

INSPECTION REPORT

Eckington Junior School
Sheffield

LEA area : Derbyshire County Council

Unique Reference Number : 112542

Headteacher : Mr N R Lewis

Reporting inspector : Mr P H Cole
2616

Dates of inspection : 11 – 15 October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707159

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school :	Junior
Type of control :	County
Age range of pupils :	7 to 11
Gender of pupils :	Mixed
School address :	School Street Eckington Sheffield S21 4FL
Telephone number :	01246 432549
Fax number :	none
Appropriate authority :	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors :	Mr G Gilbert
Date of previous inspection :	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mr P H Cole, RgI	Mathematics	Attainment and progress
	Information and communications technology	Teaching
	Religious education	Leadership and management
	Physical education	Equal opportunities
Mr A Rolfe, Lay Inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development
		Attendance
		Staffing, accommodation and learning resources
		The efficiency of the school
Mrs M Fitter	English	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
	Art	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare
	Music	Partnerships with parents and the community
		Special Educational Needs
Mr S Reynolds	Science	The curriculum and assessment
	Design and technology	
	Geography	
	History	

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Standards have been improved significantly in the last year;
- There is a very positive ethos that successfully promotes very good behaviour and relationships and encourages pupils to have very positive attitudes to learning and to willingly accept responsibility;
- Teaching is good in all subjects;
- Good provision is made for pupils' moral and social development;
- Cares well for its pupils;
- Good relationships are promoted with parents and the community;
- Many interesting and varied extra-curricular activities are provided for pupils.

Where the school has weaknesses

- Insufficient use of assessments of pupils' learning to improve the curriculum;
- Governors are not sufficiently involved in setting the agenda for development or in evaluating the school's performance;
- Weakness in the school development plan reduce its effectiveness both as an aid to management and to financial planning;
- Weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding in religious education result in standards that are below expectations.

This school has far more strengths than weaknesses and provides a very positive and supportive environment for learning. The weaknesses will form the basis for the governors' action plan.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the school has ensured that pupils make better progress in mathematics and science but they now make less progress in design and technology than before. The good behaviour and attitudes shown by pupils has improved further and their attendance rate has remained above average. Weaknesses in the teaching of science have been addressed and teaching overall has remained good. The weaknesses in the curriculum identified in the last inspection have largely been addressed and good progress has been made in improving the assessment practices in the school, although more still needs to be done to make effective use of assessments to fine tune the curriculum and raise standards further. The quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been maintained and pupils continue to be well cared for and their education to benefit from the good links with their parents and the community. Aspects of management have shown improvements, including the roles of senior managers and coordinators who are now leading their subjects and areas of responsibility well. School development and financial planning is not as effective as it was and the roles of governors are still underdeveloped as a result, progress in this area has been unsatisfactory. Good progress has been made improving in the school's accommodation.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing issues and weaknesses identified in the last report. The school's capacity for further improvement is sound given the balance of strengths and weaknesses in its leadership and management.

Standards in subjects

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key	
			<i>well above average</i>	<i>B</i>
			<i>above average</i>	<i>C</i>
			<i>average</i>	<i>D</i>
			<i>below average</i>	<i>E</i>
			<i>well below average</i>	
English	C	C		
Mathematics	B	C		
Science	C	C		

Results in the core subjects, in the three years before 1999, were well below those found in schools nationally and those in similar schools. In 1999, test results in English, mathematics and science showed considerable improvement and are now in line with or slightly above the national averages and are in line with those in similar schools. The inspection found standards in the core subjects to be in line with expectations. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are similar to those found in other schools and are well balanced across the ICT curriculum. Pupils' knowledge in religious education (RE) is insecure and often superficial but does cover the different aspects of the locally agreed syllabus. Although pupils do not make enough progress in design and technology their progress in other subjects is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in:	7 - 11 years
English	Good
Mathematics	Good
Science	Good
Information technology	Good
Religious education	Good
Other subjects	Good

Good teaching was seen in all year groups. Almost all lessons were at least satisfactory and well over half were good or very good. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Teaching was often very good in Year 4 and was particularly so in Year 6. The best teaching was characterised by high expectations, lively pace, clear explanations and often very effective questioning.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Very good both in lessons and around the school.
Attendance	Good.
Ethos*	Very positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships. There is an increasing desire to raise standards of pupils achievement.
Leadership and management	Headteacher provides good leadership but has not placed sufficient emphasis on raising standards while dealing with recent accommodation issues. Senior managers and coordinators provide effective leadership in their areas. Governors are not sufficiently involved in setting the schools priorities or in evaluating its performance. Development planning is a weakness.
Curriculum	Broad, relevant but imbalanced as a result of the time provided for English which is leaving too little time for other subjects, such as art and design and technology. The school has insufficient information from the infant school to plan work that builds on learning in Key Stage 1. Very good provision of extra curricular activities. Sound assessment arrangements but more use could be made of assessment information to improve the curriculum further.
Pupils with special educational needs	Overall, these pupils make good progress, particularly those on Stage 3 onwards and the pupils who receive additional focussed support.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for pupils' moral and social development and sound provision for their spiritual and cultural development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The significant improvements make the accommodation satisfactory although weaknesses remain, such as the small hall. Staffing and resources for learning are both satisfactory.
Value for money	Average costs, good overall quality of provision and improving standards result in good value for money.

* *Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, parents are happy with standards and progress. The school promotes good behaviour and positive attitudes. The school is easy to approach when parents have concerns. Parents are welcome in school. They are kept well informed about their children's progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is too little access to ICT. They are not told enough about their children's weaknesses. Their complaints are not always addressed satisfactorily.

The inspectors agree with the strengths identified by parents. The school has similar levels of resources for ICT as most other schools but well targeted teaching and planned use of resources ensures that children make steady progress in developing their ICT skills. Annual reports provide satisfactory information on pupils' progress. They are supplemented by termly reports that give information on pupils' learning of tables and spellings as well as their behaviour and attitudes. These could be improved to provide parents with more information on progress made in the National Curriculum. Although no examples were observed during the inspection, the inspectors believe that the

school does take parents' complaints seriously and tries its best to address any concerns that may be raised.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to further raise standards and improve the quality of education the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1 Develop further the use made of assessment information to identify patterns of weaknesses and strengths in pupils' learning in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This could use the end of year and of key stage tests to build on the analysis already undertaken in mathematics, which is based on standardised tests. Based on analyses undertaken adjustments should be made to curriculum that is taught and targets set for raising aspects of attainment both for individual pupils and for each year group.

(Paragraph 34)

2 Improve the quality of school development planning. The school development plan could take more account of assessment information as well as audits of the quality of other aspects of the school's life and uses this information to set clear priorities that focus on raising attainment. The plan should make clear how the priorities will be addressed and how their achievement will be measured. The inclusion of significant factors, such as who is responsible, timescales, resources needed (including amounts and sources of funding), how progress will be monitored and criteria for judging success would make the plan a more effective management tool. *(Paragraphs 54 and 61)*

3 Increase the governors' involvement in deciding school priorities and how the school's budget should be used to achieve these priorities. Governors should also monitor and evaluate the implementation of the school development plan and the school's success in achieving appropriate high attainment for its pupils.

