellent. This partnership makes a major contribution to the pupils' progress and personal development. Although provision for children in the nursery and reception is good overall, arrangements for entry to the reception class cause significant inequality of opportunity. Even so, a strength of the school is the determination of staff that every pupil will be helped to succeed academically and to develop as confident young people. The school needs to give pupils further opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide very strong and caring leadership for every member of the school community. Management is good but needs to make better use of assessment to raise standards and further improve teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well, working closely with the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance openly and honestly but pays insufficient attention to the performance of similar schools nationally.
The strategic use of resources	The school spends its money wisely and prudently.

There are adequate qualified staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the skilled teaching assistants are a particular strength. Accommodation and learning resources are both good. Although leadership is strong, management, while good overall, needs to improve the way governors and staff use monitoring to identify ways in which to improve. Governors ensure that they get best value for money but, in order to guarantee that they continue to do so, they need to look more closely at the way very effective schools serving similar communities achieve even higher standards than those at Somers Heath.

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 strong partnership between home and school • The leadership of the headteacher • The good teaching that helps their children make good progress • The way the school helps children behave well and develop as happy, confident young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • Outside class activities

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They find that teachers set satisfactory homework but should take more advantage of this area of learning. There is a very good range of outside-class activities, although inspectors find the school could be even more effective in using the current activities to support the progress and personal development of pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children join the nursery with very low attainment but make good progress. They join Year 1 with below average attainment, and attainment in speaking and listening is still very low. Attainment overall is well below average when pupils join Year 1 because too few pupils exceed the early learning goals for the Foundation Stage.
2. National Curriculum standards are improving and are significantly higher than at the time of the last inspection. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 have improved at a much higher than average rate in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, results in national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 have improved at a slightly more than average rate. In mathematics and science results have improved rapidly but, after an initial improvement three years ago, they have remained static in English.
3. In National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001, standards were below average in reading and writing, and average for mathematics. Girls tended to do better than boys. The performance of higher-attaining pupils was below average in reading and writing, and average in mathematics. In science assessments, although the proportion achieving the expected level was average, the performance of high-attaining pupils was well below average.
4. When these results are compared with schools serving similar areas, results were slightly above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics.
5. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001, standards were well below average in English, mathematics and science. The progress made in English was well below average, and progress was below average in mathematics and science. This difference is mainly due to underachievement by boys in English. Compared with similar schools, these standards were well below average in English, and below average in mathematics and in science. When considering percentages, the proportion achieving the expected level was well below the average for similar schools in English, below average in mathematics and above average in science. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was below average in English, but average in mathematics and science compared with similar schools.
6. The attainment of current pupils shows continued improvement, but English remains a problem, especially in speaking and listening but also in writing. Low attainment in these skills is holding back progress overall, and often pupils' underlying understanding is greater than they can express clearly in words and writing. When listening they pay attention, but do not always understand what they hear.
7. By the end of Year 2, attainment of current pupils is below national expectations in English, and matches these expectations for pupils of this age in mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, history, geography, and religious education. Attainment is above national expectations in information and communication technology, music and physical education. This very good progress overall is the result of very good teaching in Years 1 and 2, and is beginning to benefit from the much-improved provision at the Foundation Stage. The problem, however, remains as to speaking and listening for understanding, and this has a detrimental effect on all learning. Pupils

make progress in these skills, but not enough. Even so, the good improvement overall since the last inspection provides a good basis for improvement in attainment when pupils are eleven.

8. By the end of Year 6, attainment is still below expectations in English, and very slightly below in science. It matches national expectations in mathematics, information and communication technology, art and design, history, geography, music and religious education, and exceeds them in physical education. Attainment is below expectations in design and technology.
9. Progress overall is good, often very good at the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Although satisfactory, it slows in Years 3 and 4, increases in Year 5 and is very good in Year 6. This variation has several reasons. The improvement in progress in Years 1 and 2 relates to the much-improved teaching and the benefits of good provision at the Foundation Stage. Progress slows in Years 3 and 4 because although teaching is at least satisfactory it is not as effective as in Years 1 and 2. A further factor is that it is more difficult for teaching to be effective when classes cover two ages. The progress in Year 5 has suffered from discontinuity of teaching. Currently, pupils are very well taught and progress is improving rapidly. Progress in Year 6 is very good because pupils are very well taught.
10. A further reason for less good progress in Years 3 to 6 is the very low speaking and listening skills of pupils, and the expectations of teachers as to writing. These weaknesses are holding back progress in all subjects, in contrast to skills in numeracy and information and communication technology, which are moving learning forward.
11. Girls and boys tend to make equivalent progress, although the attitudes of boys, especially in Years 3 to 6, is not as good as the girls; this makes the boys' progress more erratic and markedly slows their progress between Years 3 and 6, especially in literacy. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported and make good progress. Less able pupils are identified and helped to move forward, especially in the senior years. Average and above average ability pupils make good progress. Although the school identifies the very able pupils, these pupils are not always given sufficient opportunity to achieve their very high potential.
12. As the school rectifies weaknesses, there are signs that good progress is becoming very good progress overall. The school recognises that this improvement will slow if weaknesses in literacy are not rectified.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' behaviour, personal development and relationships are very good and their attitudes are good. Attendance is unsatisfactory overall, but this tends to apply to a minority of pupils.
14. Pupils' attitudes throughout the school are good. They enjoy coming to school, a fact confirmed by 95 per cent of the parents in their answers to the questionnaires. Pupils show enthusiasm when they arrive, settle down quickly in the classroom and soon get down to the work in hand. Years 5 and 6 pupils say they are proud of their school. For example, one pupil said that he wished that pupils had a regular uniform, which would enable them to 'show-off' their school better. The same group was happy to talk about what they particularly liked about school and all of them said that they liked the way teachers help them. Pupils are happy to talk to visitors and during the observation of the

'Behaviour Club' one infant pupil asked an inspector with open interest: 'Are you from the council?'

15. Behaviour across the school is very good. Pupils are polite and courteous, hold doors open for other pupils and adults, and regularly say 'please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me'. On the Wednesday afternoon of the inspection, the school held a meeting for inspectors and members of the community. Senior pupils directed visitors to the school hall with confident charm and a pupil, when thanked, replied: 'You're welcome'. Behaviour in the classroom is usually good or very good and occasionally excellent; it was never unsatisfactory. Around the school, in the playground and in the dining hall behaviour was very good. There were six fixed-term exclusions and one permanent exclusion in the previous year, but they all involved the same pupil. In the previous four years there were no exclusions. No bullying was observed during the inspection and pupils say that it is not tolerated.
16. Pupils understand well the impact of their actions on others. For example, a number of pupils expressed disgust that, in the previous year, some pupils teased a boy with a medical condition and called him names. They were adamant that this was hurtful and should not have happened. They are kind to each other and the older pupils like to help the teachers with the younger ones. Pupils fully respect the feelings and beliefs of others, as they demonstrated in an assembly on the Hindu festival of Divali.
17. Pupils learn to show initiative and to take on greater responsibility. This starts with pupils taking the registers back to the office and helping to tidy-up after lessons. Older pupils help around the school, in assembly and showing visitors the way. They also take part in a daily rota as librarians and as helpers in the nursery. They are collecting toys for their 'Blue Peter Stall' at the Christmas fete, and raise money for Comic Relief and other charities. There were 'thank you' letters on the school notice board for pupils who had taken round harvest gifts to local elderly people, and one of these senior citizens presented the school with two beautiful models he had made. Even so, pupils could be given further opportunities to take more initiative and to make a contribution to the life of the school through, for example, membership of a school council and taking a greater part in managing their own learning.
18. Relationships across the school are very good. Pupils work well together in pairs and in groups. Pupils said they liked their teachers and the way staff helped them with their work. These positive relationships permeate the school, from the headteacher downwards. Parents, both at their meeting and also in the questionnaires, stressed that the headteacher and all the staff were very approachable; for example, they meet parents and pupils arriving at the start of the school day. The headteacher was in the playground as pupils and parents arrived at the school. He had easy relationships with both pupils and parents. Pupils were happy to chat to him as they arrived at the school.
19. Pupils' attendance, as measured in the most recent reporting year, is unsatisfactory and below the national average. In previous years it had been around or just below the average. At the time of the last inspection attendance was satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is just below average and most of the absences were authorised. Last year was exceptional, with three pupils being off school for extended periods due to illness and this has distorted the figures. However, pupils taking holidays during the school term cause a large number of authorised absences. Pupils usually arrive at school on time and very few pupils arrive late. The unsatisfactory attendance has an adverse effect on some pupils' attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching overall is good and supports effective learning; it has improved significantly since the last inspection. In the main, it is consistently good across subjects. The team of teachers and teaching assistants is strong, with some very talented members. Others work hard and effectively but find it more difficult to produce the high standards they seek to achieve. Teaching in the nursery is very good and it is entirely satisfactory in reception. In all Year 1 and 2 classes, teaching is of consistently high quality, always at least satisfactory, good in at least 90 per cent of lessons, and very good and often excellent in more than 60 per cent of lessons. This provides a very secure basis for pupils' future learning.
21. In Years 3 to 6, teaching is at least satisfactory and usually good. Sixty per cent of the teaching observed was at least good, and 20 per cent was very good and occasionally excellent. This hides inconsistencies, however, because teaching in Years 3 and 4 is less effective than in Years 5 and 6 and, consequently, while learning in Years 3 and 4 is almost always satisfactory and usually good, learning in Years 5 and 6 is usually good and often very good or excellent.
22. There are two main reasons for this inconsistency. First, the school has had great difficulty in recruiting staff and a key teacher has been absent for all the term of the inspection. The school has worked energetically and successfully to fill the gaps with effective teachers, but circumstances beyond the control of the school have brought disruption to the pupils' learning; this has had an effect on their attitudes and behaviour. Second, staff development is supportive but not sufficiently expert and, therefore, not effective enough for those teachers who find it difficult to perform as they would wish.
23. All teachers plan lessons carefully and base their planning on good subject knowledge and a clear idea of pupils' ability and prior attainment. They have clear objectives for each lesson and unit of work, and manage lessons well, maintaining the interest and concentration of the pupils. They set suitably challenging work that is well matched to the ability levels of the pupils, and lessons usually have a good pace and a clear sense of purpose. Work is marked conscientiously and some teachers add comments that help pupils to improve. Teachers make adequate but not extensive use of homework. There are satisfactory procedures for assessment and tracking of progress, but sometimes records are not up to date. A strength in the teaching is the excellent teamwork between the teachers and the very skilled teaching assistants; this makes a significant contribution to pupils' progress.
24. The main difference between very good and satisfactory teaching is the planning. Very effective teachers plan lessons in ways that help the pupils to learn rather than simply to cover the syllabus. This leads them to set work, for each level of ability, which is not only at a less or more demanding standard but also offers different ways to learn. These teachers make crystal clear to the pupils 'what they are learning today' and then specify 'what the teacher will look for' in their work; too few teachers write these objectives on the board as a constant reminder to pupils. In the very effective lessons, pupils fully understand what they must learn and the particular skills and understanding they must demonstrate. Very effective teachers set very high standards and expectations of behaviour; immediately pupils fall below this standard they are held to account, and lovingly but very firmly put back on track. These very effective lessons bowl along with tremendous pace and excitement, and the teachers use very skilled questioning to check, consolidate and extend learning. The challenge in these lessons becomes greater and greater, as the teacher introduces one idea, then a second, and then checks that the pupils understood the first; only then does the teacher move on to the third and more challenging idea. If pupils show they have not fully understood, these

very effective teachers adapt their teaching very rapidly, finding another way for the pupils to learn. These teachers place great emphasis on the first part of the lesson so that pupils understand what they need to learn and achieve, and then check scrupulously in the last part of the lesson that all pupils have met their objectives, noting areas to develop in the next lesson.

