

INSPECTION REPORT

BLACKMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Blackmore, Ingatestone

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114929

Headteacher: Mrs S Pritchard

Reporting inspector: Mr P H Cole
2616

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd May 2002

Inspection number: 197166

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4 to 11 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Nine Ashes Road
Blackmore
Ingatestone
Essex

Postcode: CM4 0QR

Telephone number: 01277 821528

Fax number: 01277 821394

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs F Lawrence

Date of previous inspection: 9 June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2616	P H Cole	Registered inspector	Science Information and communication technology Art and design Foundation Stage Equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14404	A Rolfe	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29262	N Hardy	Team inspector	English Music Physical education Religious education	How well does the school care for its pupils?
4303	S Reynolds	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography History Special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Peak Education Partnership
19 Huddersfield Road
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 2LT

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	14
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Blackmore Primary is a small school with 139 pupils on roll. It serves the village and the surrounding rural area. There is a similar number of boys and girls and almost all of them come from white backgrounds and no pupil speaks English as an additional language. Eleven pupils come from travellers families. Twenty-five pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs and two of these have statements to support them. Most of the special educational needs are related to learning difficulties. This is a typical proportion of special educational needs for a primary school. Although many of the pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds the assessments made when they start school show attainment that is broadly average. There are more higher attaining and more lower attaining pupils in each year group than is usually found, which reflects the varied nature of the community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a satisfactory school that has improved considerably as a result of the new headteacher's effective leadership. It is well placed to continue to improve. Pupils are achieving satisfactory standards by the time they leave the school, reflecting teaching that is satisfactory overall. Despite the higher than usual costs found in small schools it provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Children in reception achieve well and pupils in Year 1 and 2 achieve well in many subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and are positive about school.
- The headteacher and governors lead and manage the school well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and particularly their social development well.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities for a small school.

What could be improved

- The planning of what pupils will be learning does not take sufficient account of the needs of different age groups and sometimes pupils are not stretched enough in junior classes.
- Information from assessment of what pupils know and can do is not yet effectively used in infant and junior classes to help teachers plan what pupils need to learn next.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in tackling the many weaknesses identified by the last inspection in June 1997. Almost all of these improvements have taken place in the last two years since the present headteacher was appointed. Teachers are now much more confident about teaching information and communication technology (ICT), design and technology and children in the early years of education. Their planning for lessons is now supported by schemes of work that ensure better coverage of the National Curriculum and

the needs of youngest pupils are now much more effectively provided for. Appropriate assessment practices have been introduced and these are beginning to be used to match work to the needs of different groups in each class but more can be done to make this more effective. Many aspects of the leadership and management have improved considerably: the governors now play a full role, the planning of school development is now good and the headteacher monitors standards and the quality of education provided in the school. Standards in ICT, design and technology, history and geography have all improved.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The numbers of pupils taking the national tests at Blackmore are small and this leads to considerable variation in each year's results, as just one or two pupils' results can have a disproportionate effect of the overall picture. Until 2001, results at the school had been improving at a faster rate than those nationally and the school had received an award to acknowledge this. The results in 2001 look to be poor, particularly in science where they were in the bottom five percent of similar schools, based on entitlement to free school meals. However, the school lost many pupils after its unfavourable Ofsted report in 1997 and when the results, of the pupils who took the Year 6 tests in 2001 and were also tested in the school in Year 2, are analysed they show achievement in line with the average in English and mathematics but still below average in science. The 2001 results did not meet the school's targets and were depressed by the results of pupils with special educational needs, who were admitted into the year group after the targets had been set. The results in the Year 2 national tests, taken over three years to even out the variation found with small year groups, have been broadly average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. As in Year 6 they have been improving at a faster rate than those in schools across the country.

The inspection found good standards in speaking and listening and reading in both Year 2 and Year 6 and also in Year 2 in writing. Standards in ICT and art are good across the school and Year 2 pupils are also achieving well in geography and history. Pupils swim well. The children in reception are making good progress in all areas of learning and are achieving above expectations. Overall, pupils are achieving well in reception and by Year 2 and satisfactorily by Year 6. This reflects greater strengths in the teaching of the younger pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
--------	---------

Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils are keen and enthusiastic in most lessons and enjoy joining in the many school clubs and out of class activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, in class, during break times and around school.
Personal development and relationships	Good; pupils get on well with each other, respect others' views, willingly accept responsibility and show initiative.
Attendance	Good, above average.

Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour form a strong foundation on which their learning can be built. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds and mix well in class and when playing, although occasionally some are reluctant to work in mixed gender groups.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching overall is satisfactory, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. A strength across the school is teachers making clear to pupils what they will be learning in each lesson. This is successful in helping the pupils to work purposefully towards the same goals as their teachers. Class support assistants are used effectively to support those pupils who have special educational needs and this contributes well to the good progress they make but there are times, for example during whole-class sessions, when class support assistants sit and listen to the teacher and could be used more productively. The teaching of the reception age children is consistently strong. At this stage a good balance is maintained between well-taught sessions led by the teacher and thoughtful, well planned, prepared and supported opportunities for the children to learn through play.

A range of features characterise the good teaching found in different teachers' lessons in other classes. These include imaginative approaches that challenge and interest pupils, such as discussing the advantages and disadvantages of developing tourism from different people's standpoints; knowledgeable explanations; developing a very positive ethos for learning; and using resources well. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully adopted and ensure that the teaching of English is often good and the teaching of mathematics is consistently satisfactory. In English, teachers use their assessments of how well pupils are doing, for example when marking their work, more effectively than in mathematics to fine tune pupils' learning and to help them understand what they need to do to improve. Marking in Years 1 and 2 is usually more helpful to pupils than it is in the classes for the older pupils. When planning lessons teachers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not always take enough account of the different ages and levels of attainment in their classes and more able pupils are not consistently challenged by the work they are given. Pupils respond well to the positive relationships promoted by all teachers and almost always apply themselves well in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, with strengths in provision made for children in reception and in the quality and range of extra-curricular clubs and activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Well organised, and pupils are given effective support in class.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school currently has no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Good overall, and very good provision is made for pupils' social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils' physical, emotional and social needs are well looked after. More use could be made of the useful assessment information that is collected to support their learning.

The school benefits from a very active Parent Teacher Association that raises significant funds, provides practical help with developments, and organises many well-attended social events. Parental help in class is limited because of parents' work commitments, although the school's positive approach to homework gives them many opportunities to contribute to their children's learning. The school works hard to encourage pupils' personal development, and initiatives such as the school council and residential visits very effectively promote their social development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher, with good support from the senior teacher, leads and manages the school well. There is a strong emphasis on improving the school and on positive teamwork.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They have good levels of involvement in planning developments and in overseeing the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory; appropriate strategies are used or are being developed.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of funds for special educational needs and its budget, and has used grants for developing ICT well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school and in a relatively short time has tackled many long-standing weaknesses. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and effective in their work. Overall, teachers lead and manage their subject areas satisfactorily through their support of colleagues and their involvement in planning developments. The school analyses and evaluates its effectiveness but the benefits of this work have yet to make their full impact. Good quality accommodation and facilities, such as the swimming pool, library and the new ICT suite, enhance learning opportunities. The good staffing levels in class and for administrative support contribute well to learning and the smooth running of the school. The principles of best value are used effectively to inform how the budget will be used.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pupils make good progress. • Behaviour is good and pupils work hard and enjoy school. • There is a good range of clubs. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small number were not satisfied with the regularity of homework. • A few parents thought the school could work more closely with them.