(Paragraphs 52, 60 and 61)

4 Raise standards in religious education. Teaching in religious education should ensure that pupils know the basic facts about each religion they study, such as places of worship and holy books and should enable them to develop a framework which they can use to compare and contrast religions. *(paragraph 8 and the section on religious education)*

In addition to the key issues above the governors should also consider the following less important issues in their action plan:

- Curriculum balance - overemphasis on English and too little time provided for foundation subjects, such as design and technology and art. *(Paragraph 25)*
- Develop closer liaison with the infant school so that the curriculum is more effectively planned in Year 3. *(Paragraph 30)*
- Improve the procedures for managing the school fund accounts. *(Paragraph 60)*

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1 Eckington Junior School has 243 pupils on roll, which makes it average in size for a school of this type. Although there are a similar number of boys and girls, the balance of boys and girls varies considerably between each year group. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and all pupils speak English as their first language. Nearly a third of pupils are identified as having special educational needs, which is well above average, but the proportion who are in the later stages of assessment and the number with statements to support their needs is close to the average for the local education authority and country as a whole. The school admits pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is below the national average but other social and economic indicators suggest that, overall, the backgrounds of pupils are similar to the average found in schools across the country. The attainment on entry of pupils is again wide and overall, is close to, but just below the levels expected for pupils of seven years of age.

2 The school aims to promote pupils learning by:

- Providing a relevant curriculum;
- Creating a safe and attractive environment;
- Involving every one connected to the school in deciding developments;
- Ensuring that all staff have meaningful and appropriate opportunities for professional development.

3 In order to achieve these aims the school has identified the following priorities for the current year:

- To introduce the National Numeracy Strategy;
- Monitor the implementation of the Literacy Framework;
- Monitor the pupils' progress in science and the effectiveness of the science curriculum;
- Improve the provision made for ICT.

Key Indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2
for latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1999	35	30	65

National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	25	25	30
	Girls	23	24	26
	Total	48	48	56
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	75 (50)	75 (46)	86 (47)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	21	22	22
	Girls	20	19	19
	Total	41	41	41
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	63 (56)	63 (50)	63 (50)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions)
missed through absence for the
latest complete reporting year

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.9
	National comparative data	5.7
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.5
	National comparative data	0.5

Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school
age) during the previous year:

	Number
Fixed period	2
Permanent	0

¹

Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	23
Satisfactory or better	98
Less than satisfactory	2

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

4 In 1999, the test results for eleven year olds, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, showed a marked improvement over those for the three previous years. These had been well below the average found in schools nationally and in schools that admit pupils with similar backgrounds (based on the levels of free school meals entitlement). Boys had done less well than girls. This year, in English and science, the average levels achieved by pupils in the school were in line with those found in all schools and in mathematics they were above. Results were comparable to those in similar schools. There was also little difference in the attainment of boys and girls in these tests. The last inspection found standards to be in line with expectations in English but below in mathematics and science. The current inspection findings are that standards overall, in all of the core subjects, are in line with the expected levels for pupils' ages. Progress made by pupils in core subjects is also satisfactory and this reflects improvements made to the curriculum and to teaching, which is often sharply focussed.

5 In English, girls are judged to achieve better than boys. This has been the case in the tests undertaken at the end of the key stage, however evidence from last year's tests, pupils' work and the standards they demonstrate in lessons show that the gap between boys and girls is beginning to close. This reflects the steady progress they make resulting from the positive attitudes to learning shown by all pupils and the effective implementation of the literacy framework. Information seeking skills are mostly well developed and pupils write confidently and effectively for a range of purposes but there is little evidence of their ability to sustain extended pieces of writing. Pupils across the school listen well and although by Year 6 some are able to present their ideas with maturity and thoughtfulness, for example when speaking to the class, they are not given enough opportunities to extend their ideas through debate and longer presentations.

6 Pupils' attainment in mathematics is broadly based and pupils are handling numbers mentally with growing confidence and accuracy. The focus on the application of number in many lessons is enabling pupils to select appropriate operations to work out answers to problems. Progress varies between classes and this reflects the differences in the teachers' current understanding and knowledge of the framework for teaching numeracy. Progress is good when teachers clearly identify what pupils will learn and provide appropriately chosen activities for groups. It is less rapid in lessons when teachers rely too much on the school's mathematics scheme because work is sometimes pitched too low.

7 In science, pupils have sound knowledge of life and living processes, materials and of physical processes and they understand the nature of a fair test. Many Year 6 pupils use predictions effectively when investigating in science and are confident when recording in their own ways what they have found out. Progress is better in Years 4 to 6 than in Year 3, where lessons do not always build on what pupils have already learnt and where there is some unsatisfactory teaching. Overall improvements have been made to standards through the increased time that has been made available for teaching the subject and because of the integration of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) scheme of work into the school programme for learning.

8 Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) are at least as high as those typically found in other schools and they are broadly based, including aspects of control and monitoring. Pupils are suitably independent in their use of computers and they often make very good progress in individual lessons when ICT skills are directly taught. Weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the major world faiths limits their attainment in religious education (RE), which is below expectations overall. The school's curriculum provides balanced learning across the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for RE but not enough is done to ensure that pupils remember the key facts and understand the key concepts they have been taught.

9 Progress in the other subject is satisfactory, except for design and technology, where pupils do produce some good work but have too few opportunities to practice their skills. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on the progress made in art.

10 Pupils on Stage 3 and above of the Code of Practice for special educational needs make good progress. They are provided with well focussed and taught programmes of work based on careful assessments of their needs. The progress made by other pupils on the special educational needs register is satisfactory and this reflects the more broadly based and less finely tuned learning provided for them.

11 The school is making sound progress in achieving the targets that it has set with the local education authority for each cohort of pupils.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

12 The last inspection identified this as a strong aspect of the school and this inspection finds that further improvements have been made. In all year groups, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Almost all pupils are able to sustain concentration for appropriate periods and enter into classroom discussion in a constructive manner. Most pupils are able to work independently and without direct supervision. The majority of pupils are eager to show and talk about their work.

13 The overall standard of behaviour is very good. Pupils move about the school in an orderly manner. They respond well to the school's rules and conventions, particularly the rewards for good work and behaviour and they readily accept the principles of sanctions for poor behaviour. Behaviour in classrooms is mostly very good. One pupil has been excluded on two occasions in the last twelve months and the use of exclusion was appropriate in the circumstances. Parents have expressed their satisfaction with the standards of behaviour achieved in the school.

14 Almost all pupils work and play well together. They work well in groups, when they share ideas and listen to what each member of their group has to say. Pupils form constructive relationships with both teaching and support staff, they are courteous and considerate to each other and show respect for other people's property. Bullying is rare and the school reacts quickly and positively to known instances.

15 Pupils make very good progress in their personal development, they are willing and able to reflect on their own beliefs, feeling and experiences in a cheerful and confident manner, they readily listen to and consider the views of others. A feature of many lessons, for example in physical education, is the pupils' ability to constructively evaluate each other's efforts. They are developing their understanding of beliefs, and social and cultural tradition including those from the Jewish and Islamic faiths.

16 Pupils in all year groups are willing to take responsibility, they are trusted by their teachers and respond well to that trust, for example older pupils supervise the library at lunchtime and oversee a rota system for pupils who wish to use the computers. Pupils are given opportunities to use their initiative and respond well to these opportunities, for example a group of pupils in a Y6 games lesson were observed modifying the rules of a game to make the game work better, and then advising their teacher of the modification.

Attendance

17 The level of attendance is good, slightly better than national averages. Registration is carried out appropriately each morning and afternoon, and the large majority of pupils arrive at school on time. Most lessons make a prompt and effective start, with pupils generally settling to work with little or no prompting.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

18 Overall, the quality of teaching in the school is good and has been maintained since the last inspection. There is variation between classes and between year groups but in no class or year is teaching overall less than satisfactory and good teaching is seen across the school. A high level of good and very good teaching was found across Year 6 and many lessons in one Year 4 class were good or very good. Two classes are taught by job sharing teachers. This works very well. All teachers concerned are very effective teachers who are careful to plan together

and to share information on individual pupils and the progress made in lessons. As a result, pupils in these classes are taught very well and they make good and often very good progress in lessons.