25. Teachers use many lessons to develop the pupils' numeracy skills; for example, they use graphs to present analysed data from a geography survey. The pupils' competence in numeracy helps them learn in many lessons. Information and communication technology plays a positive part in almost every lesson, usually well-related to the work in hand.
26. The teaching of literacy skills is not so good, partly because the teaching in literacy lessons, while good, is not as effective as for teaching as a whole and, more significantly, because it is not given sufficient emphasis in other lessons. The pupils have poor speaking and listening skills and yet general planning for each lesson does not include specific plans to develop these skills in, for example, geography or religious education. Consequently, teachers tend to translate what pupils say in their own form of English, rather than putting the pupils' words into the form of English required, and then helping pupils to use this more structured English themselves. Similarly, some teachers mistake the appearance of listening for the type of listening that enables true understanding. In many lessons, inspectors noticed that pupils' attention wandered because they could not understand what they heard. The most effective teachers realise this and continually check understanding, helping the pupils to prove they understand by asking them to repeat back key ideas in more formally structured English. Writing as such is taught well but the problem is elsewhere. Sometimes teachers have expectations of pupils' writing that are too low, accepting in both literacy and other lessons writing that is poorly formed, badly structured and often simply too little in the time available. This means that pupils do not have a clear idea of the high standards they need to achieve. The school could usefully consider more use of drafting and setting clearer standards for writing in all lessons. Standards in literacy hold back all learning and have a detrimental impact on performance in national tests because even when pupils' understanding is good, some cannot understand the questions nor put their good ideas into writing.
27. Teaching as a whole addresses the needs of girls and boys equally well. The learning needs of the very and most able are adequately addressed, even though planning is seldom specific. Teaching for pupils of average and below average ability is good, with well thought-through strategies to help those who can succeed with a little more help, for example, in the 'spring board sessions'. Pupils with special educational needs are very well taught through skilled support from teaching assistants and very skilled teaching by the co-ordinator in withdrawn groups. Even so, this teaching could usefully consider placing greater emphasis on speaking and listening skills.
28. The teaching promotes good learning. Pupils make good progress, but they must make very good progress if their attainment by age eleven is to match the national average. Pupils are keen and eager to learn, and find their work interesting. Most stick at a task and concentrate, but some tend to give up too easily. They co-operate with each other and relationships between adults and pupils, and amongst pupils are very good. However, although they think they do, too often pupils do not give enough care to their work, and too much written and graphical work is careless. Many are unwilling to solve problems and prefer to do instructed tasks. This is because the school does not have sufficiently developed procedures for pupils to agree week-by-week targets, to plan how to meet them, to evaluate at the end of the week their success or otherwise, and to

record their achievements. Consequently, pupils do not manage sufficiently their own learning, reflecting on how well they have done and how they can improve.

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

29. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided overall for pupils from Years 1 to 6 are satisfactory. However, present arrangements for reception education create significant inequality of provision because some children receive three terms full-time education and others two or only one. Provision for Years 1 and 2 is good. Here, the planned curriculum provides appropriate opportunities to redress pupils' inherent weaknesses in literacy, especially in speaking and in listening for understanding. Pupils currently in Years 3 to 6 have had too few opportunities for improving their literacy skills in previous years to bring their standards up to those required for good learning in other subjects.
30. The National Curriculum is covered appropriately in all years. Statutory requirements are met and the school fulfils the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Class timetables provide sufficient time for each subject so that pupils experience a good breadth and balance in Years 1 and 2. This is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6, but in these years all subjects need to include, more rigorously than at present, planning to improve pupils' literacy skills. Published programmes of study effectively guide planning for the coverage of subjects, and good schemes of work support this coverage. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies effectively underpin the planning of English and mathematics.
31. There are many examples of strong linkage between subjects, for example science and design and technology, and these links create better understanding by pupils. Most subjects provide well-focused tasks on the same theme for pupils of different ability levels; there are very good examples in mathematics. Where this is weaker, however, and where pupils in the school need it most, is in English, where too much work is 'common' to all levels of prior achievement, and thus unsuitable for many pupils; this hinders their learning. This is mainly because the subject lacks a co-ordinator at present. The school is much more effective in teaching numeracy than in teaching literacy.
32. Teachers organise their timetable flexibly and the variety of other materials, tasks, exercises and activities pupils experience is at least satisfactory. Current class organisation, however, creates unnecessary difficulties in curricular provision; for example, the school has two mixed Years 3/4 classes when numbers could support one discrete class for each year. Examination of the effects on pupils' progress in these years is needed. This should establish whether pupils are disadvantaged by this arrangement, which has a social rather than a curricular rationale. Detailed assessment and tracking of progress are still developing, so management has insufficiently clear evidence of the impact of such class arrangements. Although pupils gain great benefit from activities away from lessons, for example helping in the nursery, more care needs to be taken to ensure that what they gain is not at the cost of missed learning in important lessons.
33. The school addresses creating equality of opportunity for all pupils with passion and complete commitment. Although not always analysing assessment information in sufficient detail, staff know correctly that they meet their aim, because it is always a central part of the way they less formally evaluate both the progress of pupils and also their own teaching. Consequently, very effective support for pupils with special

educational needs provides full access to the learning. The school identifies pupils with special gifts and talents and provides satisfactory opportunities for these gifts to flower. Even so, this provision is insufficiently focused; for example, teachers could provide investigations to carry out independently at home.

34. The school provides a very good variety of extra-curricular activity, particularly for older pupils. This ranges from trips to France to sporting competitions. Pupils often stay behind after school for clubs, with an art and craft club run by parents and badminton, for example, being well supported. The ethos of the school is one that strongly promotes equality of opportunity; these values are intrinsic to the school's planning of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. The personal, social and health education programme, which includes 'circle time' (sessions when pupils can share concerns), is designed carefully to allow flexibility to respond to events. The focus of a 'circle time' seen on inspection, for example, arose because of a breakdown in relationships between classmates. Policies regarding health education, sex education and citizenship are satisfactory, and these topics are included appropriately in the personal, social and health education syllabus being developed in the school.

Provision for personal development

35. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with many very good features.
36. Some aspects are very strong, especially the excellent provision for pupils' social development. Most pupils join the school with weak personal and social skills and leave it as mature, confident eleven-year-olds, a product of their very good development in the school. Receiving secondary schools appreciate the attributes the school's leavers bring with them to the next phase of education. Many ex-pupils remain in contact after they leave and remember the school with warmth. Many opportunities provide pupils with pathways to develop their social skills to these levels; for example, they carry out many tasks demanding initiative and responsibility such as helping in the nursery. The rich variety of extra-curricular activities, especially those organised by the Parents' Support Group, enrich these opportunities considerably. Even so, pupils could usefully be exposed to more by, for example, contributing to more decision-making through a school council and by taking more responsibility for their own learning.
37. Provision for moral development is very good. A very strong moral code underpins the whole of the school's life. High standards of behaviour are expected from the moment pupils enter the school, consistently enforced through firm but friendly discipline from teachers, and supported by all adults in the school. Pupils know where they are with staff and where the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour lie. They willingly conform to these expectations in almost all cases. Where infringements occur, sanctions are seen as fair. These consistently applied expectations create a secure and warm learning environment in which pupils feel safe to explore ideas, offer contributions and raise questions, understanding that if they are 'wrong' these contributions will still be valued. Pupils' confidence, therefore, increases greatly and they make their own commitment to doing what is right.
38. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good; it is well considered and planned. They learn effectively about music, art, literature and other areas of cultural creativity, including aspects of other cultures' ways of looking at the world. In Year 2, for example, pupils were studying Hindu customs about Divali, making their own Rangoli patterns for good luck. Less strong is the emphasis placed on the reflective, evaluative aspects of

pupils' experience. Pupils' achievements in their own communities are recognised and celebrated.

39. Although at least satisfactory, provision for pupils' spiritual development does not match that for other aspects. Assemblies, for example, while often providing strong reinforcement for a moral or social message, do not give pupils enough opportunities for quiet reflection. This aspect of pupils' development is not sufficiently built into class lessons, and opportunities for awe, wonder, quiet thought and contemplation are missed. The school meets the requirements for a daily act of collective worship of a broadly Christian nature, with some good singing of hymns and meaningful prayers incorporated into assemblies. Even so, the school lacks a sufficiently well considered policy to take full benefit from this side of the school's life.
40. Governors feel that even greater benefit could be gained from this good provision and its relationship to the good range of activities beyond the classroom. They rightly recognise that more benefit would result from bringing all these strengths together by developing further ways in which pupils can record their day-by-day and week-by-week personal achievements and successes.

Contribution of the community to pupils' learning and the constructiveness of relationships with partner institutions

41. The contribution of the community considerably enriches the curriculum in a number of ways. For example, the community police officer makes regular visits to the school and a car manufacturing company is happy to sponsor some of the information and communication technology projects and the sandpit in the nursery. The Lakeside Partnership sponsors a booklet entitled 'A Parent's Guide for Survival'. The school won an award for the best staff and pupil project for taking part in a spring-clean to support 'Thurrock in Bloom' and the borough council presented the award. The borough's road safety department organises a 'walk round' with young pupils and parents, to point out dangerous areas in the surrounding roads. The community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
42. The school has very good links with the local secondary schools. The majority of pupils move on to their local comprehensive school, whose deputy head said that the Somers Heath pupils were very socially developed, and confident. The deputy headteacher of one of the other comprehensive schools in the area also spoke highly of the pupils they receive from the school. Arrangements for transfer to secondary school are good and well-organised, and pupils said that the induction process was helpful and had already begun. The school also has very good links with secondary schools through students' 'work experience'. Somers Heath has received a Trident Award for helping young people to develop, by enabling them to carry out their work experience at the school. Discussion with students who went to Somers Heath, who are now taking examinations in secondary and further education, show that the school provides an excellent foundation for life-long learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. Pupils at Somers Heath School receive their education in a warm, caring and nurturing environment. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Those for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare, monitoring and improving attendance, and for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are all good. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, but the use

of assessment information to guide curricular planning and pupils' academic progress need to be more effective.

44. The school has appropriate child protection procedures, in line with those of the local authority's child protection committee, with the headteacher as the designated adult. The headteacher has received full training in child protection procedures and, while he has not yet undergone training in the care of 'looked after' children, he has been studying the information on the subject sent to him by the local authority. Child protection is covered on training days and all staff are aware of what to do if a child protection issue arises. The school's relationship with social services is good and the headteacher is able to call on the education welfare officer for advice. Correct procedures are followed from the first reporting by a member of staff, to the notes taken of the discussion with social services on the telephone, to the formal letter received on action taken by the social services department. Child protection issues appear on the agenda of meetings of the governing body and are discussed.
45. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are good and are being further underpinned by the developing school's personal, social and health programme. Examples of the good procedures were seen in the level of supervision in the playground during break and at lunchtime. The lunchtime supervisors are experienced and are dressed in distinctive uniforms; they are very good role-models for the pupils. Supervision on a walk to the swimming pool was good and the teacher took particular care to explain the importance of keeping in line and behaving well to avoid any risk from traffic. The provision for first-aid and the care of sick pupils is good. Health and safety procedures are good and the school carries out an annual audit in line with the local authority's policy. No health and safety issues arose during the inspection. The caretaker, who is quick to pick up any problems, is also a school governor.
46. In spite of an unsatisfactory level of attendance, the school has good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance. The school records attendance manually, but is shortly due to change over to a computerised system. Registers are marked correctly, in line with statutory procedures. Parents must inform the school of any absence and fill in a form if they wish to take a pupil away on holiday during the term. This must be approved by the headteacher. The school stresses the importance of maintaining good attendance and arriving promptly at school. Staff work closely with the education welfare officer but, at the time of the inspection, he was on long-term sick leave. Pupils receive certificates for good attendance. The introduction of a computerised system for recording attendance will make it easier to analyse the attendance rate of each pupil and group of pupils. The school should then be able to relate absence rates to a pupil's progress and inform parents and pupils of the damage caused by poor attendance, as well as setting appropriate future targets as part of overall arrangements to help pupils take more responsibility for their own achievements.
47. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying are very good and pupils are aware of what happens if they do not behave well. The emphasis is on positive action through a system of rewards and merits, which are displayed on the classroom wall. Sanctions are available, ranging from a 'look or a word' from the teacher, or moving the pupil in the classroom, to more serious sanctions such as sending pupil to the headteacher and, ultimately, exclusion; this last step is extremely rare. An example of the school's pro-active approach to behaviour is the 'Behaviour Club' at lunchtime that operates on most days. This is for pupils in the infants with social development problems. It was funded by a grant, which enabled the school to take on an extra member of staff to run it and to buy in resources such as board games; the school now meets these costs. The club enables the pupils to

develop their social skills, which they do by playing the different games, such as dominoes and table football. Older pupils usually come and help the supervisor and play games with the younger ones. The school has a very clear anti-bullying policy, which is an integral part of the behaviour policy. Pupils know about this and older pupils say they will not hesitate to tell a teacher if they see any bullying. If any serious behaviour incidents occur, parents are involved at an early stage and such events are dealt with firmly.