The inspectors agree with most of the strengths identified by parents. Progress made by many children in reception and infant classes and by those with special educational needs is good and is satisfactory for most other pupils. The amount and regularity of homework found in pupils' books are appropriate and inspectors believe that overall, the school does work effectively with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 As in all schools with small numbers of pupils being tested, results can show considerable variation from year to year depending on the make-up of each cohort. This is the case at Blackmore although the overall trend over time, until 2001, had been one of improvement with results being broadly in line with the national averages for English, mathematics and science. The 2001 test for Year 6 pupils compared very unfavourably, particularly in science, with those in all schools and with the average for similar schools, based on free school meals entitlement. The official comparison with how well the pupils achieved in Year 6 compared to how well they achieved in Year 2 was also poor. However, a number of factors have contributed to these results. The school lost many pupils after its last inspection and when the results of the pupils who took both the Year 2 and Year 6 tests in the school are examined then pupils achieved satisfactory results in English and mathematics but still below what was expected in science. The 2001 results were also depressed by the results of two pupils with special educational needs who were admitted in Year 5 and tested in Year 6. This also contributed to the school failing to achieve the formal targets set for Year 6 in 2001. The Year 2 results have also shown variation from year to year because of the small cohort sizes. Over time they have been just above the national average in reading, above in writing and just below the average in mathematics, and have been improving a faster rate than nationally.

2 The inspection found standards to be in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science by Year 6 and by Year 2 to be above expectations in English and in line with expectations in mathematics and science. In English, pupils across the school show good speaking and listening skills with Year 2 pupils giving detailed answers to questions and Year 6 pupils making effective use of a wide range of vocabulary during class discussions. Pupils read well. By Year 2 many use phonics well and read with expression and by Year 6 pupils have good fluency and find information effectively, and many are developing higher order skills such as skimming and scanning. Most Year 2 pupils write consistently in sentences and use words thoughtfully in their work. By Year 6 most pupils have attained the expected level 4 but few have been challenged to work at the higher level 5 or extend their ideas in longer pieces of text. In mathematics, pupils' ability to calculate in their heads has improved since the last inspection and is now in line with expectations. Their attainment is well balanced across the different aspects of mathematics although more able pupils do not often demonstrate the higher levels of attainment. Standards in science are broadly based and pupils show sound knowledge and understanding across the strands of the subject. Pupils in Year 2 are able to observe and measure when engaged in practical work and are beginning to understand the nature of a scientific test. However, by Year 6 they have not built sufficiently on this sound start and their skills in conducting scientific investigations are weaker than their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes.

3 Pupils are currently achieving above expectations in art, geography, history and ICT by Year 2 and above expectations in art and ICT by Year 6. All pupils have the regular swimming lessons in the school's own pool and standards in swimming are good. Pupils in the reception follow the Foundation Stage curriculum and are achieving above expectations in all the areas of learning, except for the physical development where there was not enough evidence for a judgement to be made.

4 Pupils with special educational needs are given effective, focused support in class which enables them to access the same learning as other pupils as they work towards their own learning targets. They make good progress and are achieving well. The travellers' children make similar progress to other pupils but many are in lower attaining groups or have special educational needs and overall they are achieving satisfactorily.

5 Since the last inspection weaknesses in design and technology, history, geography and ICT have been tackled successfully, most notably in ICT where they are now above expectations. Overall, pupils are now achieving well in reception and by Year 2, and satisfactorily by Year 6.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6 Pupils' attitudes to learning, their behaviour, relationships and personal development are all good. This represents an improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour since the last inspection. All these factors have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

7 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Informal discussions with pupils indicate that they have good attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school, and almost all participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. These positive attitudes are reflected in the classroom. The majority of pupils are interested in what they are doing and take an active part in their learning. They co-operate well with their teachers and show good levels of interest and enthusiasm in their work. They listen carefully to their teachers' instructions, maintain their concentration for appropriate periods of time and are keen and eager to contribute to classroom discussions. In many lessons pupils showed the ability to work well together; for example, in a Years 5 and 6 geography lesson pupils were developing and discussing arguments for and against the building of a holiday complex on the Isle of Wight. They maintained their concentration throughout the lesson, and gave mature consideration to the views and opinions of their peers, and therefore made good progress in the lesson. However, occasionally boys and girls can be reluctant to work together on tasks. This was seen in a lower junior class design and technology lesson. Most pupils take a pride in their work, and are willing and able to talk about their work and explain their ideas to inspectors. Pupils with special educational needs generally show good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school.

8 The standard of behaviour is good. In the majority of lessons seen behaviour was good and on occasions very good. For example, in a Years 4 and 5 personal and social education lesson, pupils were developing classroom rules to regulate behaviour; they approached this task in a mature and responsible manner. They listened carefully and respectfully to views of other class members, and this helped them to understand the need for sensible behaviour. Almost all pupils are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. They like the school systems of rewards and readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to poor behaviour. Outside lessons pupils interact well together, before and after school, and at lunchtimes and breaks they play and socialise well together without any signs of rowdy or boisterous behaviour. Pupils are polite and respectful to adults in the school and generally treat school equipment with care and respect. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti and there is little or no litter around the school.

9 Bullying is rare, and whilst known instances of bullying are responded to quickly, there is no anti-bullying policy. There have not been any pupil exclusions in the last academic year, and there is no evidence of racist or sexist behaviour.

10 Pupils make good progress in their personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, as are relationships between pupils. In lessons, pupils work well

together in pairs and small groups, taking turns and sharing resources, and they listen to and respect the views of other members of the group. For example, in a Years 4 and 5 science lesson where pupils in small groups were considering how animals are suited to particular habitats, they collaborated well together, sharing ideas and learning from each other. Pupils clearly enjoyed their work and were keen and eager to share their findings with the rest of the class, and this helped pupils to make good progress in the lesson. The good relationships between teachers and pupils have a positive impact on pupils' learning; pupils are eager to contribute to classroom discussions because they are confident that their views will be listened to and valued. Pupils say they would readily ask their teachers for further information if they did not understand what was required of them. Pupils are developing their understanding of other people's faiths and cultures, and are encouraged to reflect on their actions on others, mainly through their studies in religious education and personal and social education. For example, the school recently held a multicultural week that included Indian dancers and steel bands. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that pupils' work on citizenship has included consideration of moral and social issues, such as the values they appreciate in others and themselves, all of which enables them to make good progress in their social development.

11 Pupils in all year groups show a willingness to undertake additional responsibilities, for example being classroom monitors. Older pupils are involved in the school council; they represent on the council the views of their own class members and those of the younger pupils in the school. Council members are encouraged to find their own solutions to matters they bring to the council; for example when they identified the need for new basketball posts in the playground, they costed the work needed and wrote to the Parent Teacher Association asking for financial assistance. All pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to act as House Captains or Vice Captains or to be school monitors. Pupils take a pride in undertaking these tasks and take their duties seriously.

12 Overall attendance is good, similar to that found at the time of the last inspection. The overall level of attendance is above the national average and unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Registration is undertaken morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13 Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good for children in the Foundation Stage who are in the reception year, and in infant classes, and satisfactory in junior classes. There was no unsatisfactory teaching and well-taught lessons were seen in every class but were found more often in those for the younger pupils, where work was more effectively matched to pupils' different needs.