19 In a small number of numeracy lessons in the younger end of the school, teachers were unsure about the level of what they needed to teach and their lessons relied too much on the mathematics scheme and were not pitched at a sufficiently challenging level. In other numeracy lessons, teachers had more effectively identified the levels required and carefully selected appropriate sections of the scheme or had developed their own materials to ensure that teaching and the pupils' tasks were appropriately challenging. Across the curriculum, teachers demonstrated satisfactory or good subject knowledge. In the ICT withdrawal groups, the teacher's very good subject knowledge helped to ensure very effective teaching and good progress. In most of the literacy lessons teachers demonstrated secure understanding of the literacy framework and this supported their careful and often challenging use of questions. Weaknesses in science lessons identified in the last inspection have been addressed. Teachers are now secure in their knowledge and understanding and together with thoughtful use of the QCA scheme this is leading to effective teaching particularly of practical investigations.

20 In almost all lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and effective strategies for managing it. This ensures that almost without exception, pupils' involvement in lessons is either good or very good and helps to ensure that they benefit from the input made by teachers. In the best lessons, teachers also have high expectations of pupils across the range of attainment. They provide appropriate challenge in the tasks they set and the questions they ask which ensures that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, make appropriate and often good progress in lessons. This was the case in many lessons in literacy, numeracy and science in Years 4 and 6.

21 During the inspection, teachers' planning of lessons was detailed, thorough and effective. The weekly plans that are routinely done are satisfactory for literacy and numeracy, where they identify clearly the main objectives for the lessons based on the literacy and numeracy frameworks. What each group of pupils will learn, however, is not consistently made clear. Planning of lessons in other subjects is often quite general, indicating only aspects of schemes that will be covered, and it does not always make sufficiently clear what different groups of pupils will learn.

22 Across the school, teachers use a suitable range of appropriate methods and forms of organisation to ensure that pupils achieve the lessons objectives. In literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils are carefully organised to support the learning needs of different groups and classroom assistants are often deployed effectively to support those who find learning more difficult. Assistants provide careful and well-focused teaching to groups withdrawn for additional literacy support, which enables them to make clear progress in these sessions. Practical work features strongly in many science and mathematics lessons and supports learning well. In Year 6, teachers share the objectives for the lesson with pupils and this is successful in focussing pupils on what they have to concentrate on and makes a valuable contribution to the progress they make. The structure of many lessons is very similar and is effective in supporting the achievement of the planned learning. Class introductions, often usefully reviewing earlier learning, are used to introduce new learning before the pupils apply and practice what they have learnt in group based activities. These introductions are often characterised by clear explanations, although on rare occasions insufficient time is provided to ensure that all pupils have understood what is being taught and this can result in less progress being made than the teacher had hoped. This was the case in one numeracy lesson in Year 6. While demonstrating in a science lesson in Year 3 the teacher did not ensure that all the children could see what was happening and did not check that all understood what was expected of them during the practical sessions. As a result, unsatisfactory progress was made in the lesson. Plenary sessions are mostly used well to consolidate learning and to extend the ideas that have been discussed. Group work is often used well in games lessons, although occasionally, as in a Year 3 lesson, insufficient use is made of opportunities to make teaching points, while pupils are practicing their skills.

23 Resources are usually carefully chosen and used in lessons across the curriculum. This was the case, for example, in a good RE lesson in Year 5, when the teacher skilfully used a video to make very clear teaching points. When pupils chose their own reading books they are sometimes not well matched to the stage of their abilities and little is gained by pupils attempting to read them.

24 Teachers often make effective use of assessment, including marking to modify their teaching. This was the case in the Year 6 lesson numeracy lesson referred to above, when children initially struggled with some statistical

work in data handling and the teacher decided to draw a halt to the group work and to address the problems that pupils were experiencing. Marking is often informative and provides helpful suggestions to pupils. The recording of ongoing assessment is not consistent and is mostly not systematic, reducing its effectiveness. Homework is regular but is mainly limited to learning spellings and tables and overall, is not extending learning sufficiently across the taught curriculum. In Year 6, pupils are encouraged to undertake a research project later in the year and this is a positive approach to enhancing their learning.

The curriculum and assessment

25 The curriculum is broad and relevant, including all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It successfully promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. The school has carefully examined, and adjusted, the time allocated to each subject, but there is some imbalance in provision. Following the introduction of the literacy hour, the time allocated to English is high. In most year groups aspects of English such as silent reading, comprehension and handwriting have been retained in addition to the literacy hour, resulting in up to 40% of teaching time being spent on the subject. As a result, the time available for other subjects is limited and, in art and design technology, is insufficient to ensure a full course of study through the school.

26 Teachers' planning identifies the separate subjects appropriately and some effective links are made between subjects, for example, a technology project to make a moving toy, chosen to enrich a Victorian topic. Opportunities to practice and apply literacy and numeracy skills through subjects, such as history and geography, are not systematically identified in the planning.

27 The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Provision for religious education is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Sex, health and drugs education are appropriately covered, mainly through the science curriculum.

28 Arrangements to ensure equal access to the curriculum are good. In literacy and numeracy, pupils are grouped by attainment, ensuring that their needs are met effectively. Additional support is mostly arranged within the classroom so that pupils do not miss lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively by classroom assistants and sometimes by their classmates, for example when working at the computer in Year 3 or as part of a mixed-ability group in Year 6 science. Careful monitoring of activities ensures that everyone has their turn. Extra-curricular activities are open to all and where payment is required, for instance for the extended visit offered to older pupils, sensitive arrangements exist to help any cases of financial difficulty.

29 The number of pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs is higher than in similar schools. Focused support ensures that effective provision, in line with the recommendations of the Code of Practice, is made for pupils at Stage 3 and for those with a statement of special educational needs. They mostly make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans. The needs of many pupils at Stages 1 and 2 are identified too broadly. Consequently, the targets set for them are often imprecise and in some cases reflect a general curriculum issue rather than an individual special need. For example, a large number are identified as needing help with phonics or handwriting. Their targets do not set out the steps needed to improve in other areas of learning and therefore are of limited help in planning their curriculum.

30 Planning for progression and continuity has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. Schemes of work have been implemented in most subjects. Medium term planning in Years 4 to 6 effectively builds on what has been taught before. The planning in Year 3 is equally detailed, but based on insufficient information from Key Stage 1 to ensure a smooth progression in the learning programme. Planning for pupils to practice and apply skills in some foundation subjects, for example in design and technology and art, is not detailed enough and skills learned in one year are not always built upon in the next. A particular strength in all year groups is the collaboration between teachers of parallel classes resulting in the sharing of ideas and expertise and a very good degree of consistency across each year. The successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has not yet been accompanied by a systematic review of the whole English curriculum. Consequently the subject is not coherent and insufficient provision is made for developing speaking, listening, reading and writing skills across the curriculum.

31 Extra-curricular provision is very good. All age groups have access to an extensive programme including competitive sports. Lunchtime and after-school clubs are held for interests as diverse as gardening, science, country dancing, handchimes and a bird club. The activities are well advertised to parents and take-up is good. During lunchtimes a significant number of pupils choose to read or use the computers in the library, supervised very sensibly by Year 6 librarians. The school hosts some local sporting festivals and adult education classes during the day. Pupils take a keen interest in the work of an adult art class held in the school library, raising their awareness of the techniques used. The use of visits and visitors in the curriculum has been restricted by recent building work, but an annual extended visit for older pupils, provides good opportunity for them to develop social and personal skills.

32 Assessment has significantly improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. The key issue relating to assessment in mathematics and science has been successfully addressed. Records in English, mathematics and science, based on the national curriculum, are simple, accurate and useful. Updated termly, they provide a good basis for the annual reports to parents. Teachers share detailed oral information about their pupils prior to them moving into a new class. Assessment in the other subjects is limited, particularly in the development of skills and competencies. Assessment for pupils with special educational needs effectively identifies targets for individuals at Stage 3 or beyond, but assessment at Stages 1 and 2 is largely based on a screening of all pupils rather than a targeted identification of the specific strengths and weaknesses of individuals.