48. The school monitors and supports pupils' personal development well. Staff know their pupils well and pick up any problems as soon as they arise. The process is well supported by the school's very experienced and well-trained teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors, a number of whom perform both roles. Teaching assistants have their own files on pupils and they note down any problems they see, and discuss them with the teachers. Any recurring problems are then discussed at the regular staff meetings and relevant strategies put in place.

Special educational needs

49. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Their needs are identified early, and plans drawn up to guide teachers and pupils. Targets are set that provide a step-by-step learning pathway, and teachers and teaching assistants use these targets effectively to give well focused support in lessons, assessing progress so that teaching can be even more responsive. The specialist teacher withdraws pupils for specific and very effective teaching, usually with reading or writing. The school could usefully consider extending this provision to more specific support for speaking and listening. The pupils' support is underpinned by the good partnership with parents, and plans and progress are regularly reviewed. A strength of the provision is the way that class teachers, teaching assistants, the specialist teacher and parents work together to support good progress. The specialist teacher leads and manages the provision well, ensuring that colleagues make this support a priority. There are adequate but not extensive learning resources to support this work.

Assessment

50. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are satisfactory. The school has sufficient data to provide essential information to be used by teachers in their planning. Details from entry into the nursery, the assessment in Reception, and statutory assessment tasks and tests, are supplemented by information from the optional tests in Year 3 to Year 5. The school tests pupils' reading and spelling every year and teachers keep careful records of end-of-unit and termly performance. The school has made a start to the setting of targets but these procedures require further development. The local education authority provides breakdowns of test results and the school is able to use them to identify any areas of weakness in teaching. For example, the school used the information provided to improve teaching, and learning about, the use of graphs in science. Even so, the information is not used sufficiently effectively and widely. There are opportunities for improvement in the way assessment is used to guide pupils and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. This would ensure that the data are used even more effectively, for example to:

- track and evaluate individual pupil's progress more continuously;
- adapt teaching more effectively to ensure that pupils build on previous learning and progress at a suitable rate;

- bring assessment together to give week-by-week feedback to pupils so that they are clear as to where they are succeeding, where they are meeting problems, and what they have to learn next;
- link this feedback to pupils' individual target setting, their planning how to meet their targets and their evaluation and recording of their achievements.

The school has made a beginning at introducing these guidance and support procedures but they are not yet sufficiently established.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. The parents' views of the school, the effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school are all very good. The quality of information provided for parents is good and the contribution of parents to their children's learning is satisfactory.
52. The parents' views of the school are very positive. Six questions in the questionnaire were answered positively by 100 per cent of parents. They agreed that pupils behave well, teaching is good, the school is easy to approach, the school expects pupils to achieve their best; the school is well led and managed, and that the school helps pupils to become responsible. The only questions where the answers were less than 90 per cent positive were about homework and the range of extra-curricular activities. These views were confirmed by a discussion with a small group of parents at the community meeting.
53. The school has very effective links with its parents. There is an open-door policy and the headteacher and his staff are always available to talk to parents when the need arises. The headteacher is usually in the playground in the mornings when parents bring their children to school and some take the opportunity to have a word with him. The school has two parent-consultation evenings and an open day each year, and pupils' reports are detailed and clear. Parents are asked to sign a slip to say they have received the report and are welcome to write any comments. The school prospectus is detailed and well presented and, as well as the governors' annual reports to parents, contains all the information required by law. The school also issues regular and useful newsletters. The information provided by the school is good.
54. Parents make a very good impact on the work of the school and the pupils' learning. The recently formed Parent Support Group is very active in raising funds for the school and arranges very successful social and fundraising events, as well as events that extend the pupils' learning. For example, the summer fete raised about £2,600, which provides extra resources for the school, as well as giving pupils good opportunities to run their own stalls. A number of local businesses help with sponsorship for these events and give prizes for the Christmas raffle. Some parents act as volunteers in the classrooms and were observed during the inspection in Years 2 and 6. The very good support from parents goes on right through the foundation years in productive partnership with teachers. Even so, some parents do not take a full enough part in listening to pupils read and in helping with homework. This lessens the impact they could make on their children's progress. A feature of the positive partnership with parents is that the school equally values all elements of the community, and virtually all elements of the community equally value the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The headteacher provides very strong and perceptive leadership for staff and pupils. Staff, governors, pupils and parents follow his leadership with determination and commitment, creating a team with shared vision, purpose and endeavour. At the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was on long-term absence, but the acting deputy headteacher makes a very positive contribution, fully supported by other senior staff. This shared sense of purpose is at the root of the school's success, fulfilling the school's values.
56. Management is good, overall, and has many strengths. Even so, there are areas that need improving because the school recognises that the pupils do not achieve as well as the school wants.
57. The strengths of the management are many. The governing body works in a businesslike manner and is very well led. Governors are very involved with the life and work of the school, and monitor behaviour, relationships and teaching. This allows them to play an informed part in improvement planning, budgeting and policy-making, offering both support and also the probing questions that help others to think again. Governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities. The acting deputy headteacher offers strong management support for the headteacher and staff. Management of subjects is at least satisfactory and often good, despite the fact that several roles were unfilled owing to recruitment and sickness problems. The school as a whole has clear policies and procedures to cover most areas of the school's life and work, and they are well understood. This gives the school the resilience to get through problems such as staffing because they create an environment in which people know the part they need to play and what they are expected to do. The overall style of management does not treat failure or mistake as a reason for criticism, but as a trigger for the shared solving of problems and support for improvement. Even so, the absence of subject leaders needs to be rectified to ensure that standards do not decline as, for example, in English.
58. The school improvement plan provides a good and practical basis for action and is set in the context of a soundly conceived three-year strategic plan. It is well organised and sets priorities, but lacks some of the elements of very effective plans. Objectives are not always specified in sufficient detail and, therefore, progress will be difficult to judge and measure. Although targets are challenging, they are not tested against the performance of very effective schools serving similar communities. There is not a strong enough link between these targets and what the school could do to achieve even higher standards through, for example, improvement in teaching or the curriculum. Planning lacks a sufficiently detailed and time-scaled schedule of interim steps with set stages for review.
59. The main weakness in management is the analysis and interpretation of assessment information. The school collects sufficient assessment on the progress and attainment of pupils, and analyses results from national tests and assessments. Even so, this analysis and interpretation is not as systematic, probing and expert as it needs to be. Consequently, senior management and governors have an unclear understanding of key strengths to build upon and weaknesses to rectify with urgency. For example, the school does not see clearly enough how their achievements compare with truly similar schools, and cannot extract key weaknesses and understand how they have a negative impact on everything else, for example the poor speaking and listening skills of the pupils. This results in a situation in which the school does not gain full benefit from that which it does do well.

Staffing

60. There are adequate qualified teachers to meet the requirements of the curriculum, and a strong team of skilled and well-trained teaching assistants. There are sufficient and competent administrative staff, and very skilled lunchtime supervisors. Performance management procedures are in place for teachers, and senior management see these procedures as a very positive way forward. There is a rich and relevant programme of training for all staff, and this training relates to the school improvement plan. Even so, the school lacks a staff development policy to set criteria for quality assurance, for example for teaching, and for systematically planning ways of continuously developing professional performance. The school does not have ways of assuring the effectiveness of staff development, and this holds back improvement. Consequently, newly qualified teachers and teachers who perform satisfactorily but not yet well, have caring support but do not have the focused coaching or the planned objectives to meet, which continuous professional development requires.

Accommodation

61. The buildings and grounds provide a good place in which to teach and learn. They are safe and pose no risk to health. The school uses them well and has worked hard and successfully to develop their potential, for example by planting trees, developing a wildlife area and designing and building an excellent outdoor area for children at the Foundation Stage. This overall development is continuous and innovative, for example the beautiful garden for sitting quietly. The accommodation is well maintained and kept sparkling clean by the caretaker and cleaners. The buildings provide a stimulating place in which to learn, with very good displays to encourage curiosity and to celebrate pupils' achievements. Further well considered plans are in hand, for example to bring the Foundation Stage classes together with easy access to outside play areas.

Resources for learning

62. Resources for all subjects are of at least satisfactory and usually good quality, and of adequate range and variety; they are used effectively. They are stored accessibly and are well cared for by staff and pupils.

Efficiency

63. The school supports its educational priorities through good financial planning and relates investment closely to the requirements of the school improvement plan. The chairman of the finance committee has a business background and this experience is used to good effect by the governing body. Owing to the fact that one of the grants allocated to the school arrived late and there was a delay in receiving tenders for some building work, the school has a carry-over of over £80,000 from the last financial year. This has been properly allocated according to the priorities in the school improvement plan, the main priority being information and communication technology. The minor recommendations from the most recent local authority audit have been acted upon. Specific grants are used for their designated purpose and the school ensures that it gains best value through the tendering process. The school's financial management is well supported by an experienced office manager.
64. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology for administration purposes. The office equipment is out-of-date, but is soon to be replaced with new computer equipment, and the latest financial software and attendance package.
65. Governors understand the principles of best value and rigorously challenge preconceived ideas. They make good use of the advice and best practice of others, but

are not yet sufficiently expert at testing their decisions against the performance of other very effective schools. Considering the high revenue balanced by the very good personal development and good progress of pupils, the school offers good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. The school has created the foundations for considerable future improvement. These foundations are based upon strong leadership supported by a committed staff, good personal development of pupils and a very positive relationship with parents. However, staff and governors need to improve certain management skills so that key weaknesses in the learning can be rectified and the school can gain full benefit from that which it already does well. What follows should be understood as equally important parts of an improvement plan, each part supporting the others.
67. To improve pupils' progress and raise attainment, governors and staff should:
- (1) Raise attainment in literacy by:
 - clarifying for teachers and pupils the speaking skills pupils need to gain, and setting targets to be achieved. (Such learning programmes as contained in national guidance for the Foundation Stage would provide a useful model); (Paragraphs 6, 10, and 26)
 - clarifying for teachers and pupils the listening for understanding skills pupils need to gain and setting targets to be achieved. (Again, the national guidance for the Foundation Stage would provide a useful model); (Paragraphs 6, 10, and 26)
 - increasing the expectations of teachers as to the standard and skills of writing to be achieved by pupils in every lesson across the curriculum. (Paragraph 26)
 - ensuring that planning for all teaching includes development of these three skills of speaking, listening for understanding, and writing. (Paragraph 26 and 28)
 - (2) Use assessment data more effectively to improve progress by:
 - governors and senior management analysing and interpreting assessment data more skilfully to identify progress, priorities among weaknesses to rectify and realistic targets to meet;
 - teachers using assessment more continuously to track and evaluate pupils' progress so that teaching can adapt and improve;
 - using this information to feedback continuously to pupils where they are succeeding, where they are meeting problems, and what they need to learn next;
 - linking this feedback to procedures that enable pupils to agree short-term targets, to plan how to meet them, to evaluate their progress over the week and to record their achievements. (Paragraphs 28 and 50 cover this section)
 - (3) Improve further the effectiveness and consistency of teaching by:
 - clarifying for teachers what effective teaching means by specifying standards of quality to meet;