14 There are strengths that are found in almost all lessons. Teachers take care to explain clearly to pupils what they will be expected to know, understand or do by the end of the lesson. This works well in enabling pupils to work together with their teachers to achieve the learning that has been planned. The school has invested in classroom assistants to work alongside teachers in all classes. They make a positive contribution, particularly when working with pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils are able to participate fully in lessons and to make good progress given their starting points as a result of the effective help they are given. The classroom assistants are most effective when they are supporting pupils as they are working on tasks in lessons. Too often they take a passive role during whole-class sessions. However, in reception, the classroom assistant often sits on the carpet with less able children and those with special educational needs which helps them to contribute when all the children are listening to the teacher and answering her questions.

Teachers across the school have developed positive relationships with pupils that underpin the good behaviour found in almost all lessons.

15 The teaching of reception children is consistently good. Tasks are carefully matched to different levels of ability, the teacher and classroom support assistant question the children skilfully to check their understanding and to make them think, lessons are well organised and the children are sympathetically managed. A good balance is maintained between direct teaching and well-planned and resourced play activities that successfully support and consolidate what the teacher wants the children to learn. Children respond very positively to this good quality provision: they work hard, confidently enter into role-play and apply themselves thoughtfully to more formal tasks led by the adults in the class.

16 In addition to the common strengths described above, there is a variety of good features found in different classes. In some classes teachers make effective use of imaginative strategies such a discussion in a geography lesson in the Years 5 and 6 class when groups of pupils were challenged to argue a case for or against a holiday development from the standpoint of different interest groups. This lesson successfully developed pupils' social skills and ability to take notes and improved their ability to sustain an argument and respond to others' views in discussions. In the Years 4 and 5 class the teacher often maintains a good pace that ensures high levels of pupil involvement and the positive ethos she creates ensures that pupils are keen to learn. In a well-taught lesson in the Years 3 and 4 class the knowledgeable teacher sensitively used a practical approach to develop pupil understanding of a Hindu ceremony. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 2 the teacher's high expectations, skilful questioning and successful setting of small achievable targets and well-matched work ensured that all the pupils applied themselves very well during the lesson and improved their understanding of spelling, rhymes and alliterations.

17 The literacy and, to a slightly lesser extent, the numeracy strategy have been adopted successfully and lead to good teaching in English and satisfactory teaching in mathematics. In mathematics, teachers are less successful in planning activities that take account of the different needs of pupils in mixed-age classes – currently an issue in junior classes and not in infant classes. Too often the same work is given to all the pupils and this does not always provide sufficient challenge for the older and more able pupils in a class. In some lessons different needs are successfully met, for example in a Years 3 and 4 numeracy lesson when the older pupils were expected to work at a more sophisticated level than the younger ones. In English, the older junior pupils are not challenged to work at the higher levels often enough and are given few opportunities to develop their written ideas at length.

18 Marking of pupils' work tends to be better in the infant classes than in junior classes because teachers provide more guidance to pupils about what they have done well and sometimes indicate how they could improve. In the junior classes teachers' comments too often acknowledge effort but do not help them to understand what they need to do to make their work better. There are more useful comments made in English books than in other subjects. Homework is used well in reception to support mathematical and language development through practical tasks, appropriately in other classes to support learning in English and mathematics and in the other subjects when they are a focus for teaching.

19 Teaching has clearly improved since the last inspection when over one in five lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. Weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in ICT, have been overcome and pupils' behaviour is now effectively managed. Some weaknesses remain in ensuring that work is well matched to needs of different groups of pupils.

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

20 A number of curriculum weaknesses were identified in the previous inspection. All but one of these have been successfully addressed, contributing to the improvement in standards in several subjects. Provision overall is sound, with a major strength in the extra-curricular life of the school and a continuing weakness in planning for the different needs of pupils.

21 The Foundation Stage curriculum for children in the reception year is now good. The areas of learning are covered imaginatively with good links, for example, in the way that well-planned role-play contributes to children's knowledge and understanding of the world whilst extending their language skills. In the infants and juniors, the requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met, earlier weaknesses in design and technology and ICT having been resolved. Schemes of work are now in place for all subjects and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education is followed. The provision for personal, social and health education is good, including sound arrangements for teaching citizenship and for drugs and sex education.

22 National initiatives in literacy and numeracy have been adopted throughout the school and satisfactory provision is made for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Fewer worksheets are in evidence than during the previous inspection and this has increased the opportunities for pupils to use literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy skills across the curriculum.

23 Curriculum planning has improved with a clear long-term framework for covering the required elements. Now that the teaching day has been extended, sufficient time is allocated for all subjects to be covered in a balanced way. A standardised process for planning is used in all classes, making use of national guidelines and materials where appropriate.

24 The planning is intended to include decisions about how the work will be differentiated, but these are not always explicit enough, particularly with regard to the different age groups in most classes. As a result, the work, for instance in history and geography, reflects which class pupils are in rather than their age. Whilst the long-term framework ensures a balance of topics over time, it does not identify the core skills to be covered by each year group. Staff do not often enough follow the good example in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson, when the teacher explicitly gave the older pupils the added challenge of using two criteria rather than one in drawing up a Carroll diagram. Equally, there are too many times when meeting the needs of the different abilities in the class is limited to the allocation of classroom assistants' time. Whilst this additional support is almost always effective, it is an inflexible approach that, for instance, reduces the opportunities for lower attaining pupils to work independently. Pupils are often expected to complete the same work regardless of age and ability, meaning it is too easy or, more rarely, too difficult for some of them.

25 The extra-curricular life of the school is very good. A wide range of clubs, meeting at different times of the day, is available, including some provision for the younger pupils. Staff give their time very generously to this and are rewarded by the high level of attendance and the enthusiasm of pupils and parents for the activities they lead. A good number of pupils benefit from instrumental music tuition. The arrangements for this have improved since the previous inspection, although there are still a few pupils who regularly miss the same lesson while having tuition. A residential visit for the older pupils contributes well to their social development as well as extending the curriculum. This year all Year 6 pupils took part along with some from Year 5. The school also benefits from having its own swimming pool and regular opportunities for swimming lessons for all pupils result in high standards being

achieved in this aspect of physical education. Visits and visitors are used well to enrich the curriculum.

26 The school has very good links with pre-school groups so that the transition into the reception class is as smooth as possible. Pupils with special educational needs not only benefit from an appropriate curriculum whilst at Blackmore, but also receive additional support on their transfer to secondary education. The provision for pupils with special needs is well organised and up to date. The school is well advanced in implementing the requirements of the revised code of practice, including good arrangements to involve parents and pupils in decisions about their specific programmes. The new format for individual education plans needs further refinement and the change from a five-stage procedure to two has meant that some pupils may be included at an inappropriate level. The school's inclusive approach to teaching pupils with special educational needs is an improvement on the heavy reliance on withdrawal reported in the last inspection and is working well.

27 The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with a particular strength in social development. Provision is better than reported last time.

28 Assemblies contribute well to the life of the school. Requirements for a daily act of worship are met and staff work hard to create an atmosphere in which pupils can reflect about aspects of their lives and the lives of others. During the inspection, the letters written by grandparents recalling their memories of the coronation were used to prompt pupils' thinking about their relationships with an older generation. Visiting clergy are regularly invited to contribute to assemblies and parents join a weekly celebration of pupils' work. Subjects such as art, religious education and music make a good contribution both to spiritual and cultural development. Pupils have good opportunities to write reflectively as in the poems by Years 5 and 6 pupils, one of whom wrote that a waterfall is "like a stream of diamonds ... that turns into a roaring beast."