33 Teachers keep a range of daily notes to record significant learning points. The most effective of these, such as the mathematics record in the Year 4 job-share class, are systematic and simple in tracking key learning objectives for every child, leading to more focused planning. Others are more haphazard and as a result make it difficult to gain an overview of progress.

34 The school uses a number of tests to track pupils' progress. Statutory and optional national curriculum tests are used to moderate teachers' own judgements and are beginning to provide information about curriculum strengths and weaknesses, for example in mathematics. Some simple tests are being successfully adopted, for instance in science, to check how well pupils have completed a unit of work. Other tests, such as the annual standardised testing of pupils, have little influence on the curriculum or on raising standards. Overall insufficient use is currently being made of assessment information to improve the curriculum and raise standards.

35 Pupils' work is regularly marked, including perceptive teacher comments that help pupils improve. In some classes, teachers add a very useful summative statement at the end of finished exercise books, recognising achievements and indicating future areas for improvement. The school has developed a rapid assessment record that provides parents with selected information each term. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies is not yet reflected in these assessments, reducing their value as a regular communication with parents about the progress being made by their children.

36 Assessment information in the three core subjects is used to predict how well pupils will do in the national tests and to set achievable targets for different year groups.

37 The introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies has begun to have a positive impact on progress and standards in English and mathematics, although some teachers are not yet sufficiently confident in the more recently introduced numeracy strategy for it to have a consistent impact in all classes.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

38 The last inspection found provision to be satisfactory. Improvements made in pupils' moral and social development result in overall provision that is now good.

39 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Experiences in both class and whole school assemblies provide opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer to which most pupils respond appropriately, although there is insufficient use of opportunities for spiritual responses in religious education and other subjects. Pupils mostly recognise and respect the beliefs and practices of other major world faiths and are able to talk about aspects of Judaism and Islam. They are encouraged to reflect on certain experiences, for example, what it must be like to be homeless, hungry or poor, and to make some sense of them at a personal level. Action Aid and the life of the third world child the school sponsors offered the whole school pause for thought. Provision for collective worship is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements.

40 Provision for pupils' moral development is good. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, which is supported through the strong ethos, and everyday life of the school. Adults provide very good role models and have high expectations of behaviour throughout the school day and particularly in lessons. Positive attitudes and behaviour, which are supported by the Good Behaviour Plan, are consistently reinforced and promote good progress in lessons where pupils' self esteem and confidence contribute to individual learning. Stories and studies of famous people, such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, focus on moral issues, make an important contribution to this aspect of development.

41 Provision for social development is good and from their first admission to the school pupils are encouraged to adopt responsible attitudes toward each other and their environment and to take responsibility for themselves. They develop mutual respect and tolerance and are able to cooperate well in many lessons and in different subject areas. Pupils in school are given responsibilities such as selling tuck and stationery and working in the library. They are offered opportunities to work away from direct supervision, particularly when working with the computers in the library, and they show considerable maturity in many instances. They are courteous and polite to adults and many are confident in their conversations, as when visiting the adult painting club and talking about the work in progress. The school places appropriate emphasis on good citizenship.

42 Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils study a wide range of literature, particularly through the literacy strategy and other books read to them. They benefit from visits, including residential, and visitors into school such as a recent visit from a poet who worked with the pupils to compose their own poems. They learn about other cultures and faiths in religious education although direct experiences are few and opportunities to explore non-European materials are missed in some subjects. The school offers a good range of lunchtime and evening clubs and although none was observed during the week of inspection, pupils could talk enthusiastically about their involvement at other times.

Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

43 The arrangements and procedures for the support and guidance of pupils and for monitoring their progress and personal welfare and development are good. There are clear and effective policies and practices for promoting good behaviour and caring staff know the pupils well. Consistent practice ensures that pupils are happy and well supported and able to make the most of their time in school. Effective procedures are in place for monitoring attendance and registration practice is efficient. The home-school agreement is in place.

44 Support for pupils with special educational needs remains good and child protection procedures meet requirements and are familiar to all staff. There is good liaison with other agencies, including the secondary school to which the pupils transfer, to ensure that provision is secure and useful information is transferred with the pupils. However, transfer of information from the feeder infant school is currently inadequate to ensure that there is continuity and progression in pupils' learning. The induction of Year 3 pupils is well supported in personal and social respects by the friendly and supportive procedures and practice within school and there is helpful liaison with parents.

45 Health and safety issues are mostly well attended to, the security of the building has been significantly improved since the last inspection, and there are plans to develop these further. The school recognises the need to tighten some aspects of practice. First aid and pupils' medical needs are well managed.

46 The school has successfully improved in many areas since the last inspection and has maintained the good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Partnership with parents and the community

47 The overall quality of information for parents is good and annual reports provide useful information about pupils' attainment, progress and future learning needs and include opportunities for parent and pupil comments. The prospectus provides a helpful overview of the curriculum but information about what pupils are currently learning is not consistently available apart from that provided in home school reading and homework diaries.

48 The school is aiming for an 'open door' policy now that the buildings refurbishment is completed and increased access and involvement for parents and community is being encouraged. There is sensible guidance for parents and other helpers in school and consultation with parents about the homework policy and the development of the home-school agreement. The parental concerns, expressed to inspectors, in this respect are being addressed and the school association (SAFE) has been reconvened this term to offer opportunities for dialogue across a range of issues.

49 There is a strong commitment to increasing and further developing the already considerable community links

and activities and the proposed development of School House is intended to make a significant contribution in this respect. The pupils and staff contribute to the local carnival and other local ventures, the school hosts sporting events and there is currently an adult painting club, which meets in the school library and in which pupils take an active interest. The school benefits from a number of links with local businesses and there has been significant help with funding resources for information and communication technology.

50 The school has both maintained and improved the sound provision reported in the last inspection and although links with both parents and community have been adversely affected by the recent, difficult rationalisation of the school buildings, the school is working hard to re-establish good provision and practice.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and management

51 Overall, leadership and management of the school are satisfactory but there are weaknesses that need to be addressed as well as strengths that can be built upon. The headteacher provides good leadership that has successfully encouraged a positive ethos for learning, strong and supportive relationships and has enabled the quality of the accommodation to be significantly improved. Recently, due to the diversions caused by the major building work, he has not placed sufficient emphasis on raising standards. This contributed to the lower than expected achievement of pupils in the national tests in the period from 1996 to 1998. The successful introduction of the National Literacy Framework and the QCA scheme of work for science, both of which were carefully monitored and evaluated, and the focus on identified weaknesses in mathematics all made a significant contribution to raising standards dramatically last year. The headteacher has been effectively supported by the school's senior management team, which currently fulfils the role of the deputy headteacher.

52 Governors were identified in the last report as making a sound contribution to the life of the school through their committees and meetings, although they were not sufficiently involved in curriculum matters and in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school. Little progress has been made since the last inspection in developing their roles and weaknesses remain. Governors are still not as fully involved in helping to identify priorities for school development, deciding spending decisions or in monitoring the performance of the school as they should be.

53 Over the last year, the school has made good progress in developing monitoring and evaluation strategies. This has been particularly noticeable in English and science where lessons have been observed and work scrutinised to improve the quality of provision. Analysis of assessment information has been used successfully to address weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. More appropriate assessments than the annual standardised tests need to be made in English and science if similar monitoring is going to be undertaken in these subjects.

54 The headteacher and staff of the school have worked hard to ensure that the school's aims, values and policies are being consistently and effectively reflected in practice. As a result, the school has developed an ethos that provides a very firm foundation on which learning can be built.