- monitoring and evaluating continually the effectiveness and quality of teaching against these standards and relating this to an improved and quality assured staff development policy to enable continuous professional improvement;
- increasing the coaching support by senior managers for less effective teachers through, for example, lesson observation that tells teachers what works, what does not, and where and how they need to improve.
(Paragraph 60, as well as many references elsewhere)

(4) Improve attendance by:

- introducing computerised recording and analysis of attendance;
- relating such analysis to the progress of pupils;
- enabling pupils and parents to understand the damage caused by poor attendance by relating attendance to pupils' target setting and action-planning procedures.
(Paragraph 46)

(5) Rectify the serious inequality of provision for reception education by:

- reviewing arrangements for entry once a term.
(Paragraph 29, 69 and 89)

When considering the above, the school should also improve the following less significant but still important aspects of the school's work:

- Ensure that present arrangements for classes provide appropriate progression in learning.
(Paragraph 32)
- Ensure that withdrawal from lessons is managed in ways that do not hinder classroom learning.
(Paragraph 32)
- Build upon the very good provision for activities outside the classroom by enabling the pupils to receive certificated recognition of their achievements that they can include in their record of achievement. (Paragraph 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
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
Number	5	19	23	12	1	0	0
Percentage	8	32	38	20	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR– Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	194
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	12	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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4

National comparative data	6.1
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National comparative data	0.5
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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 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	16	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	13	16
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	25	25	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (61)	83 (71)	93 (95)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	13	14	15
	Girls	12	12	12
	Total	25	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (71)	87 (92)	90 (95)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	14	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	9	11
	Girls	10	8	12
	Total	14	17	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	45 (63)	55 (63)	74 (80)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	4	11	11
	Girls	8	8	10
	Total	12	19	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	39 (57)	61 (70)	68 (77)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	186
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	24

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	176

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	8.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

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	6	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.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	595747
Total expenditure	568591
Expenditure per pupil	2146
Balance brought forward from previous year	54769
Balance carried forward to next year	81925

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	226
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	26	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	34	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	50	16	3	3
The teaching is good.	60	40	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	49	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	29	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	34	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	54	40	6	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	66	34	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	51	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	34	9	1	3

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the parents' meeting and on other occasions stressed the strength of the headteacher's leadership and the strong partnership between home and school.

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

68. Provision for children at the Foundation Stage is very good in the nursery and good in Reception. Children join the nursery aged three with very low development. Their speaking and listening skills are extremely low and they have little awareness of books or writing. Their understanding of number is better but still lower than expected at that age. Their physical development is average but their ability to manipulate small tools such as scissors is very low. Their personal and social skills are also very low, and they lack confidence and independence; their awareness of others is very low and they tend to see the world only from their own perspective. Consequently, they have a very restricted understanding and knowledge of the wider world.
69. They join the part-time afternoon session in the nursery aged three years and then progress to the part-time morning session. In the term before their fifth birthday they move up to full-time education in the reception class, the change happening at the beginning of each term. This means that while some children have three terms full-time education before progressing to the National Curriculum, others have two terms and some only one. This arrangement causes very serious inequality of opportunity and means that children do not enter more structured learning in Year 1 with the same foundation learning. This inequality is very serious because most children have such low development when they join the school, especially in speaking and listening.
70. This aside, the nursery provides a very good start to schooling. The manager for the Foundation Stage, working very closely with skilled teaching assistants, ensures that children experience a rich and varied learning environment. She ensures that children's development grows steadily from when they join the nursery until they join Year 1. Staff place special emphasis on social and personal skills, and, therefore, activities have a firm routine. Linked to expert and careful planning, activities cover all the expected areas of learning, and continuous assessment and very good communication between staff mean that children's achievements are recorded and teaching moves them on to the next step. Children with special educational needs are identified early and given effective help. Able children are given more challenging work. An excellent outdoor play area extends the learning, and an indoor classroom provides carefully planned, rich and varied opportunities to learn. These opportunities include provision for social interaction, imaginative, role and creative play, and writing, counting, reading and computer work.
71. Parents, students and pupils from the main school regularly work alongside the permanent staff, increasing the children's confidence. Teaching is firm but loving. Staff ensure children are always occupied profitably, striking a very good balance between firm guidance and allowing children to learn for themselves. For these reasons, teaching in the nursery is very good and children make very good progress, especially in their personal development.
72. At the time of the inspection there were only eight children in the reception class. This class is in a classroom away from the nursery and does not have easy access to the outdoor play area. Being a basic classroom, the range of learning opportunities, whilst still good is not as good as that in the nursery. Similarly, children only have opportunities to work with one adult, their teacher. The school has plans to bring all the Foundation Stage classes together, with immediate access to the outside play area.

Teaching in Reception is good, with the same firm but structured ethos. It lacks, however, the richness possible in the nursery.

73. Throughout the Foundation Stage, children make good and sometimes very good progress, and the majority meet or nearly meet their 'early learning goals' by the time they enter Year 1. A significant proportion, however, do not meet their learning goals and very few children exceed these goals. It is not surprising that those who make the most and most secure progress are those who have longest in the reception class. Learning at this stage needs to progress by taking one secure step at a time; the very low attainment upon entry means most children need to make many steps, and this takes time. Overall, the teaching at the Foundation Stage is effective and very good teaching in Year 1 ensures a smooth transition to more structured learning within the National Curriculum.

Personal, social and emotional development

74. This is a considerable strength of the provision and extremely good; the teaching is excellent. Pupils show good attitudes to their learning and behave very well. The firm and perceptive teaching helps the children gain secure routines of working and socialising. The well run 'snack times' build sharing, taking turns and caring for the needs of others; they are very effective. The general social activities range from full class sessions on the carpet reading a book, to shared activities in the outside areas, and then to group activities in counting, constructing and painting. Activities outside are very well managed, encouraging children to try and accept challenges. Balancing these more teacher-led activities are those which are initiated by the children such as role play in the make-believe house, imaginative dressing up, and imaginative play in the light and dark area searching for 'scary bears'.
75. Many children are very nervous when they join the nursery but soon gain confidence, working initially with their parents. Partnership with parents is a strength. Even though children learn to mix with a wide variety of adults and other children, the provision ensures they feel loved and valued as individuals, and this makes them emotionally secure. In reception, although they spend most of their time with only one adult, they also have good opportunities to take part in assemblies with the rest of the pupils. They do this with confidence and clear enjoyment. Most children reach some of their early learning goals but very few exceed them. They are socially well prepared for learning in Year 1, but lack other essential skills, for example, being able to evaluate their own work.

Communication, language and literacy

76. Provision is satisfactory with strong features; teaching, overall, is satisfactory with good and very good features. Strong teaching in full-class sessions on the carpet introduces children to books. Skilful teaching encourages children to value books and enjoy stories. Learning rhymes and songs helps them begin to structure and sequence their language, and children soon learn that books are read from front to back and that text has meaning, running from left to right. They learn the sounds of letters and most children in reception understand how these fit together to form words. These children talk confidently about the books they 'read' and the most able can recognise words by their first letter sounds and some know simple words from memory. Most children, but not all, can follow the line of a story and some can predict what may come next. They learn to talk about characters and decide nasty and nice events in a story; for example, the feelings of the mouse who felt his friends had forgotten him. Most children will meet their goals for reading but very few will exceed them.

77. Children in the nursery learn to form letters correctly but progress is slow because they find it difficult to manipulate pencils. Even so, they make good progress because they practise every day, and children in reception can write their names, some very well and all in ways that they themselves and others can recognise. Most children will meet their goals for writing but very few will exceed them.
78. The routines and the active work by adults help children to listen with good concentration. Even so, low development in language overall means that they often do not understand what they hear. They follow instructions more because they have learned what to do rather than because they understand precisely the meaning of words. Adults miss some opportunities to develop listening for understanding because they do not always check understanding, mistaking compliance for this higher-level listening skill. Children make satisfactory progress by Reception, but still children tend to let what they hear wash over them rather than trying to always understand. They do not satisfactorily develop their questioning skills and in both the nursery and also Reception one rarely hears the 'why' and 'how' questions so necessary at this stage. Few children will meet the goals for listening by the time they leave Reception and most will be ill-equipped for learning in Year 1.
79. Children start in the nursery with very undeveloped spoken language, using single words roughly linked together rather than structured sentences. Their structured language develops but not sufficiently, and consequently in Reception they find it very difficult to explain how a machine for making toys that they had designed and constructed, actually worked. What was in their heads was much better than their ability to express themselves in speech and, therefore, they found it very difficult to sort out their ideas. The teaching does not place sufficient emphasis on this 'language for thinking' and, therefore, few children will reach their goals in this area of language development.
80. Overall, in an understandable trade-off with building social skills, the provision pays too little attention to building speaking and listening for understanding skills.

Mathematical development

81. Children join the nursery with average awareness of number and staff in the nursery build on this more secure foundation well. Teaching is very good because teachers take every opportunity to build the children's sense of number, from counting those who are present to grouping objects and relating shapes. Staff make very good use of computers to aid this learning. Many activities develop children's awareness of larger and smaller, long and short, heavy and light, and children soon learn to use their understanding for example, working with sand, choosing the right parts in construction toys and completing jig-saws. Painting gives them good opportunities to relate and identify shapes, and children in the reception class show that they can relate shapes in ways that match reality, not only in drawing but also when making wheeled models. Most children by the time they move up to Reception can count to at least 20 and recognise when numbers are out of sequence. Some have an awareness of adding and taking away, and can take away and add in order to create selected numbers such as five or nine. All can group objects of different types, explaining these groups in terms of less and more, and greater and smaller. Most, but not all children are well set to meet their goals in this area of learning before joining Year 1. A few children will exceed them.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

82. Provision, including teaching, is very good. Children come with a very restricted understanding of the world around them and this is made worse by children seeing the world only from their own perspective. Staff realise this and really attack this deficit. They take every opportunity to drive children to take a wider view, even though many children prefer to stick with the security of what they already know. Staff do this very effectively. They introduce children to problem-solving using construction toys and 'junk-modelling'; there was a particularly effective 'toy machine' and 'junk' wheeled toys in Reception. Progress is hindered by the inability of younger children to manipulate such tools as scissors, but these skills are well developed by the time children enter the Reception class where most are adept at using tools when sticking and joining, even deciding how it was best to fix a chimney on the 'toy machine'.
83. Children plant bulbs in pots they decorate themselves, learning effectively that plants need water, light and warmth. Children in the Reception class understood that caterpillars needed food and safety so that they could change into butterflies. Children in both the nursery and Reception were encouraged to build on their own experiences, differentiating between home and school, and even further away, although many found this difficult. Most realise why you needed to go further away by car to shop. Good discussions growing from stories built the children's understanding of old and new, old and young, and the past and the present. They learn securely the days of the week, the months and are beginning to describe different seasons and how they relate to weather. Most in Reception are just beginning to tell the time.
84. Children become confident users of computers, with good mouse control and a good awareness of functions, showing good numerical awareness when selecting the width of a 'brush' in a painting program. Children make very good progress in this area of learning.
85. Children learn that people come in many types and with many different customs, for example, how Hindus celebrate Divali. Even so, there are not enough triggers for seeing this through, for example pictures and displays. Even though the provision helps children make good progress, few will join Year 1 with an adequate understanding and knowledge of the world.

Physical development

86. Provision is good and teaching excellent. Children join the nursery able to control their larger body movements with average skill but very low development in using their fingers. Staff use the excellent outdoor play areas very effectively. They help children to steer and control wheeled vehicles and to use climbing frames with confidence and some skill. In more structured activities, children learn how to co-ordinate their movements by twisting between markers whilst balancing objects on their heads or on a bat. Children in the nursery have already met their goals for this area of learning, and extend them further in Reception.
87. Children's ability to manipulate small objects such as pencils, scissors and brushes, or to fit objects together in construction toys, poses much greater problems. Staff take every opportunity to build these skills by, for example, showing children how to cut around objects and in a straight line. By the time children are in Reception they have made very good progress and will meet the early learning goals. This will have considerable impact on their learning further up the school when writing and drawing diagrams.