29 Moral development is supported well and parents appreciate the school's efforts to underpin pupils' understanding of right and wrong. The emphasis on positive rewards, such as the house system, is effective and the pupils themselves are involved in constructing the class rules at the start of the year. Personal and social education includes work in all year groups on responsibilities towards moral issues in school and in the wider world. For instance, in a Years 4 and 5 lesson pupils discussed why 'rules' such as being careful with other people's belongings are important. Staff provide good role models throughout the school.

30 Provision for social development is very good. Personal and social education is covered by all classes, including some valuable work on citizenship such as the ways in which a democratic society works. Pupils are able to put some of these principles into action through the school council, which includes discussion about their involvement with charity work. In some lessons, teachers organise the learning in groups. For instance, in a successful Years 5 and 6 geography lesson, pupils worked together to put forward arguments for and against the building of a holiday complex. They showed a mature outlook and well-developed social and language skills as they became animated in putting forward their case. Pupils have good opportunities to work in the community, for example taking part in village and church events and visiting the elderly. The wide range of extra-curricular activities not only allows pupils to mix with different age groups, but also to meet other schools in sports and other events.

31 Provision for cultural development is good and improved since the previous inspection. Several subjects, including art and music, enable pupils to experience different cultural traditions. Theatre visits and a multicultural week, which included Indian dancing and

a steel band, have been very much enjoyed by the children who learned to appreciate the richness of different cultural heritages. The headteacher sets a positive example in the way that assemblies are organised, for example using the Queen's Golden Jubilee as a vehicle for understanding the importance of royalty and ceremonial events in British life. Displays, such as the Hindu display in the hall, celebrate other cultural beliefs, although there is little evidence of the traditional culture of the travelling community around the school or in the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32 The school continues to provide a safe and caring environment as at the time of the last inspection. The standard of individual care, support and guidance provided for pupils enables them to feel happy, confident and secure. Pupils are confident that they can approach their teachers should they have any problems either of a personal or academic nature, and that appropriate support and guidance would be forthcoming. Overall the pupils are given good levels of care and support that enable them to concentrate on their lessons, and that have a positive impact on their learning.

33 The health and safety policy meets statutory requirements. Procedures for general risk assessments, including school trips, and fire risk are in place and inspections are carried out on a regular basis. First aid provision is good; there are appropriately qualified first aiders, and appropriate records of accidents and injuries are maintained. Overall, the school is successful in providing a safe working environment for staff and pupils. Arrangements for child protection are good. The headteacher is the designated teacher and has received appropriate training. All staff are provided with a copy of the school's child protection policy that provides guidance on the recognition of child abuse. There are good links with outside agencies and the designated teacher attends case conferences as appropriate.

34 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good. Parents are advised of the need to notify the school of the reasons for any absences. Staff monitor registers on a weekly basis and contact parents in writing if reasons for absence have not been received. A computer program is used to monitor absences over time and shows any patterns of absence as they emerge. The education welfare officer inspects registers on a termly basis and agrees with the headteacher appropriate courses of action if there is evidence of poor attendance. Certificates for good attendance are awarded, which pupils value.

35 There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. A well-established behaviour policy clearly sets out the school's expectations, and rewards good behaviour whilst holding pupils to account for any poor behaviour. The house point system is popular with pupils in all year groups. Pupils are involved in drawing up their own classroom rules; this helps them to appreciate the need for sensible behaviour. All of these elements are applied in a consistent manner and represent an improvement in the management of behaviour since the last inspection. Records are maintained of incidents of poor behaviour and parents are notified if their children's behaviour is considered a matter of concern. The school's ethos is to discourage bullying and oppressive behaviour; however, there is currently no anti-bullying policy.

36 The systems to assess pupils' attainment are satisfactory although more needs to be done to use the information gathered to accurately monitor the learning and the progress that pupils make in the differing year groups. An early assessment of children's attainment and their learning needs is completed in the reception class to identify strengths and weaknesses. These assessments are used well in reception and with the younger infant

pupils to set targets for they are to learn and to provide often good levels of challenge in their work. Targets are regularly reviewed, new targets set and teachers' planning modified to ensure that children's needs are met. The recording of pupils' personal development is well developed for younger pupils.

37 Procedures are in place to assess individual pupils' progress in the infant and junior departments in both English and mathematics and these provide satisfactory levels of information. The amount and complexity of some of this information, especially in English, mask the specific needs of pupils and do not always lead to an appropriate challenge, especially for more able pupils. The progress of pupils, and the skills and knowledge they have gained are not always used sufficiently rigorously to guide teachers' planning in the mixed age group classes. Much information is duplicated so access to information can become difficult and unwieldy. The recording of science and ICT skills is still being developed. Recording of what pupils know and can do in other subjects is largely informal and awaits development.

38 Information from the national tests taken in Year 6 and in Year 2 is analysed and useful information gathered. This helped the school identify spelling as a weakness and this is being addressed successfully by the school. National test information, together with that gathered from optional tests, is not yet used sufficiently rigorously to monitor the progress of, for example, boys and girls or groups of pupils, such as the travellers' children. Older pupils are aware of the targets set in English and mathematics but teachers could refer to these more regularly to help to raise standards. The use of specific objectives in the individual educational plans to monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39 Overall, parents' views of the school are good. Approximately 43 percent of parents returned the parents' questionnaire and 32 parents attended the parents' meeting. Almost all parents are pleased with the progress their children are making in their learning, the quality of teaching, the expectation that their children will work hard and the standards of behaviour in the school. Parents also indicated that their children enjoy coming to school, that the school is helping them to become more mature and responsible, the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and the school is well led and managed. Evidence from the inspection mostly confirms these positive views of the school. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the amount of work that their children were expected to do at home and a small number think the school does not work closely with parents. Inspectors consider the school's use of homework is satisfactory, similar to other schools of this type and size, and, whilst few parents help in classrooms, the school does encourage parents to become involved in its life.

40 Parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory overall despite the limited time most parents have because of their work commitments. They assist pupils changing before and after swimming lessons, help in the school library and accompany pupils on school trips. However, only a relatively few parents help in classrooms. The parents' and teachers' association is very active in organising social and fund-raising events that are very well supported, and has raised substantial funds for the school. These funds have been used to provide additional learning resources that have had a positive impact on pupils' learning.

41 Overall, the quality and range of information for parents are good. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well presented and provide a wide range of information about the

school and its activities. Class teachers provide parents with newsletters at the beginning of each term that gives good quality information about what their children will be studying. Headteacher's newsletters are provided regularly and along with letters about specific events ensure that parents are well aware of current school issues. The headteacher and class teachers are available before and after school should parents wish to discuss any matters relating to their children's education. Pupils' reports are good; they contain good quality information about pupils' strengths, weaknesses and areas for development. Staff provided parent information evenings for literacy and numeracy. Parents are invited to two formal consultation evenings and attendance at these meetings is good. There are good arrangements to involve parents of pupils with special educational needs in the development and review of their children's individual educational plans and parents are fully involved in termly reviews.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42 The school is now well led and managed. The last inspection identified many weaknesses in this crucial area of the school's life. The development plan was ineffective, there was a lack of monitoring of the quality of the school's provision for pupils, governors had little involvement, staff development was ineffective and appraisal did not meet requirements. Very little was done to tackle either these issues or the other weaknesses identified by the inspection until the present headteacher took over the running of the school. In the last two years all the important issues concerning leadership and management have been addressed successfully as have most of the other weaknesses. This reflects the headteacher's clear vision, high expectations and hard work in building up team work and the expertise of staff and governors. She has been supported well in this by the senior teacher, as the school has no deputy headteacher, and teachers in their roles as subject managers are increasingly making effective contributions. At the present time the senior teacher has too many responsibilities. She is co-ordinator for mathematics, science, geography and assessment, and finds it difficult to be effective in all of these areas at the same time.