55 The school's development plan is very descriptive and focuses mainly on the current situation in the school and the progress that has been made over the previous year. It is based on wide consultation with staff, governors and pupils. However, it does not clearly identify priorities nor does it break these down into specific tasks with identified responsible staff, timescales, costs, or expected outcomes by which the success of their implementation can be judged. As a result it is not an effective tool for managing change or for financial planning. However, the school has made steady progress in addressing the issues that were identified by the last inspection and it complies with its legal responsibilities.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

56 There are sufficient suitably qualified and experienced teachers for the number of pupils in the school and a teacher new to the school and qualified in another country is working towards qualified status in the United Kingdom. The match between qualifications and curriculum responsibility is satisfactory.

57 Sufficient educational support staff are deployed effectively to work with individuals and groups of pupils, and are appropriately involved in the planning of lessons. The school's clerical staff provide a good level of administrative support, which enables teaching staff to concentrate in their teaching and co-ordinating roles. The school has a well established teacher appraisal system, which meets statutory requirements. The headteacher co-ordinates the school staff development training programme, which includes measures to provide a balance of training for individuals and the corporate needs of the school. A start has been made to evaluate the impact of staff development training on the quality of teaching and curriculum provision.

58 Major improvements to the school's accommodation have been made since the last inspection. The school is now located on a single site, which has had a positive impact on the quality of the provision made for pupils. However, there are still some accommodation problems that involve pupils having to pass through one classroom to reach other classrooms and the library. This often distracts pupils from their studies. The school hall is barely adequate for PE lessons because it is unable to accommodate large apparatus.

59 With the exception of large PE equipment, the school has a good range of learning resources, many of which are very effective teacher-produced learning resources. The school library is well organised and contains a satisfactory range of both fiction and non-fiction books although there are a significant number of worn books.

The efficiency of the school

60 The governors are supportive of the school but are not sufficiently involved in strategic management of the priorities. They have established a number of committees, including a financial committee. The committees do not have adequate written terms of reference that ensure their responsibilities are clearly defined and that limits of delegated authority are established. With the exception of the finance committee they do not meet on a regular basis nor are there minutes that record their business.

61 In the current financial year, the governors have approved a budget that commits virtually all of the school's income from the local education authority. They have maintained a contingency, which includes rent income for a mobile phone mast, to cope with unforeseen expenditure. However, they do not have in place procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of major spending decisions.

62 Overall, teaching staff and support staff are deployed well and used effectively. Educational support staff who work with pupils with special needs are appropriately involved in planning lessons and in developing individual education plans. The school makes good use of the available accommodation and learning resources particularly of the library and the computers located there.

63 There is effective day-to-day control of the school's finances and administrative procedures are well established that enable teaching staff to concentrate on their teaching and management roles. However, the control of the school fund is unsatisfactory. The accounts have not been subject to a proper audit and the school have not produced and submitted an annual balance sheet to the Governing Body.

64 The cost of educating pupils is broadly in line with national averages. The backgrounds and attainment of pupils on entering the school are close to the national average. Pupils' attainment and progress is satisfactory and they have shown considerable improvement recently. Teaching is consistently good and pupils' attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good. Taking all these factors into consideration the school provides good value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

65 By the end of the key stage, standards of attainment in English are judged to be broadly in line with national averages and standards across the school mostly meet age-related expectations. Attainment in 1998 and the previous two years, as measured by end of key stage tests, was well below national averages but the unconfirmed figures for 1999 tests indicate that attainment is now in line with national averages. This represents a significant improvement and is generally confirmed by evidence from scrutiny of pupils' recent and current work, direct observations of on-going work in lessons and talking to pupils about their work in English. There remain significant gender differences, with girls consistently out-performing boys but the inspection evidence suggests a narrower gap in performance than previously. Attainment varies between the different aspects of English as described below.

66 Attainment in listening is good and pupils throughout the school can listen attentively to adults and their peers. They answer questions in ways which show that they have understood and thought about what has been said, not just in English lessons but across the whole curriculum range. Their oracy skills are less well developed but are mostly satisfactory and there is evidence in some classes, particularly Year 6, that some are becoming mature and thoughtful speakers. In shared text work and guided reading pupils showed good speaking abilities when comparing and contrasting the work and lives of two authors. Overall, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to present information orally to an audience or to engage in debates where they are expected to offer opinions and respond to other speakers with increasing levels of confidence. There is some evidence of useful oracy work in other subjects, such as religious education. Progress is mostly satisfactory and often good for pupils with special educational needs as they take part in whole class oral work during the literacy hours.

67 By the end of the key stage, levels of attainment in reading are average although attainment is variable across the different aspects of reading. Pupils generally have good information retrieval skills, can find appropriate books within the library with ease and make efficient and effective use of a dictionary or thesaurus. They work well with the shared reading, guided reading and text level work in the literacy hours and pupils, including those with special educational needs, often make very good progress. Younger pupils are beginning to respond to different texts and Year 3 pupils showed a good understanding of the ideas and themes in a simple play about Theseus, while Year 5 pupils could identify different types of poetry and able pupils could talk about the characteristics of some challenging poems by Kit Wright.

68 Pupils' progress in individual reading is variable and sometimes unsatisfactory. When given free choice of books to read in class and to take home, they frequently choose books that are not well matched to their stage of reading development. However, by the end of their time in school, many pupils are fluent, expressive readers who can express tastes in reading and offer opinions about the books they have read and a range of authors.

69 In writing pupils' abilities to organise short pieces of work and exercises in grammar and punctuation are average, they mostly work diligently in literacy lessons and produce creditable amounts of work within the constraints of limited time. Pupils in Year 6 are able to write in impressive style, incorporating a range of conjunctions and very effective adjectives but there are currently insufficient planned opportunities for them to write in extended narrative form both in English and in other areas of the curriculum. As pupils move through the school, there is clear progress in their handwriting skills and they are encouraged to take care with presentation although standards are variable in this respect between classes. In Year 6, the teachers have high expectations and this is reflected in the quality of the pupils presentation of their work.

70 Pupils have very good attitudes and in some literacy lessons their levels of enthusiasm and engagement with the well targeted and challenging work ensure very good progress is made. They mostly have sound cooperative abilities and can work well in pairs and small groups and in whole class sessions show respect for the contributions of others. Pupils with special educational needs mostly make good progress in English and experience good levels of support and access to the full curriculum. Behaviour in lessons is often lively and responsive and rarely inappropriate.

71 The quality of teaching in English is good with the majority of lessons being either well taught or very well taught. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The best teaching is well planned, with detail as to what each group will learn, maintains a lively pace, has high expectations of pupils reflected in the challenging use of questions and this ensures that pupils make very good progress in these lessons. Most of the lessons in Year 4 and 6 reflected these qualities. In Year 3 the management of group reading tasks is not always successful in ensuring all pupils maintain their concentration and progress in these parts of the lessons is not as good as in the class shared reading and plenary sessions. Teachers are increasingly knowledgeable about the Literacy Framework and its implementation is clearly having a significant and positive effect on the range and rigour of the English curriculum. However, overall, subject coherence is not yet secure and there is a need to audit and evaluate current programming to ensure efficient use of the time available within the week and exploit the possibilities for English in other subject areas. Homework currently makes a limited contribution to pupil attainment, mainly through work in spelling. Assessment and recording practice is satisfactory and summative records are completed termly. Their use to improve individual progress and target setting is underdeveloped.

72 The quality of leadership in the subject is very good and the coordinator has very effectively supported the introduction and implementation of the Literacy Strategy with the help of an able and committed staff. There has been some monitoring and evaluation of the subject, analysis of attainment outcomes and subsequent targeting of reading comprehension skills which has had a clear impact on standards. There is planned review of the policy and the school plans further strategic audit and analysis of current practice to inform priorities and development planning. Time and available resources are very well used to support teaching and learning in literacy. The school has taken part in the Eckington Literacy Project which targeted last year's low attaining Year 6 pupils and this year the Additional Literacy Strategy is having a positive impact on the attainment of younger pupils.