Creative development

88. Provision is good and teaching very good. Staff ensure that children gain rich and varied opportunities to paint, use colours and arrange collage. They sing songs and beat in time. They use their imagination 'telephoning' a friend and playing roles in the make-believe house, and investigate imaginatively in the 'light and dark' area. This makes them keen to express themselves and to investigate their feelings. They enter the nursery with low attainment in this area of their development and make very good progress. Even so, few will meet their goals completely by the time they join Year 1 because their observational skills are not well developed.

Conclusion

89. The provision allows children to make well-structured and good progress. Because they have very low attainment on entry, they have, however, a long way to go. The much improved and extended provision provides a much more secure foundation for future learning than at the time of the last inspection. Planning is very tightly related to meeting the early learning goals, and in most areas teachers succeed in their intermediate aims. Even so, children by five still have lower than average development in literacy and very low attainment in speaking and listening, and this is still the case when children join Year 1, especially if they have too little time in Reception. This holds back their future learning. A few children will achieve all the goals, most will nearly meet their goals and a significant minority will be well below. Very few children will exceed the goals and most will not meet their goals for speaking and listening. This is why the inequality in provision for Reception is so serious, because developing speaking and listening skills takes longer than for other areas of their learning. Overall, children's attainment when they join Year 1 is still well below average, because very few children exceed their early learning goals and a significant number do not reach them.

ENGLISH

90. Provision for learning of five to seven-year-olds is good. However, provision for eight to eleven-year-olds needs to improve because standards in literacy are still too low.
91. Attainment of five-year-olds is well below averages expected nationally. Pupils make good progress and by the end of Year 2 they attain well in the National Curriculum tests, achieving standards just slightly below national averages and in line with those in comparable schools. In the Reception class the teacher builds on the excellent start in literacy skills that children make in the nursery.
92. In Year 1, the learning of the skills of reading and writing is linked in order to ensure that pupils progress to better attainment at all levels of ability. For example, pupils listen enthralled to the story of Rama and Sita' and their struggles with the Monkey King. They read simplified passages from the story aloud with their teacher who uses phonic clues to help children to understand the meaning. This inspires them to write their own lively accounts of the adventures of Rama and Sita.
93. Year 2 pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other responding with their own ideas and opinions when given the opportunities to do so. Pupils read a range of stories with their teachers building on them to develop their own writing. They learn best when given the opportunity to share their work with each other. For example, a Year 2 class read aloud and with great relish their 'revolting recipes' for making a marvellous medicine. All this shows a strongly improving situation, with good value being added from attainment on entry. The picture is less positive, however, at the end of Year 6.

94. Standards reached at the end of Year 6 in the National Curriculum tests for 2001 are well below those expected nationally for pupils of their age and well below comparable schools. The same pupils achieve better results in mathematics and in science. The trend over time is broadly in line with the national trend upwards, although pupils' attainment is much lower than average. Girls are performing better than boys and this currently relates to boys' poorer attitudes to language as a whole.
95. Standards in the mixed Years 3/4 classes fluctuate according to the quality of the teaching. Long-term absence of the Year 5 teacher has adversely affected pupils' learning until very recently. The headteacher, in co-operation with his staff, has devised strategies to redress the balance in learning by tackling the under-achievement of boys in English. A significant proportion of pupils, however, do not achieve as well as they should in all aspects of English and this is unsatisfactory.
96. The planning for the teaching of the four basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing is insufficiently integrated; for example, improved speaking skills do not support improved listening for understanding and comprehension in reading. Teachers do not make enough use of assessments of pupils' learning needs to ensure continuity of learning at a good rate for all groups of pupils. Standards in speaking and listening are not high enough. Pupils listen obediently but not always with sufficient understanding of the information given. As a result, tasks are tackled superficially and writing activities are left unfinished. Most pupils answer well in class but there are too few opportunities for pupils to read aloud, enjoying stories together or sharing information. As a result, pupils' reading is accurate, often fluent, but lacks the intonation and expression needed for a good standard of oral work. Pupils 'chat on the mat' easily to each other but they are not confident enough to take part in sustained discussions, structuring an argument to support their opinions. This hinders pupils' capacity to present ideas, exchange opinions or share information in other subject areas. Teachers do not plan well enough to raise speaking skills effectively through, for example, more formal presentations to small groups, and through role play, pupil interviews, discussions, reviews of books, mini-lectures on areas of interest, dramatisations, and reading poetry, their own and other writers. Writing skills are not developed well enough and, consequently, standards in spelling, punctuation and appropriate use of structured English are below average. Pupils analyse autobiographies and biographical forms of writing for authentic facts and journalistic fiction but there are too few opportunities to compare and contrast a range of written evidence. For example, pupils in Year 6 compare Andrew Morton's biography 'Posh and Becks' with David Beckham's autobiography 'My World'; this offers an interesting but overly restricted view of biographical writing. The range of text is too narrow and provides too few opportunities for pupils to experience a range of good writing to fuel their own extended and creative writing.
97. The progress made from Reception classes to Year 2 is extremely rapid but levels-off in higher years and, therefore, by the end of Year 6 too few pupils attain the standards expected nationally.
98. Pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2 is consistently good or very good as a result of the high quality teaching they receive. Teaching in these years is good or better, with some excellent teaching. Teachers prepare their lessons carefully using the National Literacy Strategy as the framework for their planning. This provides purposeful objectives for learning, which teachers share with their pupils. Pupils learn best when teachers set a lively pace, moving from one learning activity to another, keeping pupils motivated and focused on the text they are studying. Pupils respond eagerly if teachers' questions are searching enough to excite their curiosity by presenting a problem to be solved. For

example, pupils in a Year 2 class had great fun suggesting all the words they knew with two meanings. They rose enthusiastically to the challenge of spelling the correct name for such words and after five attempts one pupil wrote 'homonym' on the board. The learning of the grammatical term was reinforced by the repeated attempts to spell the word correctly.

99. Pupils' written work is celebrated through cross-curricular wall displays around the school, often using writing skills to comment on work in other subjects. For example, in a Year 2 classroom, brightly coloured paintings of pizzas illustrated instructions of the making process 'it is hot in the oven so the cheese melts'. A strength of the teaching is the plenary session at the end of each lesson; pupils are invited to reflect upon the tasks and activities undertaken, evaluate their experiences and comment on new skills acquired and information learned. As a result, pupils have a heightened awareness of their own learning.
100. Pupils' learning in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory although the standards attained are well below average for their age groups. Teaching during the inspection was at least satisfactory and in a quarter of the lessons seen it was good or better. Lessons were planned to meet the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy so the learning objective was clearly defined. The quality of the learning process varies according to teachers' skills and the effectiveness of the strategies used. In the best lessons, teachers set a brisk pace, vary the activities, and ask open-ended questions to encourage pupils to think for themselves and set challenging tasks requiring positive effort. In too many lessons, however, too many pupils 'mark time' and do not make sufficient progress. Teachers too readily accept short answers to their questions. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to speak at length about their ideas, opinions, conclusions or discoveries. Consequently, their written work does not develop as well as it should. Pupils have insufficient practice in writing within precise time limits so that they increase their productivity and pace of working. Too often the teachers accept unfinished work or work that is too brief for the time available. This weakness is apparent in subjects other than English.
101. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy researching the differences between facts and opinions in biographies. These biographies are relevant texts and well chosen for eleven-year-olds but a wider range of reading is required. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop a critical understanding that comes from writing in various styles and for a variety of audiences and purposes.
102. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, giving praise and encouragement for efforts made, although they do not always indicate how pupils can improve or what they should do to make their work better. Pupils know what their targets for learning are, because they are well listed. However, they often cannot explain how well they are progressing towards these targets. Assessment is not used sufficiently to ensure that systems for monitoring pupils' work informs teachers' planning to raise standards overall.
103. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress because their learning is well supported within class by teaching assistants. The special educational needs co-ordinator and her team facilitate the learning of SEN pupils by withdrawing them in small groups for special help. Pupils with special gifts and talents are celebrated but the support for their needs tends to be insufficiently planned.
104. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sustained through the study of stories and poems. For example, pupils in Year 2 describe sensitively the tremulous

moment when 'Laura set free the star that felt too cold on earth'. Older pupils write 'Creation Stories' based on Hindu, Christian, Chinese and Aboriginal beliefs.

105. Cross-curricular links are well established through a range of teaching strategies for pupils to use literacy skills across all curriculum areas. However, many pupils lack confidence in the basic skills of speaking, reading and writing, which restricts their learning in other subjects. Achievement in reading is developed better than the other literacy skills. All classrooms have a good stock of reading books that are available to all and there is a small library area located centrally.
106. Teaching assistants organise a lunchtime reading club four days a week. This is well attended by pupils of all ability levels. The keen readers enjoy the opportunity of reading aloud with each other. Play scripts are a popular choice for this purpose and also Winnie the Pooh poems. Lower-attaining pupils read with the teaching assistants and use the extra practice profitably to improve their reading skills.
107. Teachers foster pupils' learning through links with information and communication technology. Pupils in Year 1 used the computers competently to write the story of 'Rama and Sita'. Pupils in Year 2 used their keyboard skills to compose 'revolting recipes' for a 'marvellous medicine'. Older pupils take turns at using word processors for writing tasks, working in pairs. The majority of pupils in most classes made satisfactory progress. Good examples of word-processed work are celebrated in wall displays, for example poems charting aspects of the changing seasons of the year. Most notably in Year 6, pupils used exciting language to describe fierce winds 'roaring past houses, springing through jungles'. Other pupils from this class described spring as 'she reaches up and tickles the clouds'.
108. At the time of the inspection, there was no subject manager to co-ordinate the teaching of English across the curriculum. As a result, there are some inadequacies in leadership and direction towards the raising of standards, although all teachers are firmly committed to improving pupils' achievement. The headteacher is coping with the help of the teacher responsible for Years 1 and 2 but this is not adequate for the longer-term planning needed to improve the quality of learning for the older pupils. Resources are of good quality, range and number and include a small but well resourced library; situated in the foyer it makes a strong statement about the importance of books. Standards have improved since the last inspection but not enough; poor speaking, listening for understanding and writing still hold back all learning.

MATHEMATICS

109. Provision for learning is good. In National Curriculum tests in 2001 at the end of Year 2, the school's results in mathematics were in line with schools nationally. These results often represented very good achievement for pupils, given their low attainment on entry to the school. Mathematics results have improved considerably over the last three years. Pupils' attainment in the 'using and applying mathematics' aspect of the subject was particularly strong. When compared with similar schools, seven-year-old pupils of all prior attainment levels do well.
110. National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001 showed that pupils' attainment in mathematics was well below average, and below the average for similar schools. Even so, higher-attaining pupils did particularly well. In these tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 there were no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls, although in both sets of results, pupils attain better in mathematics than in English.