43 The governors play a full part in deciding how the school's budget will be used and what developments the school will work towards. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses through their monitoring visits and discussions of results.

44 Teachers lead and manage their subject areas satisfactorily. They produce action plans that inform the school development plan. They are beginning to monitor the standards and quality of provision through analysis and evaluation of test results, where these are available, by examining planning for lessons, looking at pupils' work and, in English and mathematics, observing their colleagues teaching. Most of the strategies have recently been introduced and have yet to an impact on improving provision and standards. They are beginning to be used to focus teachers' efforts on tackling weaknesses in pupils' learning, such as spelling which was identified as a weakness when the English results were analysed. These monitoring and evaluation strategies are appropriate and if they are used effectively should contribute to raising standards. An aspect of monitoring and evaluation that is not as well developed as it could be is the monitoring of the progress and performance of some of the different groups in the school, for example the children from travellers' families, to check that they are doing well enough.

45 The school has good quality accommodation that has enabled good provision to be made for ICT with the separate large ICT suite, and for swimming with the swimming pool. Many of the improvements to the building and the school's grounds, such as the sensory garden and the outdoor play area for reception children, have been achieved through the hard work of the caretaker and other adults in the school. The resources available for ICT are good and have made a significant contribution to the improvements in standards in this subject.

There is a relatively well-stocked and well-organised library, which is unusual for a small school and this supports the good standards in reading. Good levels of additional adult support is available in classrooms which is helping to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into mainstream learning and that they make good progress. Similarly administrative support is more generous than is usually the case and staff ensure that the school runs smoothly and the headteacher can use her time to work on the key elements of her role, which in turn helps to promote the good leadership and management.

46 The significant improvements that have been made in resources and the quality of the accommodation testify to the good use that has been made of the school's budget. The principles of best value are understood by governors and the headteacher and are used well to inform decision making. Funding available for staff development is used effectively to develop teachers' and other staff's skills and the newly qualified teacher has responded very well to the good quality support she has been given. Performance management is well in hand and is used effectively to inform the professional development of teachers.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

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

- (1) Improve teaching further, particularly in the junior classes, by ensuring that weekly plans for lessons identify what different year groups in each class will be expected to learn and, whenever it is appropriate, they also identify how more able pupils will be extended.

Please refer to paragraphs 17, 24, 59, 61, 72, 75, 79 and 80.

- (2) Make the very useful information (particularly for English and mathematics) that is collected on what individual pupils have learnt more easily accessible. This information should be used to fine tune what groups of pupils and, when appropriate, what individuals will be learning. This could involve:

- simplifying records so that there is no unnecessary duplication;
- producing records that show what groups of individual pupils have learnt (for example, a year group);
- analysing test information to track the progress of particular groups of pupils, to ensure that they are making sufficient progress;
- consistently using information from the analysis of tests and ongoing assessments to identify weaknesses. These can then be tackled in future lessons or be the focus of targets that individual pupils and groups of pupils can work towards.

Please refer to paragraphs 37, 38, 62, 74 and 81.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

33
20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	2	16	15	0	0	0
Percentage	0	6	48	45	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	NA	139
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	NA	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	NA	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	NA	25

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	6	7	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (80)	85 (93)	85 (93)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	11	11	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (87)	85 (93)	85 (93)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	7	10	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	6	4	6
	Total	11	9	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	65 (75)	53 (85)	71 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	n/a	4	6
	Total	n/a	9	11
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	n/a (70)	53 (75)	65 (75)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Some figures are omitted from these tables because they are too small to be included.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	139
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.8
Average class size	27.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	146

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002
	£
Total income	361,833
Total expenditure	381,387
Expenditure per pupil	2,744
Balance brought forward from previous year	38567
Balance carried forward to next year	19013

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1.3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

42.4%

Number of questionnaires sent out

139

Number of questionnaires returned

59

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	49	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	53	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	59	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	54	15	3	5
The teaching is good.	37	56	7	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	53	7	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	8	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	44	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	66	10	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	51	41	5	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	56	5	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	66	27	7	0	0

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

48 Children are well taught in the reception year and overall are attaining above expectations and well given their attainment when they came to school. The children are currently benefiting from being taught separately for English and mathematics and this enables the teacher and the classroom assistant to carefully match work to different groups' needs in literacy and numeracy. A good balance is maintained between direct teaching of knowledge, understanding and skills and opportunities for children to learn through well thought out, presented and supported play opportunities. The outside area is well resourced and successfully used to extend the provision in the classroom. Adults monitor the progress of individuals carefully and set clear learning targets that the children understand. The teacher and the classroom support assistant work well as a team. They each have clear roles during sessions and skilfully carry these out, making particularly good use of questioning to develop the children's ideas. The sympathetic but consistent managing of the children's behaviour promotes their social development well. Homework that is carefully matched to what is being taught in class is set on a weekly basis and encourages parents to engage in practical activities that successfully develop their children's learning, particularly in the mathematical and language areas of their learning. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made in developing the teaching and learning of children in reception.

Personal, social and emotional development

49 This is a strong area. All the children are successfully learning to behave appropriately in different situations. They listen attentively in class discussions and although eager to answer questions they willingly wait for their turn when answering. They carry out instructions well when given tasks and settle quickly and responsibly to their work, including when they are not working with an adult. They sustain play activities well and they are sensible and relate well to each other when playing in the different role-play and activity areas. They adhere to the sensible rules that they have decided on for the classroom. Subtle provision is made to increase their independence, such as the display that is strategically placed to encourage them to tie their own shoe laces, and this works well. They are expected to tidy away what they have been using and most do this well.

Communication, language and literacy

50 The children have made good progress in this area of learning and many are exceeding the early learning goals. They are very confident when listening to and joining in class discussions and are able to provide detail in their answers and often make use of sophisticated words, such as 'sombrero' and 'luggage', for example when they were discussing Blackmore Bear's visit to Mexico. They all understand that books tell stories and give us information (the books are organised into fiction and fact in the classroom to reinforce this) and that books have authors and titles. They identify, and many can suggest, rhymes in poems. Higher attainers talk about their favourite books. They see themselves as readers and most of them know all or nearly all of the sounds that letters make and can use pictures and letter sounds to help them read words that they do not recognise. Many of the higher attainers can read a good number of words, such as 'water' and 'add' as well as more common words, such as 'here' and 'is'. Higher and average attaining pupils can read and spell simple three-letter words and confidently attempt independent writing although some do not separate out individual words yet. They form their letters clearly and even the lower attaining children know that their ideas can be written down and they attempt to do this using word banks and can write under what an adult has written for them. The good progress

reflects skilful teaching of language in literacy sessions. Guided reading is used well to develop a range of reading strategies and to develop their comprehension skills and their knowledge of words. Whole-class sessions successfully develop children's knowledge and skill in using phonics as well as their understanding of other aspects of English.