Mathematics

73 The test results for this year showed a marked improvement over those for previous years. They had been well below those found in schools nationally and in similar schools but the gains made have raised standards to above the national average and they are now comparable with those in similar schools. The improvements have been sustained and the inspection findings are that pupils' achievement is broadly in line with national expectations, which is better than at the time of the last inspection.

74 By the time pupils are in their last year in the school their knowledge and understanding is broadly based across the different aspects of mathematics and is developing at appropriate levels within the numeracy framework. They are confident and skilled in mental arithmetic as a result of the teachers' emphasis on exploring strategies within realistic situations, as well as quick recall sessions. In several Year 6 lessons, for example, pupils are encouraged to simplify complex problems in order to solve them. Most pupils make use of rounding when estimating answers to support effective use of calculators, can order fractions, understand simple percentages and decimal notation but are less confident in identifying patterns in number sequences. Their knowledge of tables is often good but some pupils do not always apply this knowledge accurately when undertaking complex multiplication and division calculations. Most pupils have good habits in mathematics and check their answers using, for example, reverse operations. Pupils' understanding of data handling is developing well in the current series of lessons and many clearly understand what means, modes and medians are. Some are able to decide on appropriate frequency intervals when presenting data graphically. Measures for weight and length are chosen appropriately for different objects and Year 6 pupils have a sound knowledge both two and three-dimensional shapes and their properties such as symmetry and the different angles within them.

75 The progress that pupils make is satisfactory overall but varies between classes and often depends on the teachers' confidence in teaching the new framework for numeracy. Progress in lessons is best when teachers match the challenge well to the appropriate year in the National Numeracy Framework and do not rely too much on the schools mathematics scheme for the content of lessons. This was seen in lessons in Year 6 and in some lessons in Year 4. Here the teachers had very clear learning objectives, which they often shared with the pupils (a feature of all the lessons in Year 6) and provided pace lessons that challenged the pupils to think mathematically, for example, by choosing operations and explaining what they were doing. In one particularly good lesson in Year 4, there were very clear objectives for each of the different groups in the class and tasks for each were very well prepared and matched to the pupils needs. This enabled pupils across the range of attainment to make very good progress in their learning

about the properties of regular and irregular shapes and to successfully built on their mental facility with numbers. In a Year 5 lesson that relied too much on the mathematics scheme for the planning of group work, the mental session was lively and challenging and made good use of digit cards to develop quick recall skills, which the school has identified as an area of weakness. The plenary session was used well to consolidate pupils' understanding of decimal place values. Progress is most rapid in Year 6, where the teachers practise of sharing the learning objectives for each lesson with the pupils is very successful in ensuring that they focus their attention and thinking and this in turn often supports good and sometimes very good progress in learning. Lessons in Year 6 are particularly well planned and prepared. Teachers purposefully challenge pupils to analyse problems and identify key elements and then to make thoughtful decisions as to how they will tackle them. This approach is a positive feature of lesson introductions and compliments well the more pacy recall sessions. Another strong feature of the good teaching in this year group is the consistent use of mathematical language, both in discussions and questioning and in the displays of key words for lessons. This is successfully enabling pupils to develop an appropriate technical vocabulary for the subject. Teachers here also use a range of different resources to support their teaching and only use the old mathematics scheme if it meets the planned learning for the lesson. Challenging work sheets and practical activities that are well matched to range of attainment in the class are provided, as seen in the data handling work. Satisfactory but less rapid progress was found in Year 3 and one Year 4 class where the level of challenge in the lessons was pitched too low, often using elements from the previous years programme for numeracy. This sometimes resulted from an over-reliance on the mathematics scheme which does not consistently reflect the demands of the numeracy framework. Teachers here do not always look closely enough at the specific aspects of mathematical topics that should be taught to their year group.

76 Pupils' behaviour, involvement and interest in lessons is almost always good and is particularly so in the upper key stage where lessons are often more demanding. This reflects the good relationships and effective strategies for managing behaviour that most teachers have. Just occasionally, when a teacher did not consistently address calling out and chattering, the involvement of a minority of pupils could have been better and they could have made more progress than they did. Teaching is good and during the inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen although there are weaknesses in teachers' knowledge that sometimes limits progress as described above.

77 A sound start has been made in implementing the numeracy framework, which provides a broad and balanced curriculum with mostly good progression beginning to emerge across the school. Care has been taken to ensure that weaknesses that the school has identified, such as mental arithmetic are being addressed. Appropriate assessment and associated records that show pupils progress in numeracy have not yet been developed. The current approach is helpful but does not provide sufficient detail about pupils' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics, nor does it provide a reliable record of what has been covered in the curriculum. Although the coordinator was absent during the inspection, the subject is being satisfactorily led. Some monitoring of the effectiveness of the teaching of mental arithmetic has been undertaken and there are plans to monitor the implementation of numeracy. So far there has only been a small amount of training related to numeracy and some of the weaknesses identified in teaching should start to be addressed as more staff development is undertaken.

Science

78 Standards in science have improved significantly and the school has successfully addressed all the weaknesses identified in the previous report. Results in the national tests for 11 year olds have consistently been well below average until this year when the number of pupils achieving the expected levels almost doubled. The school's results are now in line with national average. A significant proportion of 11 year olds achieved the higher level 5 in the 1999 tests. The inspection shows that the school is in a strong position to sustain this improvement, with a good proportion of pupils working within level 5. In the past, girls have performed significantly better than boys in the tests. This is less evident in the most recent results and in pupils' current work and there is now no significant difference in the progress shown by boys and girls through the school.

79 The improvement in standards reflects the increased time allocated to science, which is now taught as a separate subject. Staff training has improved teachers' subject knowledge and the recently adopted scheme of work is beginning to improve progression and continuity. Last year, Year 6 teachers rightly identified the need to prepare pupils for the test situation by revising material covered in previous years and ensuring that they could understand and use scientific terminology. As a result, attainment in science when pupils leave the school is now in line with national expectations.

80 By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils can identify the conditions necessary for life. They know the names and functions of major body and plant parts and can describe food chains and habitats. Higher attaining pupils can explain the effect of different environments on living things. Knowledge and understanding of materials and their properties are sound. Most pupils can identify solids, liquids and gases and describe the effects of heating and cooling. A smaller number of pupils know the difference between solutions and suspensions and the ways that mixtures can be separated, but most cannot compare the properties of different materials in their real world applications.

81 Pupils have a good understanding of simple electrical circuits and by Year 6 they can draw and change circuits using standard symbols correctly. They can explain the effects of gravity and know how to measure force and weight. Pupils have a secure understanding of what makes a fair test and most 11 year olds can predict the outcome of an investigation using their existing knowledge well.

82 Pupils make sound progress through the school. Progress in Year 3 is slower because lessons do not always build on what pupils already know and there is some unsatisfactory teaching. Year 3 pupils learn to observe carefully and begin to identify the difference between a fair and an unfair test. In Year 4, pupils can predict with increasing confidence what might happen in an investigation. They can apply their existing knowledge to unfamiliar situations, for example when thinking about the habitats needed by different minibeasts if they are to survive. Pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6 in the recording of their investigations and in the quality of presentation of their work. A strength in the teaching in Year 6 is the opportunities provided for pupils to write or talk about their findings in their own ways. In one example, the pupils themselves were confident enough to ask their own questions in order to understand the work better.

83 The progress made in lessons is often good because teaching has clear objectives and the methods used encourage pupils to think for themselves. Higher and lower attaining pupils generally make the expected progress because tasks are well-designed and in some classes, groups are effectively identified to support pupils with special educational needs.