111. By the end of Year 2, the range of pupils' current attainment in mathematics matches the national expectation. As in previous years, this represents very significant achievement for many pupils who start school with very low overall attainment. This is the result of the very good and often excellent teaching of mathematics in Years 1 and 2. Achievement is particularly good given the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 2. Pupils of all abilities learn very well in these years and make very good progress in all aspects of their mathematical understanding. Pupils' mental competence with numbers and operations, such as adding and subtracting, is well developed. Teachers build these skills, usually at the start of lessons, and give pupils the confidence that they can do calculations in their heads. Their enjoyment of these sessions is a key element in their success. Teachers make the sessions thoroughly enjoyable, so pupils are engaged and interested, keen to answer and enthusiastic about mathematics in general.
112. Teachers also take very good advantage of innumerable opportunities to reinforce pupils' use of mathematics in everyday classroom life. Very good examples were noted in many situations; for example, in calculating how many pupils are present when the register is called, how many will be having school dinners, and what the clock will look like at a given time. All this underpins the pupils' understanding of the importance of the subject in everyday life and this partly accounts for their growing interest in the power and importance of numeracy. Most lessons showed pupils enjoying the other aspects of mathematics, which involve, for example, written calculations and drawing shapes. Because they enjoy it, and because they are well taught, pupils make very good progress and achieve well or very well by Year 2. Higher-attaining pupils can, for example, use fractions well, working out and recognising halves and quarters of large numbers. Lower-attaining pupils, often very well supported by teaching assistants, can do the same with small numbers or, if not, are assisted in their understanding through effective help. The attainment of Year 1 pupils in a mixed Years 1/2 class matches that of Year 2 pupils. The excellent progress in the current Year 1 class promises well for their development and future achievement in mathematics when they move into Year 2 and beyond.
113. The picture is less good in Years 3 to 6, although underlying understanding still matches expectations, even though pupils cannot always show this understanding. This is mainly because in these years, pupils' work in mathematics often relies much more heavily on their attainment in English. Here, pupils' 'reading for meaning' and 'listening for understanding' are weak, and, consequently, they often misunderstand what is required mathematically. Weaker pupils can have a reader to help them understand the national tests, which strips away the literacy problems many pupils were finding in lessons and classes seen on inspection. In the purely mathematical aspects of their attainment, the range of standards seen in the current Year 6 meets expectations and is closer to the national average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4 and attainment is broadly average. In Year 5, having several different supply teachers has recently hindered pupils' progress. In a Year 5 lesson, the teaching was good and pupils were beginning to consolidate their achievements in mathematics. Here, for example, pupils could sequence numbers, counting accurately and recognising simple or very complex patterns according to their differing levels of underlying attainment. In Year 5, where the majority of pupils are boys, the school has identified a group of pupils achieving less well than they could and has provided a very good 'springboard' support programme. Taught successfully, this is starting to have the desired effect in raising attainment. In a Year 6 class, pupils use the 'x' and 'y' axes of graphs to plot and 'translate' or reposition geometric shapes on graphs. Here, attainment showed the average nationally-expected range. Lower-attaining pupils were enabled to fulfil this graph exercise with very good, well-targeted help from the teaching assistant. The

higher-attaining pupils understand and conceptualise the translations very well, able to predict what would occur if graph co-ordinates were altered.

114. It is pupils' attainment in literacy that reduces their overall achievement in mathematics because their mathematical understanding is greater than their ability to understand or express themselves in words.
115. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good. They are keen to respond to teachers' carefully constructed questions in question-and-answer sessions at the ends of lessons. Sometimes these questions are carefully targeted to individuals according to their known levels of understanding and, consequently, pupils feel increasingly confident as they get answers 'right'. At other times, these questions are open, requiring abstract thinking and challenging pupils to think for themselves. Pupils develop a very secure understanding of the place and role of mathematics in the world around them.
116. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is very good and sometimes excellent. It is broadly good in Years 3 to 6, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have a good understanding of mathematics, almost all taking opportunities to refer for example, to aspects of shape, number, and time whenever they can; these opportunities make pupils aware of the links with other subjects. The teachers' competence with computers, and their integration of information and communication technology programs into pupils' learning of mathematics has improved significantly since the last inspection. Lessons are very well planned around the content of the National Curriculum, with the National Numeracy Strategy fully embedded into all work in the subject. Lessons incorporate elements of the numeracy hour very effectively, giving a good variety of activity and creating a swift pace of learning in almost all lessons. Teachers' marking is helpful, giving comments about what pupils have done well or less well. Marking does not, though, lead to a rigorous mechanism of target-setting, evaluation of improvement towards specified and time-scaled targets, or the procedures that give older pupils insight into their own strengths and weaknesses. Such an assessment and guidance mechanism would give pupils a much clearer idea about what they need to do to improve their individual attainment, to track their achievement of given targets and become involved in setting the next ones. Lessons overall insufficiently include reinforcement of pupils' literacy, particularly in the older years. Pupils' basic handwriting makes even accurate work appear messy, with their inaccurate formation of written script often transferring to their writing of numbers; consequently, pupils write numbers with difficulty, for example from bottom to top. General strengthening in all aspects of pupils' literacy competence would greatly help pupils overall attainment in mathematics and clearer reinforcement is required in all lessons.
117. Subject management is good. The curriculum is secure, and teachers use appropriate nationally-recognised tests to establish pupils' attainment between the national test years. They analyse results and identify pupils' weaknesses in literacy as a cause of less good attainment in some areas. Well-targeted work now supports the good progress of pupils of all ability levels, including those with special educational needs. Information and communication technology is now well used in the mathematics curriculum. Better assessment procedures are still required to provide a more effective learning tool for pupils to understand and plan their own improvement. Resources for learning are at least satisfactory.

SCIENCE

118. The provision for learning is good and pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. The majority of pupils enter Year 1 with a knowledge and understanding of the world that is below that expected for their age. By the time they are seven, pupils achieve standards that are close to the levels expected nationally in all areas of the subject. In the National Curriculum teacher assessments at the end of Year 2, in 2001, pupils' performance was in line with the national average, although fewer pupils attained at a higher level. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, in 2001, standards were well below the national average. Many achieved the expected standard, but relatively few achieved above expected standards. The significant upward trends in results over the last few years continued and standards have risen since the last inspection, especially for pupils aged seven. There are no significant differences between the performances of boys and girls. Standards are broadly in line with those in similar schools. Current pupils achieve standards close to the national expectation, but many of the pupils find it difficult to write down their experiments and findings accurately and quickly because of their difficulties with written English.

119. Factors that contribute to the improving standards in science include:

- A programme of work that places a strong emphasis on practical scientific enquiry and experimentation. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Topics are systematically revisited at a higher level as pupils move through the school.
- Use of assessment of pupils' performance in statutory assessment tests to identify areas of weakness in pupils' learning. For example, the school identified the need for more work on the accurate use of graphs in science.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and their enjoyment of the activities.

Areas for further improvement are:

- improvement in the presentation of grids and tables;
- improvement in the quality overall of presentation of written work;
- greater emphasis on the use and correct spelling of scientific words;
- higher attaining pupils to extend their written responses and conclusions so that they attain a higher level.

120. Pupils in Year 1 have great fun when they experiment with musical instruments to discover the numerous sounds they can make. They learn many techniques for playing different instruments, including rubbing, blowing and hitting them. They are very excited by their task but are so well managed by the teacher that they retain a clear focus on the scientific elements of their task. Year 2 pupils understand that they are 'science detectives' as they investigate 'pushing and pulling'. They think hard about the various ways in which they push and pull familiar objects and sort groups of objects into ones that push, pull, or involve both actions. Pupils go outside to experience pushing and pulling on the play apparatus or look around the room for ideas. All pupils carry out their own test with great concentration. Teachers use these lessons as an opportunity to develop initiative and skills of working in small groups. Discussion with the pupils shows that they have a good understanding of their tasks and the word 'forces'.

121. Pupils in Year 3 develop their studies about which materials keep water warm or ice-cubes cold, for example cloth, cotton wool, foil and newspaper. They understand why the temperatures of the beakers with the ice-cubes are variable, discovering that it is because sometimes the thermometer is on the ice and sometimes in the water. Pupils find it difficult to touch only the plastic tops of the thermometers and realise that this affects the validity of their investigation. Pupils make sensible hypotheses about the

various materials they are using around their beakers. One boy working with the ice-cubes suggests that, 'cloth will be the worst because we wear that to keep us warm' and is happy to discuss this prediction at the end of the lesson. Pupils understand the need for a fair test and quickly work out whether their test meets requirements. They are beginning to understand that some items are better insulators than others.

122. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 understand that by constructing a fair test it is possible to work out a range of situations in which water evaporates or condensation occurs. The majority of pupils understand that the gas produced is known as 'water vapour', which 'disappears into the air'. Through very skilled questioning, the teacher ensures that pupils are able to link what happens when steam hits a cold metal tray to condensation on windows at home. They understand the process of the rain-cycle; some higher-attaining pupils write interesting stories about the journey of a raindrop through the cycle.
123. When explaining what 'weight' is, pupils in Year 6 clearly understand how to work in grammes and know how to use a force-meter. Lower-attaining pupils measure objects in the room accurately in grammes, using the force-meter. Higher-attaining pupils measure in grammes and convert their answers to 'Newtons', having little difficulty with the decimal conversion. They are clear about the terms that they use and have a good knowledge and understanding across all aspects of science.
124. Learning throughout the school is good and pupils make good progress, both in individual lessons and also in the longer term. Pupils build on what they have learned before, recalling terms and equipment used in previous years well. Good support is given to pupils with special educational needs and teachers simplify and adapt written tasks helpfully. For example, in some lessons the teacher or teaching assistant writes down ideas for a group of pupils, asking open-ended questions to help pupils to extend their answers and thinking. Higher-attaining pupils are usually given suitable opportunities to work at a higher level, although they do not always extend their answers as much as they can when speaking.
125. The quality of teaching is good, and sometimes very good. Some very good features of teaching are evident in lessons. Teachers use a wide range of interesting resources to ensure that pupils are purposefully involved in a range of practical activities. They take care to ensure that clear explanations are given to pupils so that they can have success with the practical tasks and learn from each other. Scientific terms are introduced and used correctly. The practical work develops pupils' social skills very effectively, for example taking turns. This was seen in Year 6 when pupils were helping each other to find objects to weigh and in Year 2 when pupils had to make a group decision about who was to write the answers on the list. In most lessons, pupils are fully involved in their tasks and, as a result, they behave well. Pupils' behaviour is good because they find the subject so interesting. They come in, see the items set out and look forward to the lesson. Pupils want to learn more, concentrate for extended periods on their practical activities and usually try hard with the written elements.
126. Teachers' planning is good and they use a wide variety of methods to maintain pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and to develop understanding of the scientific language. Lessons are interesting and teachers strike a fine balance between leading pupils to expected conclusions and allowing them to find out for themselves. Questions are carefully phrased and rephrased to enable pupils to work out the answer. For example, the teacher asks, 'What pushes and pulls have you used this morning?' and several connected questions lead the pupils to many instances of putting on clothes and getting ready for school. There is some very helpful marking of pupils' work, but a significant

number of pupils do not present their work well. They try to finish it too quickly and do not take time to order their thoughts or check their spelling of important scientific words or punctuation. Some pupils do not draw grids and tables well. They need regular reminders about the setting out of their work because it is difficult to read, although their answers may be correct.

127. Teachers and support staff frequently record accurately what a lower-attaining pupil says about the outcome of an experiment. This enables them to check pupils' levels of understanding of the task and helps pupils to achieve their best before they move their learning on and deepen their understanding. Staff work well together to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are able to participate fully in the lessons.
128. The management of the subject is good and efficient use is made of the analysis of test results. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and regularly monitors teaching, teachers' planning and pupils' work. There is some effective use of literacy and mathematical skills. There are some good examples of observational drawing skills but more use could be made of information and communication technology across the school, especially for work with graphs. There are sufficient resources for the range of topics currently being used.