Mathematical development

51 Imaginative strategies, such as listening to teacher clapping with their eyes closed and playing physical counting games have successfully developed the children's ability to count forwards and backwards to at least 10 and most to 20. They understand 'more than' and 'less than' and many can perform simple subtractions. The children can identify and eagerly create their own repeating patterns, for example using common two-dimensional shapes and colour arrangements to make place mats and wrapping paper for Blackmore Bear's birthday celebrations. They use positional words accurately and describe objects using 'smaller' and 'bigger' and 'longer' and shorter'. They know the names of common two-dimensional shapes. Again, progress is good and pupils are achieving well.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

52 The children have many opportunities to learn about the world and this leads to successful learning and good achievement. They often listen to music, look at photographs, taste different foods and discuss the weather and customs and aspects of life in other countries as they follow Blackmore Bear's journeys around the world. This is helping them to gain a good understanding of ways of life other than their own and what it is to be a traveller, for example having to have a passport and travel using a variety of methods of transport. Their scientific understanding is successfully developed through the practical activities, for example, observing how the wind pushes balloons, makes windmills turn and makes streamers flutter. They can sort objects using properties such as magnetic attraction, and describe what different materials are used for. They have describe what are the healthy things that they eat and what are not, and can sequence changes in humans as they get older. They know the names of parts of the body and are beginning to understand that we find out about the world by using our senses. Their work on castles has enabled them to develop a good knowledge and understanding of life in a different time and to consider how things change over time. They are able to describe their journeys to school, describe what they like and dislike about particular places such as the playground in the village and use this information to design their own play areas. The outdoor provision is well thought out and enables the children to observe birds and the changes that take place in the small wild area that has been created. Pupils are comfortable using the computer programs that are made available to them.

Physical development

53 During the inspection it was not possible to observe the children when they were playing in the well-equipped and imaginatively-developed outdoor area where they have access to a range of large play equipment, such as tricycles as well as balls and bats etc. When they are using hand-tools and pencils, crayons and brushes, they show good skills and the products they make, such as their weaving, are of good quality and reflect well-developed hand/eye coordination for their age.

Creative development

54 As in the other areas the children benefit from a wide range of well thought out activities and ongoing provision. The outdoor area is used well to promote imaginative role-play linked to provision in the classroom; for example, the storage shed has been made into

an airport terminal building, while inside there is a travel agents. The children eagerly take on different roles and can extend these well because of the quality of the linked provision, such as Blackmore Bear described earlier. Adults carefully observe what is going on and sensitively join in the play in order to develop it further. The children have printed, painted, drawn and used a range of materials such as torn paper and pasta to make good quality pictures and collages. They are encouraged to observe and to refine their skills and this is clearly evident in the detailed drawings of faces that they produced. Teachers consistently make links between the different areas of learning and this consolidates pupils' learning well; for example, making colourful decorated name labels supported them learning to write their names. The imaginative play enriches their knowledge and understanding of the world and provides many opportunities for them to develop their language skills including both speaking and listening, and reading and writing, for example in the travel agents.

ENGLISH

55 Standards in English in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 fell in 2001 to well below average, mainly as a result of movement of pupils in and out the school as described earlier. Too few higher attaining pupils achieved the more difficult level 5 and this lowered overall results. However, an analysis of school assessment records reveals that those pupils who had attended the school since Year 2 had all made satisfactory or better progress in English. Current evidence shows that attainment has now improved and that pupils are likely to achieve results closer to the national average, a judgement similar to that made at the time of the last inspection. Results for pupils in Year 2 in 2001 were satisfactory in reading but well above average in writing when compared to those for similar schools. Prior to 2001, results in English for pupils aged eleven had been regularly at and above average levels and had shown steady improvement since the last inspection. Girls consistently outperform boys in the national tests, especially in Year 6. Progress by pupils with special educational needs is good, aided by the high quality support they are given by support assistants.

56 The standard of speaking across the school is above average. By the age of seven pupils are becoming confident and articulate speakers. When given the opportunity, pupils respond readily to teachers' questioning which is often of good quality. Pupils in a Year 2 class were encouraged to provide full answers in a very good lesson on alliteration and this helped to consolidate their understanding. Older pupils volunteer information on a range of subjects, for example, in a good science lesson when Years 4 and 5 pupils were discussing habitats. Some pupils offer in-depth answers to teachers' questions and participate eagerly in class and group discussions. Many are keen to express their opinions and views. By the age of eleven, most pupils are confident and articulate speakers using a good range of vocabulary. Across the school, teachers appreciate the contributions and views of pupils and try to ensure that all pupils have an opportunity to be involved in discussions. Pupils show respect for the answers of their peers and appreciate others' points of view. Most pupils listen carefully when teachers give instructions.

57 By the age of seven, attainment in reading is above average. Books are handled with care and a variety of texts are read. Pupils have developed a variety of ways to read unfamiliar words by sounding out the words phonetically or by using picture clues. By Year 2 many pupils accurately use punctuation and know how speech is shown in text. Many are beginning to read with expression. When using non-fiction books they show that they understand how books are organised and confidently use terms such as author and title, and know what an illustrator does. More able pupils understand how to use non-fiction books and use index and contents pages. Reading standards remain above average for pupils aged eleven. Most pupils are independent readers, enjoying a variety of stories, poetry and reference books. Many read accurately, fluently and expressively. Pupils are able to discuss

plot and characters in their books and provide illustrations of favourite passages. They are also able to make accurate predictions of what may happen next. When given the opportunity, pupils are able to develop reference skills and more able readers are becoming familiar with skimming and scanning techniques. Some opportunities are given in subjects such as history and geography to use books for reference. Individual reading records are maintained with opportunities for parents, pupils and teachers to comment. These do not contain information on areas for improvement. Overall, standards in reading are good.

58 Writing skills in Year 2 are above average with most pupils achieving the expected level 2. A high proportion of pupils achieve the more difficult level in writing and overall standards are good. Pupils use a good range of vocabulary in their writing and the basic skills of punctuation are used consistently. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to use speech marks accurately in their writing. Improvements in spelling have been specifically targeted by the school and show signs of improvement. The majority of pupils write in sentences, some of which are complex. A small minority of pupils struggle with their writing and have difficulty in communicating ideas. Pupils have a wide range of writing experiences. These include re-telling stories, writing instructions, writing about their own experiences, for example about a party, and composing poetry. Teachers provide a good range of tasks to extend skills in punctuation, spelling and grammar. Many pupils have developed well-formed neat handwriting as a result of the consistently effective teaching of this aspect of English. Satisfactory planning provides links with other areas of the curriculum but these writing experiences could be extended.

59 Writing skills are satisfactorily developed by the time pupils reach Year 6 with two thirds of pupils expected to attain average levels. Too few pupils exceed this level. Aspects of language such as grammar, comprehension and the writing of plays are covered satisfactorily. Pupils also learn to write for a particular purpose, for example letters to the local council arguing the case for the preservation of a local wood. Pupils use a wide and varied vocabulary when writing poetry, describing a tornado being “covered in glittering debris” and the sun being “as dazzling as a sparkling crystal”. More able pupils use punctuation consistently well and presentation, including handwriting, is good by all pupils. Spelling becomes increasingly accurate, the result of a specific focus by the school. Although pupils have opportunities to write stories there are too few examples of pupils writing at greater length in other subjects. This limits the challenge for more able pupils to extend their writing skills and to regularly access the higher levels of the National Curriculum.

60 Most pupils enjoy literacy lessons and are keen to participate. A majority of pupils listen well, responding to the questioning and ensuing discussion enthusiastically. Once set their tasks most concentrate well. In a very good lesson in Year 2 pupils wrote alliterative poems and spent a considerable time improving their verses. Expectations in this lesson were high and pupils realised that only their best work would be good enough. When given the opportunity, pupils respond well to working in groups and share ideas and resources well. Where the task is interesting and well matched to their needs, pupils are well behaved. On a small number of occasions, when the match of work is less successful, a small number of older pupils can become restless and uninterested.