84 Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject. They enjoy science lessons and behave sensibly, treating equipment carefully and safely. A major strength in many lessons is the way pupils work together in pairs and small groups. Sometimes they choose partners for themselves, but even when the teacher decides for them, for example to ensure that boys and girls work together, they work sensibly, taking turns and listening to each other. In Years 5 and 6 they take increasing pride in the presentation of their work which, by the time they leave the school, can be of a consistently good standard. In almost all classes, pupils work independently when asked, completing the tasks as requested. Older pupils need more opportunity to design investigations for themselves.

85 Teaching overall is good, although there is some variation between classes. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when half the teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers now have a secure understanding of the subject and of national curriculum requirements. There is evidence that, with the adoption of a new scheme of work, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve, particularly in the way that practical investigations are integrated in many lessons. Expectations are generally high and, in most classes, teachers' own enthusiasm is communicated to the pupils who respond positively to the praise and encouragement they receive. Time is used very well, both in classes that have one long science lesson each week and in those that plan two shorter, linked lessons. Homework is occasionally planned to enhance the learning, as in the year group where pupils were asked to investigate how much water is used in their own homes, but generally this is not frequent enough to further raise standards.

86 Where teaching is less effective, including the one unsatisfactory lesson in Year 3, weaknesses in the organisation of the lessons and management of the pupils resulted in them not settling quickly to their work. The pupils could not see a vital demonstration and so they did not know exactly what to do before they started the investigation.

87 The co-ordinator provides good leadership for the subject. She has been instrumental in the improvements made since the last inspection and recent visits to observe other classes have increased her understanding of current strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Assessment is now sound, although information gained through ongoing

teacher assessment and tests is insufficiently used to inform the medium term planning.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Information and communications technology (ICT)

88 During the inspection it was only possible to observe a small amount teaching of ICT. However, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of their work and observations of them using computers and other ICT devices demonstrate achievement at least as good as pupils in other schools and that their skills are more broadly based than is usually found. By Year 6, pupils have developed satisfactory independence in using computers. They can launch programs, save and print their files and use a range of editing and formatting features to present good quality work. A number of these pupils are unsure about how to cut and paste work within their documents. Examples of what they have done show the ability to incorporate pictures into text documents and to resize them as needed. Although not very sure as to the nature of databases, pupils in Year 6 can describe how they have searched for information and used databases to make graphs. They do not know the technical terms, such as records and fields that are used when handling information in database programs. Most have a sound understanding of the Internet and made use of it to find information on the artist Escher to support their work in class. In music, they have used a composition program to produce and modify their own pieces of music to represent different moods.

89 Too little teaching was observed to make any overall judgement on its quality, however, progress was very good when pupils were directly taught ICT skills. This was the case when Year 3 pupils were being taught how to control the Roamer, a programmable robot. The teacher's very good subject knowledge ensured pupils were given very clear and well structured explanations and activities that enabled them to make such good progress that by the end of the lesson they were able to program the Roamer to move around a simple course and stop at a predefined point. In another lesson, Year 4 pupils, who were being introduced to LOGO, could write procedures to draw patterns based on rotating squares by the end of their lesson. At other times pupils were seen being given opportunities to practice their skills, for example, during supervised break times in the library, as well as when they were asked to do their work on the computer in other subjects. These sessions enable them to successfully consolidate their learning. Pupils enjoy using computers and related equipment and they work sensibly and carefully with them.

90 The school's curriculum for ICT is broad and well balanced and extra curricular opportunities enhance the access to learning in this core skill. The long term planning provides sound progression and is informed by the national model scheme of work. The school has recently benefited from the National Grid for Learning initiative which has enabled it to establish a small network in the library that enhances the sound basic provision the school already had. Resources are well organised by the coordinator and his leadership and skills are beginning to have a very positive impact on pupils' learning now that the disruption caused by the building work has eased.

Religious Education

91 Only two lessons were observed in religious education because of the structure of the timetable. Judgements about standards at the end of the key stage are based on discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work. Overall attainment at the end of the key stage is below expectations because few pupils have secure knowledge of what they have been taught. Most have a sound understanding of the diversity of, and the basic characteristics of, religious belief. They can name some of the religions they have studied in school, such as Hinduism, and Judaism, but have forgotten others such as Islam. They know that most religions worship one god but that Hinduism has many gods and they understand that religions provide explanations for humankind's existence and the creation of the Earth. They also know that believers pray both to worship their god and to ask for help. Most know that each religion has its own special places for worship and holy books but their knowledge of the names and features of these for particular religions is often poor as is their knowledge and understanding of the practices and festivals of each religion. For example, most cannot name the place of worship of Muslims or Jews or the rituals associated with Islamic prayer. Similarly, their knowledge of symbolism is superficial. Higher attaining pupils can describe what significance the cross and bread and water have for Christians but all struggle to provide examples of symbolism in other religions. The more recent work that pupils have covered on special people, such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela, is more secure.

92 Overall, progress is unsatisfactory despite a broad curriculum that is based satisfactorily on the locally agreed syllabus. This is because insufficient emphasis is placed on reinforcing and consolidating key concepts and

knowledge in religious education. Much of the pupils' work across the school consists of copying activities and many opportunities for pupils to find out, record for themselves and reflect on their learning are missed. Too little teaching was seen to make an overall judgement on its effectiveness. In the lessons that were seen, pupils did make at least satisfactory progress in achieving the lessons' objectives and in adding to their existing knowledge and understanding of the nature of the bible. The teachers made effective use of a well chosen video to develop facts about and understanding of the nature of the Bible and its significance to Christians. Well focussed questions were asked at key points in the video to develop the lessons objectives and a lively pace was maintained in both lessons which ensured that the pupils retained their interest and involvement.

93 The coordinator manages resources effectively and is gradually building up a suitable range of materials to support teaching. At present, there is little monitoring of what pupils are being taught or of the quality of their learning. The brief policy for religious education does not provide much guidance to teachers and planning of the curriculum in the absence of a scheme of work is the accumulated medium term planning of teachers based on the topics identified for each year group. In practice this provides a sound curriculum but the release of the local authority's new agreed syllabus would be a good time for the school to develop a scheme of work based on these new requirements.

Art

94 On the limited evidence available from lesson observation and scrutiny of pupils' work in art it is not possible to make a secure judgement about progress across the different aspects of the subject. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to produce water colour paintings, are beginning to show understanding of perspective and can reflect on their work and talk about ways in which it might be improved. Younger pupils are able to talk about and compare some features of the work of famous artists.

95 The coordinators have strong subject expertise and a clear sense of direction for the art curriculum, such that when priorities allow, there is significant potential for development. Resources are satisfactory and work around the school reflects pupils' experiences using an appropriate range of media and of work in different subject areas.

Design and technology

96 Due to timetable restrictions only one design and technology lesson was observed during the inspection. Discussions with pupils, scrutiny of past work and an examination of displays in classrooms and communal areas indicate that pupils make insufficient progress through the school. This is predominantly because too little time is allocated to the subject restricting the range of materials used and slowing the acquisition of designing and making skills.

97 Pupils make satisfactory progress in the use of paper and card. In Year 3, pupils can cut and score card to make a container, having first disassembled real packaging to see how it is made. Some higher attaining pupils can draw their own nets, but most pupils need to use a template provided by the teacher. In Year 4, these skills are further developed to make a moving model using linkages with card and metal fasteners. Older pupils enjoy using their cutting and joining skills to make and illustrate their own pop-up books.

98 Progress in using resistant materials, fabrics and threads and food technology is unsatisfactory because pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to build up their knowledge and skill over time. The curriculum has been affected by the recently completed building work and the school now has better facilities for cooking. Pupils in Year 5 make sound progress in measuring, cutting and joining wood battens accurately and in solving problems when fixing cams to make a Victorian toy. They learn to modify their designs in the light of experience and to evaluate what they might do differently another time.