ART AND DESIGN

129. Provision for learning is satisfactory with several very good features. Attainment by Years 2 and 6 is slightly lower than standards expected. Progress is good, however, because pupils rapidly improve on the low observational skills and weak control of such tools as brushes that they had when they joined Year 1.
130. Learning is good in Years 1 and 2 because skilled teaching inspires a creative response from the pupils. This is a positive improvement since the last inspection. Wall displays of pupils' artwork provide a colourful celebration of pupil's joy in creativity. Pupils in Year 1 follow up their religious education studies of Hinduism and effectively use rangoli patterns, which they colour, exploring a range of materials as they experiment and try out their ideas; they learn control of the media in the process. Self-portraits, labelled 'Ourselves', show some high levels of interpretation. Higher-attaining pupils are developing a good understanding and competence in the use of line and shape to realise their intentions. Year 2 pupils are offered a range of opportunities to try out tools and materials, using them for a range of purposes linked to other subject areas; pupils use these links well. For example, one pupil explained the reason for her choice of 'joining materials' as 'I dont yoos gloow be kos it is sticke'.
131. Teachers make good use of cross-curricular links, relating art with mathematics where different shapes are used to make people, houses, shops, castles. A class booklet titled 'Noah's Ark and other stories' has illustrations to support pupils' writing of the Bible story. Links between art, science and literacy are established through colourful paintings of pizzas labelled with captions. Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported through self-portraits under the title 'Smile to make us happy'. Pupils in a Year 2 class lesson were engaged on a very complex activity using their imaginations to create their own picture designs using part of a painted image, magazine picture or photograph as the focus. From this starting point, pupils worked imaginatively and with great concentration using a range of colouring pens and pencils. The completed pictures were presented as composite scenes and pupils talked about their pictures, explaining what they represented. Through this learning experience pupils were inspired to explore their ideas, to investigate ways of looking at things and to represent their observations in their own style.
132. Older pupils explore a range of starting points, investigating art forms in a variety of genres and traditions. For example, pupils in Years 3/4 classes produced self-portraits using similar techniques to those of Andy Warhol in his portrait of Marilyn Monroe. Pupils in Year 6 produced a series of movement designs spectacularly displayed as black figures on a white background. Their inspiration was Giacomo Balla's study 'Dog on a Leash'. Pupils experiment with a range of materials, trying out different processes to fulfil their ideas. They investigate the work of famous artists, studying the techniques used and the style and form of their work.
133. Teachers' enthusiastic approach to the subject inspires their pupils to lively creative efforts that transcend their highest expectations. Overall, teaching is good, and the response of the pupils very good. In the most effective lessons, the good subject expertise of the teachers leads to planning that develops skills alongside creativity. In less effective lessons, lack of focused objectives allows enjoyment of the task to overwhelm the need to think about the equally important design elements.
134. The class teachers teach the subject and use published guidelines to organise their planning. The lack of a subject manager means standards cannot be evaluated and

improvement cannot be ensured. A strength of the subject is that the work of pupils of all ability groups is valued, their efforts are encouraged and finished creations are celebrated. There are adequate resources and good accommodation to support the learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. Provision for learning is satisfactory with several good features.
136. By the end of Year 2, pupils' attainment in design and technology matches national expectations. Pupils cover a good range of elements such as cooking and textiles and, for example, learning how to join materials suitably; other examples include pupils choosing toppings for and cooking pizzas. They skilfully use information and communication technology to make pictures of their pizzas. An interesting development for some Year 2 pupils is that these pictures are used in mathematics lessons to divide into halves and quarters. Work in Year 2 relating to pattern and colouring of Joseph's 'coat of many colours' showed pupils making good patterns that were striped or checked and deciding sensibly which they liked best. The project showed pupils comparing joining techniques effectively; for example, to establish whether adhesive tape, pins, staples or stitches would be the best for joining the cloth. This project involved pupils reflecting, for example, that adhesive tape would get wet and feel cold and that stitches would be most secure. This type of project in Years 1 and 2 provides good opportunities for pupils to begin to understand the requirement to design, make and evaluate products. By the end of Year 2, attainment is average in all these aspects of the subject.
137. Published schemes of work ensure that planning covers all aspects of the required subject curriculum. At all years, aspects of design and technology are linked with other subjects, for example with science and art. Consequently, pupils' experience by the end of Year 6 has been satisfactory. Even though by Year 6 pupils' attainment is below national expectations, pupils' underpinning knowledge and understanding of the whole process of design and technology shows good progress. They are aware of the processes of designing, making, modifying, and redesigning, but have weaknesses in the evaluating aspects. Problem-solving and evaluating are often hindered by literacy difficulties, especially when pupils want to write things down or discuss ideas. In speaking, pupils lack a wide vocabulary and frequently use poorly structured spoken language that makes it difficult for them to explain what they have done and why. Other weaknesses, for example skill in relating shapes and space, detract from the quality of many pupils' drawings in Years 3 to 6. For example, in Year 5, pupils had good ideas for a fairground ride, and understood the key concepts about gearing and transference of power through gears to make the ride slower or faster. However, when pupils came to designing, their weak ability to draw frustrated them because many could not describe their ideas visually. Similarly in Year 6, pupils using plastic construction kits to adapt and enhance a given model could not explain their modifications effectively to other pupils. Pupils' strengths lie in making things, but across the whole range of skills expected in design and technology, attainment overall is below average by Year 6. Given pupils' very low skills levels on entry to the school combined with underpinning low levels of literacy, achievement at all years is at least satisfactory. In Years 1 and 2 it is often good.
138. Teaching of design and technology is good. Where aspects of the subject are taught as part of other subjects, teachers make good reference to them in lessons. For example, links between science and technology are reinforced well in a physical education lesson in Year 2. Teachers highlight examples of forces at work in physical movements. In

design and technology lessons, pupils often work in pairs or groups whilst others in the class are doing other subjects. This makes good use of resources. Teachers emphasise appropriate vocabulary to describe technological ideas but only higher-attaining pupils really use these words effectively. Teachers need to ensure that pupils of all abilities are using appropriate terminology, orally and in writing, to improve their ability to describe what they are doing, and how and why.

139. Some teachers are not very confident when teaching design and technology. They possess an appropriate knowledge to teach design and technology at these levels but, even so, some teachers lack sufficient training, for example in assessment, which is weak at present. Teachers do assess the quality of some outcomes, but they make little assessment of pupils' development in understanding of ideas or processes. Teachers need a clearer view of the whole design to final realisation process themselves in order to make their pupils understand it better and thus to be able to raise attainment, especially in Years 3 to 6.
140. Subject management is satisfactory. Policy documents and a scheme of work are now fully in place. They were not informing planning or teaching at the time of the last report. Assessment, an issue last time, remains an area for improvement. Resources for learning and the accommodation support effective learning.

GEOGRAPHY

141. Provision for learning is satisfactory. Attainment of pupils by Years 2 and 6 is in line with national expectations and with those at the last inspection. Girls and boys, including those with special educational needs, gain an increasingly wide knowledge and understanding of the subject. They develop good skills in geographical research and observation because of the wide range of opportunities provided in the lessons and through visits.
142. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, pupils in Year 1 recognize the four countries that make up the British Isles and prepare their colourful and detailed passports to travel farther afield, 'Like Barnaby Bear'. Pupils in Year 2 locate a wide range of places at home and abroad on a map of the world and send postcards home from their chosen holiday. This activity gives them a good understanding of the different features and weather to be found in, for example, the sunshine and beaches of Lanzarote. Pupils show a good knowledge of the most suitable way of travelling around this country and abroad.
143. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 think seriously about the environment. After a visit to a local park they ask, 'What can we do to clean up the park?'. They made graphs of the litter found and wrote to the Community Forum so that they can become more involved in improving their own area. Pupils are very aware of the different aspects of pollution and conduct surveys of noise near the headteacher's office at certain times of the day, and of rubbish in the local area. They interpret their graphs well and produce very clear graphs of their findings on the computer. Pupils make very sensible suggestions about ways of improving the environment and illustrate their arguments well.
144. In Years 5 and 6, pupils use secondary sources, including travel brochures, maps, postcards and pictures to find information about places of interest around the world. They label their own maps very carefully and compare houses in Africa with some in the United Kingdom before moving on to a comparison of similar houses in Mexico. Pupils respond to the skilful questioning of the teacher with thoughtful comparisons of the food, dwellings and domestic life of people in all these countries. They draw sensible

conclusions, for instance that Mexico is a hot country, using clues in the picture well. By Years 5 and 6, pupils develop a broader understanding of how features of the physical landscape, such as rivers and mountains, affect where settlements are placed and how people use them.

145. Teaching is at least satisfactory and usually good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it to plan lessons that are well matched to the topic being studied. Teachers expect pupils to remember and apply knowledge from previous lessons. In the introductions, teachers ask probing questions and work hard to extend pupils' answers and thinking so that they extend their geographical knowledge as they move through the school. Teachers plan some good links with literacy, as when Years 5 and 6 write weather poems and Year 2 write their postcards.
146. Pupils show an interest in the topics studied, especially when it is something of which they already have some knowledge and experience, for example pollution and litter. Their written work is variable and frequently not presented sufficiently carefully because pupils do not always think about their spelling, punctuation and presentation.
147. The subject is well managed and the curriculum has been revised in line with national recommendations. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through visits, field studies, visitors and the interesting learning opportunities teachers provide. Resources are satisfactory for the curriculum as currently planned.

HISTORY

148. Provision for learning is satisfactory at both key stages. Attainment by pupils in Year 2 is in line with standards that are expected by pupils of their age. Written work is enlivened by colourful illustrations of people and events in the past. For example, pupils in Year 1 use well-selected words and phrases to describe an artefact from the past. They observe carefully the 'old bear', modelling outlines of a teddy bear in plasticine then painting and varnishing them. Their painted pictures have a close resemblance to the old teddy bear on display in the classroom. Pupils are learning to find out about the past from a good range of sources of information. They effectively use books, artefacts, pictures and stories to develop their basic skills of historical enquiry. They understand that they can record their findings in a variety of ways. For example, pupils in Year 2 perceptively wrote and illustrated their class book about Florence Nightingale and her experiences in the hospital at Scutari. Pupils understand that events in history such as the Crimean War changed the lives of people in Victorian times. They think deeply when they consider the difficulties imposed by living conditions then, and the many advantages we have in our own times. They explain about the disadvantages too, such as noise and traffic!
149. Attainment by Year 6 broadly matches standards expected at that age. Two lively lessons were seen with the mixed age Years 3/4 pupils. Both classes were researching information about life in Roman times using a range of resource books, some loaned by the county library service. They also had a useful CD ROM with much information. Pupils' low attainment in literacy impacts upon their learning in history because they are not able to understand difficult texts or access information for historical investigation. Nevertheless, a strength of the history teaching is the cross-curricular planning that links historical enquiry with literacy by organising the recording of information through writing tasks set in English lessons. For example, in the literacy lesson pupils wrote about the adventures of a Roman soldier on Hadrian's Wall. In the history lesson they organised their enquiry to find out how the walls were built, and by

whom. Pupils learn how to access information through first skimming and scanning books then reading for understanding, although many find this difficult. They discover how to use the contents page, the index and the glossary, understanding some important principles of historical enquiry. Pupils are directed towards recording their findings after selecting the relevant facts. This learning is not wholly successful because pupils do not have sufficient writing skills to select, organise and communicate their knowledge and understanding of historical information. Pupils have had more success with journalistic writing. Some lively wall displays carry accounts written in columns like a newspaper for the 'Celtic Chronicle' and the 'Roman Recorder'. Pupils have reported the Roman invasions of Britain from both a Celt point of view and a Roman point of view. A delicious sparkle of humour enlivens the headline 'Battling Boudicca Storms into Attack'.

150. Teaching is very good in Years 1 and 2 and at least satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. It is most effective when lessons are carefully planned to help pupils learn, rather than to cover the syllabus. The pace in these lessons is rapid and the enthusiasm of the teacher catches the interest of the pupils. In most lessons, pupils show interest and curiosity about the past but, in Years 3 to 6, they do not always transfer this excitement and commitment into care with their written work.
151. Subject management is satisfactory. The subject manager co-ordinates the planning and all teachers follow published guidelines, which provide a secure framework for learning. There has been no staff development for the teaching of history specifically, but cross-curricular links with literacy are the main focus. Day trips are organised annually for Year 2 to Southend to research seaside holidays in earlier times and for Years 3/4 to visit the Saffron Walden Museum. Resources for learning are satisfactory and significantly enhanced by outside visits. Standards have improved slightly since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

152. Provision for learning in information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Pupils' attainment in ICT exceeds national expectations by the time pupils are seven and matches these expectations by the time pupils are eleven. The subject standards have improved very considerably since the last report, raising pupils' achievement significantly.
153. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make very good progress in their understanding of the use of computers as an everyday tool to help them with their learning. Pupils of all abilities work with confidence on the machines and have good levels of skill by the time they are seven. The teachers' use of paper keyboards on which pupils practise their fingering away from the computer is a very effective and simple tool that has helped pupils to improve keyboarding skills significantly. It helps them greatly; they know where to look for various letters and, consequently, are faster than most pupils of this age when they work. Pupils in Year 1 use a painting program creatively because they are very adept at using the mouse, rapidly finding the right tools to fill in defined areas of a pattern, for example Hindu rangoli designs they had been learning about in religious education. In word-processing a poem, Year 2 pupils remembered well how to use the 'shift' key and how to get to a new line by using the 'enter' key. Previous ICT work, displayed in Years 1 and 2 classrooms, shows that pupils experience a wide variety of uses for their computer learning. In mathematics for example, pupils do sums using ICT and print them out. Different groups have word-processed stories of Noah's Ark using language appropriate to their abilities. They have dressed 'teddies', demonstrating good levels of control over the program they use. Overall, pupils' progress in knowledge and

understanding of ICT in Years 1 and 2 is very good and standards are above average by Year 2.

154. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to use ICT to help them with their work, developing the skills expected for their ages. Pupils currently in this phase of the school did not reach such high levels of attainment as those described above when they were younger. They have, however, continued to make satisfactory progress in learning about a range of functions, uses and programs. They are aided by good access to computers and a very good range of programs. Pupils use computers confidently in many lessons; for example, in a Year 5 English lesson, they developed a pen-portrait of a character in the story they were studying. By Year 6, the range of pupils' competence with ICT reflects that expected nationally. Two pupils in Year 6, for example, were working confidently building up a 'world' of roads, vehicles, people, goods and services based on a construction kit. One of the pair was more familiar with the program and helpfully 'tutored' another in its use. Both pupils could explain functions and operations well, adding to their creation sensibly as it grew. Other pupils in the same group were accessing the Internet for pictures they liked and importing them into a word-processing program with appropriate levels of skill.
155. At all stages, pupils enjoy using ICT for all manner of purposes. They welcome the opportunity to 'go on' the computers, share willingly when they work in pairs and are very good at taking turns. Pupils work very harmoniously and respect the machines appropriately.
156. The teaching of ICT in the school is now good. In the last report, teaching was unsatisfactory so this represents a very good improvement. Teachers' subject expertise is now good and resources have improved from a state where they were unsatisfactory, to a position where resourcing is now mostly good. Teachers have sufficient hardware in their classrooms. The school has good quality and quantity of software, with teachers confident to use it to support pupils' learning in a good variety of subjects. Planning of the subject across the curriculum is good. Teachers benefit from the services of a visiting technician to keep machines in working order, but some examples were seen of hardware not working, causing problems for the teacher. The school does all it can to avoid this, and most teachers have the competence and experience to solve minor breakdowns.
157. The subject is well managed and this has brought great improvement. The school now provides its pupils with a very good start in their younger years, so that when these pupils move up to Key Stage 2, their levels of skill will be better than those currently older. An area for improvement is the assessment of pupils' skills levels and of their progress, neither of which is yet in place. The school has wisely not yet spent funds allocated for teacher training for ICT, so an investment in how to enable staff to assess their pupils in ICT would be worthwhile.

MUSIC

158. The school provides well for learning in this subject. By the end of Year 2, pupils attain above the national expectations and by the end of Year 6, attainment is at least in line with the standards expected for their age. Pupils enjoy their music-making activities. There are particular strengths in composing and performing. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Standards for pupils up to the age of seven have risen since the last inspection because of the very good teaching.

159. The teachers' enthusiasm and expertise motivates pupils to try hard and respond well in lessons and when singing together. Pupils benefit from well-organised teaching that develops a pleasing tone, clear expression and a good sense of rhythm. Pupils demonstrate a good attitude, performing with confidence and enjoyment. They listen carefully, follow the teachers' clear directions, and develop a good feel for the music. Pupils know and sing a wide range of songs, both traditional and modern, and in a variety of styles. For example, pupils in Reception, and Years 1 and 2 leave the hall after assembly, joyfully singing the hymn they have learnt as they dance back to their classrooms. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 sing their hymns in assembly with good expression, both boys and girls joining in with disciplined gusto and enjoyment.
160. Lessons are planned imaginatively so that pupils build on skills and techniques learned previously. For example, pupils in Year 6 perform to the rhythm of 'Reindeer Rap' and keep their clapping and singing in time throughout the song. Pupils in Year 1 clap rhythms on different parts of their body accurately as soon as they hear the music of Rama and Sita. Every time the singing on the tape stops they join in with their body rhythms, keeping time well. Pupils know the names of the instruments they are to use and the rule that instruments are left on the floor until needed. They are filled with admiration when one girl plays a musical pattern on three chime bars and try very hard to sing her pattern accurately. The teacher quickly extends the task so that pupils successfully follow the patterns of two pupils playing after each other. A boy in Year 2 explores the sounds made by a group of instruments and other pupils realise that he is playing the first notes of 'One, two, three, four, five.' They join in with their voices and instruments spontaneously. Pupils show good skills in improvising and 'making a piece of music' because they think carefully about their task of creating a composition about fireworks. Year 2 pupils are stimulated very well by a picture of a marching band and the song that accompanies this. They learn very quickly to mime the playing of trumpets, trombones and drums, and at the same time make the sounds of the instruments with their voices. Pupils learn the song, select instruments to play a suitable accompaniment, and then work in groups to perform the song in many different ways. The result is a high quality performance in which they demonstrate an exceptional feeling for the rhythm and beat of the music.
161. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 extend their work on composition and singing. They create graphic scores, which are developed well in Years 5 and 6 into musical stories. Pupils write their own stories on the computer, and they work together in groups to select the right instruments for sound effects in their graphic score. Pupils concentrate very well when performing their work and think hard about which instrument will be most effective for a bang or a quiet moment.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The consistently good, and frequently very good, teaching leads to high standards of work in all musical activities. Those pupils, who learn to play the recorder and guitar at school, or learn an instrument at home, are encouraged to share their skills with the rest of the school. The teachers provide a wide range of interesting opportunities and musical experiences that enable pupils to learn how to listen to music and improve their skills in playing instruments and composing. Staff encourage pupils to participate with enthusiasm. Pupils participate in music making and singing with other schools, through festivals and workshops; they gain a joy in performance. These events are of high quality and contribute positively to pupils' learning and personal development. Pupils enjoy their music lessons so much that they are always sorry when they end.
163. Music is managed and led well. The subject manager provides good support for those staff who have little experience in teaching music and ensures that there is a good

selection of musical instruments available for lessons. The curriculum has been developed well so that all elements are taught over the year and staff use the published music scheme very well. They ensure that there is always a wide range of interesting and enjoyable musical activities for pupils. They enhance pupils' learning in lessons. Singing-together sessions are organised and structured well and provide a valuable opportunity for pupils to improve their skills. Since the last inspection, the arrangements for music have improved and the subject has a higher profile within the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

164. Provision for learning is very good. Pupils' attainment by the ends of Years 2 and 6 is above standards expected. In some aspects of their work, such as gymnastics, pupils' attainment is well above expectations by the time they are eleven. The quality of teaching is consistently very good, and this accounts for the high standards pupils reach in their work. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are almost always very good in lessons and they are keen to participate in all that the school provides for them. In the Years 1/2 class, for example, pupils working in pairs on the sequencing of movements were very agile and nimble in their movements; more pupils here had above average skills than usual and none had below average. Pupils understand the keywords of physical education, using them for themselves with confidence. They know the differences between types of jumps, and can both demonstrate and describe them. Because teaching is so good, pupils make very good progress and develop highly positive attitudes towards all aspects of the subject. They understand from an early age that they need to warm up, and why. They can explain that this relates to their heart rate. Equally they understand the need to cool down after activity.
165. In Years 3 to 6, pupils have much more opportunity to become involved in a wider range of sports activities, some of which bring them into more direct competition with others. The very good attitudes they bring from Years 1 and 2 enable pupils to develop a good sense of balance between competitiveness and co-operation, and pupils understand and enjoy participation whatever their physical prowess. Because they work well with others, and because they have learned to comment helpfully on others' performances, they can switch easily between ways of collaborating and competing. This extends into the playground where these attitudes lead to fair play at a wider level. As at the time of the last report, pupils have the opportunity to go swimming at the nearby secondary school. When observed there, pupils were learning very well and almost all can swim the required 25 metres by the time they are eleven, with many swimming much further. Many teams represent the school in different sports in local competitions, with a good degree of success. This success is well celebrated in the school's information for parents. Parents support these events enthusiastically, and this is also true of sports days, where the same balance of participation and achievement for all is maintained. All pupils achieve well in physical education in the school, with pupils of all abilities able to find some area of the subject where they can succeed well.
166. The quality of teaching is very good. A great enthusiasm exists for the subject amongst staff. They prepare lessons very well, have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and create a good sense of fun and valued contribution in their lessons. The pace of lessons is very good, often developing a variety of activities, which build in complexity to a 'performance', with an appropriate opportunity for pupils to evaluate others' work. Most teachers actively involve themselves with very varied extra-curricular provision; this is an additional strength of the subject in the school.
167. The subject is well managed, with planning and coverage of the curriculum secure. Standards were good at the time of the last report and have strengthened further.

Documentation is now extensive and used well. Good resources and green play areas make a significant contribution to the provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

168. Provision for learning is satisfactory for all year groups. Standards attained by pupils by the ends of Years 2 and 6 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
169. The main religions studied are Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. Pupils in Reception class and in Years 1 and 2 steadily develop their knowledge through a study of people and events that influenced the lives of others by the decisions they made and the effects of their behaviour. Pupils are led perceptively towards an understanding of how their own behaviour impacts on others and as a result the responses people make to them. For example, a Year 2 class learned from the story of Jonah that trust is important because we all depend on each other. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and decide on the right course of action to follow. They are given opportunities to think about important moral decisions, understanding that the choice between right and wrong behaviour can be difficult because we are never quite sure of ourselves. The pupils listen well because the teacher makes the story exciting for them. They respond well to the teachers' probing questions and struggle to understand the concept of being 'trustworthy'. Pupils learn that the Bible stories have a relevance for our lives today because the moral decisions we have to make are unaffected by time or place; they are universal for us all. Pupils are introduced to other religions by stories from different cultures. For example, children in the Reception class learned about the fulfilment of Divali through the adventures of Rama and Sita; this helps them see the importance of meaning and purpose in human lives. Good cross-curricular links are established because the same story is studied in literacy and in art lessons. For example, pupils in Year 1 compared Christian 'special times' such as Christmas with the Hindu 'special time' Divali. The teacher had resourced rangoli patterns from the Internet so that pupils have 'hands on' experience as they learn that Hindus use flour and water and spices to create their patterns. The patterns provide good cross-curricular links with art and with numeracy. Pupils learn very well that different cultures celebrate their beliefs in different ways and that all are valuable.
170. Older pupils in the junior classes are taught to recognise special celebrations of the Christian church by discussing Advent and making an Advent calendar. Teachers do not always share the religious significance of the event with their pupils and learning opportunities are lost; Advent becomes just another story and making the calendar just another activity. Pupils in a Year 6 lesson learn about ceremonies through relating their own experiences of attending weddings in a Christian church with a traditional Hindu wedding. Pupils were fascinated because the teacher was wearing a typical Hindu wedding dress, which she compared with the long white wedding dress worn by a recently married teacher at the school. Learning was made relevant because pupils told about attending family weddings, sometimes as bridesmaids or as pageboys. Comparing photographs and pictures of both Christian and Hindu weddings reinforced the learning. Pupils' studies of the different ceremonies enhance their understanding of the need for tolerance of the beliefs, customs, traditions, practices of other nations, creeds and cultures. Even so, lessons tend not to provide enough quiet reflective times and provide too little opportunity for pupils to express their developing beliefs through creative writing.
171. Teaching overall is at least satisfactory, showing adequate subject knowledge and sufficient expertise. In the most effective lessons, the teaching created a very strong link between learning about religious beliefs and practices, and helping pupils to

express, question and develop their own beliefs. In less effective lessons, the teaching was overly focused on covering the curricular content, and missed opportunities to help pupils understand the significance of religious faith and custom. This less effective teaching failed to build upon the pupils' natural interest in the subject and their willing respect for the beliefs of others. Consequently, both teaching and learning became slow and uninspiring.

172. The school lacks a subject manager but the policy enables teachers to know what needs to be taught and how. The school follows the Exeter Scheme for Teaching Religious Education in Primary Schools, which provides a good framework for planning. Standards have improved since the last inspection, but the absence of a subject manager needs to be addressed.