61 Teaching is good and ranges from satisfactory to very good, with particular strengths in the infants. In the good and very good lessons teachers provide opportunities to contribute positively to discussions. The lesson introductions are purposeful and well structured and pupils are enthusiastic about what they are going to learn. All pupils are involved in the lessons and confidently provide answers to the teachers’ effective questioning. In a good lesson for pupils in Years 4 and 5, pupils were skilfully encouraged to explore ways of making their writing more interesting by using short sentences to heighten the excitement and tension in a story in the style of ‘The Iron Woman’ by Ted Hughes. Very good teaching helps

older pupils in the infants use poetry well to identify rhyming words which they use cleverly in writing their own alliterative poems. Lessons such as these are delivered with enthusiasm, encouraging pupils to succeed. Pupils' vocabulary is extended well in all lessons and their answers and contributions to questions are respected and valued by both teachers and others in their class. Relationships are good between pupils and adults in lessons. Work is consistently marked and comment made on how work can be improved. These comments are linked to the pupils' targets for improvement and in good lessons teachers remind pupils of these during lessons. This has a positive effect on standards of work. Although all teaching is at least satisfactory, some lessons for the older pupils suffer from a slower pace and the level of challenge for the most able pupils does not extend them sufficiently. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in most lessons but on occasions support assistants are not sufficiently involved during the whole-class sessions of lessons.

62 The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced effectively and is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Teachers' planning is carefully monitored and lessons have been observed to improve quality. Test results are analysed and strengths and weaknesses identified. One result of this has been the identification of spelling as an area for improvement across the school. Comprehensive records on pupils' attainment are maintained, but on occasions the amount of information collected is excessive and does not lead to the clear identification of pupils' future needs or help teachers with their planning.

MATHEMATICS

63 Results in national tests for eleven year olds have improved since the previous inspection. Because of small year groups, there have been unavoidable fluctuations, most markedly in 2001, when results fell well below those of most other schools. However, these disappointing results had been predicted, and resulted from very unusual circumstances. Individual pupils had made satisfactory progress over the four years following their tests at the end of the infants. Over time, results for Year 2 and Year 6 are around, or slightly above, average.

64 Standards for seven and eleven year olds have now returned to the satisfactory levels achieved in 2000. The school's focus on raising standards, for example for the higher attaining pupils, has been effective in lifting the number of eleven year olds achieving the higher level in the tests. It is not yet as effective in meeting the needs of more able pupils in most lessons. Pupils with special educational needs do well, because of the support they receive. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls in lessons.

65 Standards in mental calculations are better than those reported at the last inspection and attainment in oral work in the infants and the juniors is now in line with expectations. This is a direct result of the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, giving pupils daily practice in remembering important number facts and calculating in their heads. Almost all pupils are achieving appropriately in this aspect of mathematics, particularly where teachers vary the questions for different pupils without losing the pace and the interest of the whole class. Pupils can explain how they have worked things out, a strength that spills over into their written number work.

66 By the age of seven most pupils can work with numbers up to 100 and some beyond that. They are beginning to understand place value. By eleven, they can add, subtract, multiply and divide to the expected level, and develop a sound understanding of fractions and decimals. For example, they can use their knowledge of measures to show that 10 centimetres is the same as 0.1 or one tenth of a metre. In one lesson, Year 6 pupils were

less confident with more complex decimals because expectations were not high enough for the more able pupils.

67 There is a good balance with other areas of mathematics so that by the age of seven all pupils, including those with special educational needs, reach the expected levels in knowing about two-dimensional shapes, in measuring and in collecting data to make simple graphs. By eleven, almost all can calculate areas and perimeters, showing sound understanding of mathematical vocabulary. Good use is made of ICT in collecting and interpreting data. In the best lessons pupils are encouraged to construct their own questions about different kinds of graphs they have worked out on the computer. However, throughout the school there is insufficient emphasis on pupils solving or setting their own problems. The application of numeracy skills in other subjects is satisfactory, but could be better planned, for example in identifying which measuring skills are needed in a design and technology project or in using a knowledge of co-ordinates and scale when drawing and reading maps.

68 Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the infants and the juniors. Unlike in the previous inspection report, no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and the problems reported then in managing some pupils' behaviour have been almost entirely resolved. Teaching has improved because the numeracy strategy gives a framework for lessons that keeps pupils on their toes and planning is much more detailed. Homework plays a regular role in reinforcing the learning.

69 In the Years 1 and 2 classes teachers are enthusiastic and have established good relationships combined with high expectations so that pupils work hard to please the adults. This term, the two year groups are taught separately, allowing both teachers to focus their work so that clearer progress is made by all pupils. Some pupils find it hard to concentrate for long when working independently and the teaching throughout the school needs to ensure that pupils can use their time profitably when adults are working with other groups.

70 In the junior classes, most pupils enjoy the challenge of quick-fire oral work. For example in a Years 3 and 4 lesson, the teacher used a good range of questions to revise the three and six times tables, expecting higher attaining pupils to explain how they did their calculations whilst making sure that the less confident remained fully involved. In a Years 4 and 5 lesson, the teacher used praise effectively to motivate the pupils, particularly those who found the oral work hard. Plenary sessions are sometimes a little rushed. On these occasions they are not wholly successful in consolidating the learning, although teachers generally make sure that pupils know what they are expected to learn in each lesson.

71 The school has recently started to set individual and group targets for mathematics. In the juniors these are pasted into pupils' books and most are aware of what their targets are and how they can meet them. The subject manager is keeping an eye on how well this is working and, for instance, has rightly recognised that some targets need to be more closely tied to the current teaching so that pupils can get ongoing practice and feedback about how well they are doing. The marking of work in the juniors is less effective than in the younger classes because these teachers rarely include precise comments about what pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve. As a result pupils are not as clear as they might be about how they are getting on.

72 The main weakness in teaching throughout the school lies in the provision made in lessons for pupils' different needs. Too often all pupils are expected to cover the same ground, usually with extra support for the lower attainers. In some classes, insufficient account is taken of the different age groups so that the older pupils are not covering the same level of work as their peers in another class. An exception to this was seen in a Years 3 and 4 lesson where the teacher deliberately provided a more advanced task for the older pupils

which she then used to extend the more able Year 3 pupils. This gave the Year 4 pupils the chance to use the correct vocabulary to explain what they were doing.

73 During the inspection, learning support assistants were used exclusively to work with the less able pupils. Although there were occasions, for instance during some whole-class teaching, when their skills were not fully employed, generally they were effective and sometimes very effective in making sure that lower attaining pupils and those with special needs made good progress. The planning needs to recognise times when support assistants might work with other groups, so that the class teacher can be with the lower attainers or, equally importantly, these pupils learn to work independently. Good provision is made for the oldest pupils who show mathematical talent to receive additional support.

74 The headteacher and subject manager have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in mathematics, using a good range of available information to draw up a detailed annual action plan for improvement. Pupils' progress is assessed in detail. Whilst good use is made of this information to target curriculum development, it is used less well by teachers to ensure the work is appropriately challenging for all pupils. Subject management is sound with good use made of external support from the local education authority. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, but more still needs to be done. The school and subject manager are committed to raising standards further and are well placed to be successful in this.

SCIENCE

75 Results in the Year 6 tests in 2001 were very disappointing when compared to those in other schools. They reflected the movement of pupils in and out of the school since the last inspection, which has depressed the results in all of the core subjects; however, science results have not been as good as those in English and mathematics. The inspection found standards to be broadly in line with national expectations with most pupils at both Year 2 and Year 6 working at the expected levels. However, there is very little evidence of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher level 5 and their work, over time, shows that they have very little opportunity to access more demanding tasks. Their skills in conducting scientific enquiries are not as well developed as their knowledge and understanding of living things, materials and physical processes.