99 Pupils enjoy design and technology lessons, which are often linked to art and to the class topic. They work well together and learn to use tools safely, for example when sawing wood. Pupils are proud of the finished products, which as they get older may have taken several weeks to complete. They particular enjoy using vivid colours and designs when finishing their work.

100 No overall judgement is made about the quality of teaching. Planning shows a secure understanding of the

national curriculum based on the QCA scheme of work, modified to fit in with the school's topic cycle. The topic approach allows useful links to be made with other subjects, for example taking apart and making cardboard containers within a science topic about materials. In view of the limited time allocated, more attention needs to be given to agreeing a manageable list of designing and making skills to be covered by each year group. Some teachers make very positive use of interactive displays to show what pupils have made and promote interest in the subject.

History and geography

101 Only two history lessons and one geography lesson were observed during the inspection. Analysis of previous work, discussion with pupils and scrutiny of teachers' planning indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress in both subjects. This maintains the picture found in the previous inspection where pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding were generally in line with national expectations.

102 Topics such as "The Romans" or "India" are studied for a block of several weeks providing an appropriate balance between the two subjects each year. Pupils acquire a good knowledge of the periods and places studied. For example in Year 4 they find out about life in Ancient Greece when looking at photographs of Greek pottery. They learn to distinguish myths, legends and factual information. By Year 6 pupils know about major historical periods and most can position them accurately on a time line. In geography, pupils make satisfactory progress in using maps. Most Year 6 pupils can locate key features on a map of the United Kingdom and of the World. For instance, they know that the world is largely covered by water and can name and find many of the main oceans and seas. They can describe the water cycle and compare climates. As they get older pupils can compare different places and time periods with their own lives. Higher attaining pupils show a good empathy, for example in the life of a Victorian school child and all pupils remember the visits associated with the Victorian topic, including the 125th "birthday" of the school building.

103 Most pupils make satisfactory progress in acquiring and using key skills in history and geography but there are some significant gaps. They learn to recognise different sources of historical information, for example through archaeology or by reading contemporary diaries. Older pupils need more opportunity to compare interpretations of the past and to use historical artefacts to build understanding of the process of historical enquiry. Good provision is made in Year 5 for pupils to use reference material, including the computer, to undertake a personal study into a famous Victorian person they themselves have chosen. In geography, there is insufficient opportunity to develop fieldwork skills to collect and record a range of evidence about their own locality. Sometimes, not enough is expected of the brighter pupils.

104 Pupils have positive attitudes to both subjects. They can recall topics enthusiastically, reflecting the interest shown by their teachers. Presentation in the younger classes is often untidy, but most pupils make satisfactory progress through the school showing increasing pride in the finished booklets. Some topics books are completed with a contents page and a review of what has been learned, but generally, there are too few opportunities for extended writing or personal study, particularly for the higher attaining pupils.

105 No overall judgement is made about teaching because of the small number of lessons observed. Planning is detailed and follows the recently adopted schemes of work. Teachers in parallel classes plan together effectively, ensuring consistency and the sharing of good ideas and resources. Opportunities are missed, however, for pupils from parallel classes to share their findings and discoveries with each other. Teachers use praise effectively, both in lessons and in the positive marking of work. Resources, such as video and photographs are used well, but not enough use is made of first hand experience to develop pupils' observational skills.

106 Curriculum coverage is monitored informally by co-ordinators. Assessments made at the end of each topic are limited to a list of key facts. These do not provide information about pupils' development of core skills and therefore give little basis for teachers' future planning.

Music

107 Within the limited range of music seen in lessons during the inspection, standards of attainment are close to national expectations in listening and appraising, although their abilities in performing and composition are less well developed. By the end of the key stage, pupils are able to respond to pieces of music and identify changes in

character and mood and can recognise how the composer has used some of the musical elements, such as dynamics, timbre and tempo, to create an effect. Year 6 pupils have examined different television themes and are able to use appropriate musical vocabulary to compare, contrast and comment on their suitability for a particular kind of programme. In Year 5, pupils are able to create a short four bar composition, record it using simple notation and play it for their friends.

108 Pupils mostly enjoy musical activities and make reasonable progress. The quality of teaching in lessons is mostly good and two pupils benefit from the opportunities for bought instrumental tuition.

109 Planning and resourcing are satisfactory but subject coherence is limited by the lack of expertise and leadership and there are currently too few opportunities for singing. The school acknowledges the need to further develop the music curriculum.

Physical Education

110 Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills and understanding as they move through the school. The physical education curriculum is well balanced and pupils experience dance, gymnastics, games, athletics and swimming and many benefit from the extra curricular opportunities that are provided, for example competing in a local cricket competition organised by the school.

111 By Year 6, pupils show good understanding of tactics in games situations. When playing games including handball and hockey they drew opponents out of position, looked for space in order to receive passes and closed opponents down when they had the ball. They often showed good levels of technique. This reflected the teacher's confident subject knowledge and very clear teaching of skills, such as making accurate chest passes in matball. In Year 5, pupils are able to develop and refine sequences of movement using the floor and items of apparatus. Their progress in the lesson seen was helped by the teacher successfully encouraging them to evaluate each others efforts and the lively pace that was maintained throughout the session, although the uneven size of groups limited the access of some pupils to the apparatus. In Year 4, many pupils demonstrated good coordination and controlled movement when responding to the rhythm and dynamics of a musical stimulus. The pace in one of the two lessons observed was better with more effective use being made of the tape recorded lesson which led to fewer interruptions to the flow of the session, while still ensuring that teaching points were clearly made. This resulted in good progress being made in this lesson. Many pupils in Year 3 are able to keep a football under control when running with it and show appropriate awareness of space, however the progress made by a small number of pupils in the lesson seen was barely satisfactory because the teacher did not develop teaching points that would have ensured that pupils were consistently involved and on task. Almost all pupils leaving the school have achieved the required levels of competence in swimming and water safety.

112 In almost all lessons, pupils have positive attitudes, behave well and, as they grow older, show a good understanding of sportsmanship and the need for the consistent application of rules within games. This reflects teaching that was never less than satisfactory and was sometimes, particularly in Year 6, very well structured and challenging. In almost all lessons teachers ensured that all pupils were fully involved and interested. A good feature of all the teaching seen was the emphasis placed on evaluating performance. This had a positive impact on improving the quality of pupils' work. The school's accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory because of the small hall and the limited space in the main playground. There could be helpful markings on the hard play area to support the organisation of games sessions.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

113 During the inspection:

- 47 lessons or parts of lessons were observed;
- four acts of collective worship were observed;
- pupils from each class were assessed in their reading;
- discussions were held with pupils at the end of each key stage to assess their knowledge and understanding in mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, history, geography and religious education;
- lunchtimes and playtimes were observed and many informal conversations were held with pupils about their life in school;
- samples of pupils' work from across the range of attainment and from across the school were examined;
- discussions were held with teaching and support staff about their roles in school;
- school documentation and planning were evaluated;
- three governors were interviewed about their involvement and roles in managing the school;
- parents were asked about their views of the school, through the use of a questionnaire and at a meeting;
- attendance registers were examined.

DATA AND INDICATORS

Pupil data

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y3 – Y6	243	4	74	32

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27

Education support staff

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week	67

Average class size:

30.4

Financial data

Financial year:	1998-99
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	£
Total Income	317,037
Total Expenditure	322,230
Expenditure per pupil	1,337
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,234
Balance carried forward to next year	7,041

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

243

Number of questionnaires returned:

100

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	20	72	7	0	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	30	61	4	5	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	11	57	23	10	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	14	73	11	2	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	22	68	8	1	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	25	65	10	0	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	62	15	1	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	19	67	7	4	2
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	21	60	19	1	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	21	56	18	5	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	35	60	3	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

Please refer to the Main Findings section.