76 By Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding are suitably balanced across each of the aspects of science. They understand the needs of plants to survive and develop, name in detail the parts of flowers and plants and have sound understanding of what each does. The role of micro-organisms in the food cycle is understood by most pupils and they understand about different feeding relationships in food chains and use words such as 'producer', 'consumer', 'predator' and 'prey' appropriately. Their work on materials and their properties has led to a secure understanding of how heat can change the state of materials, changing solids into liquids and liquids into gases, and they use terms such as 'evaporation' and 'condensation' appropriately when describing these changes. Practical tasks have enabled them to understand that the solubility of materials is affected by the size of the particles and the temperature of the liquids they are placed in. Pupils understand electrical circuits and the effect of switches and that some materials are better conductors and insulators than others. Their work on light indicates that some pupils are unsure about the nature of shadows and that their length is determined by the position of the light source rather than the distance away from it. Pupils understand that sound is made as objects vibrate and most understand that the pitch varies with the size of the object that vibrates, for example a larger drum has a deeper sound than a small drum. Much of the practical work they have undertaken has involved them following instructions and observing. They have not had the opportunities

needed to plan their own tests and to work out how to make them fair, and their skills in, and understanding of, scientific enquiry are below expectations.

77 By Year 2, pupils' knowledge and understanding are also soundly balanced across the attainment targets and pupils are developing appropriate skills in undertaking enquiries, although they do not make enough use of tables and graphs to present what they have found out. They can name the main parts of the body and understand what each of our senses do. Pupils can sort living things into different groups and are equally successful when sorting foods into different types. They showed good practical skills when measuring each other and were able to make sensible predictions about the differences between boys and girls. Pupils are able to sort materials according to their properties and are beginning to be able to explain why particular properties make them appropriate to use for different purposes, for example because glass is transparent it is useful for windows. Through their investigations they know that some metals are attracted to magnets, that the shape of some materials can be affected by forces, such as stretching and squeezing, and that objects can be made to move by pulling and pushing them. They also understand that the friction between different surfaces affects the distance objects travel.

78 Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Pupils are usually sensible and co-operate well when undertaking practical tasks but on occasion, for example when younger pupils were testing objects to see if they would float, they could have been more sensible and made less mess.

79 Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons have clear objectives that are shared with pupils and help them work positively with their teachers towards the same goals. Most lessons build effectively on what has been covered earlier but sometimes do not extend the pupils sufficiently. This was the case in a lesson in Years 5 and 6 when little was added to most pupils' understanding of food chains, and opportunities to extend their understanding into the higher level 5, by discussing food webs, interdependence and balance within food chains, were missed. Pupils were asked to investigate food webs for homework when this would have been a much more appropriate focus for the lesson. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to clarify pupils' thinking, but could be used more effectively to extend their ideas. Teachers often organise lessons well and use resources effectively to support pupils' learning, for example enabling all Years 1 and 2 pupils to test a range of objects for floating and sinking and providing work sheets that successfully encouraged pupils to predict and then record their results. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively and this enables practical tasks to be undertaken successfully. On occasion individual teachers do not pick up on minor silliness quickly enough, or tolerate too much calling out during discussions; although these do not stop learning taking place they can slow the pace of lessons a little.

80 The curriculum plan ensures that topics are not missed or unnecessarily repeated. However, in a lesson on feeding relationships in Years 3 and 4, pupils were required to work at a similar level to those in Years 5 and 6. This reflects a weakness in the curriculum guidance where it is not clear what each year group is expected to cover in each topic. This results in uneven progress and opportunities to stretch older and more able pupils are sometimes missed.

81 Science has not been a priority and the co-ordinator has other important responsibilities in the school. As a result, some weaknesses evident in the previous inspection remain, for example in the progression of pupils' learning. There has been insufficient time available for these to be tackled. More needs to be done to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and priority given to making improvements. Overall co-ordination is unsatisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

82 Standards in art are above national expectations by both Year 2 and Year 6, and are higher than at the time of the last inspection. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching in art because it was possible to observe only one lesson during the inspection. Evidence from the pupils' completed work indicates that art is well taught as pupils show good technique and produce good quality results using a variety of media. They are also experiencing a wide range of artists, and successfully encouraged to evaluate their work.

83 The Years 5 and 6 pupils' landscape paintings show careful choice of colour and use of line. They are atmospheric and well executed. Their three-dimensional work, which includes very well produced and decorated masks of 'the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' characters and hats for 'Alice in Wonderland' characters, makes good use of different materials. The photo montages of famous people show good composition and the pastel and tissue pictures in the style of the Impressionists show good skills. The latter are accompanied by reflective writing that shows appreciation of the effects the artists were trying to achieve. Younger pupils in the junior classes have produced some very good quality batik and quilted pictures, based on Kandinsky's work.

84 The work of the Year 2 pupils shows similar care and quality and includes wax relief, use of torn paper and pastels to create pictures in the style of Paul Klee. Recent work shows good skills in weaving, plaiting, tying and twisting materials to create different effects. This builds well on the work of younger pupils where the work of artists, such as Matisse, has been used well to focus the pupils' efforts using paint and tissue.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

85 Due to the timetable, only one lesson in design and technology was seen. Judgements are based on an examination of planning, work on display, photographic evidence and discussion with staff and pupils. These indicate that standards in the infants and juniors are now around the expected levels, and are appropriate for these pupils. This is a substantial improvement since the previous inspection when the National Curriculum was not being fully covered. The introduction of a nationally recognised scheme of work has ensured that pupils make satisfactory progress in all three stages of the process: designing, making, and evaluating. Some weaknesses remain in the acquisition of skills because teachers are not clear enough about what should be expected at each age.

86 Pupils work with an appropriate range of materials. Infants enjoy making glove puppets in fabric and vehicles to carry Blackmore Bear. They can make rough drawings of what they want their products to look like and can identify the materials they will need. Most can review their finished work, saying what they like and sometimes how they might improve the product another time. In common with the junior pupils, they show both care and imagination in finishing and decorating their products, often reaching a good standard in this element of the process.

87 In the younger juniors, pupils develop their designing skills appropriately. When making a money container for instance, they can identify the intended user. With help from the teacher, they can establish the criteria to be met if the container is to be successful. In a Years 3 and 4 lesson seen, pupils set out logically the stages they would follow in making a picture frame. The designs of the older juniors are suitably detailed and labelled although not generally measured to a precise scale. Some useful links are made with science as when

they design a working torch. The oldest pupils show satisfactory skills working with wood and card to make a rotating toy. In all projects seen, pupils complete their work with an evaluation. They become increasingly sophisticated, for example considering the potential dangers of sharp edges or toxic materials in making a toy for a younger child.

88 Insufficient evidence was seen to make a judgement about teaching and learning. It is clear from their evaluations that pupils enjoy the practical work, taking pride and care in the finished products and trying hard to work to a high standard. Many are eager to take the finished articles home. On occasions pupils are reluctant to work in mixed gender groups and more could be done to encourage boys and girls to work positively together on co-operative tasks. Teaching follows the agreed guidelines closely and teachers' subject knowledge appears to have improved since the last inspection. The time allocated is just about sufficient although, in common with other non-core subjects, the precise skills to be covered in each age group are not evident enough and pupils of the same age in different classes may not progress at the same rate. In lesson planning, the different needs of pupils are not generally clear because assessment is not used sufficiently to adjust the work for pupils with different abilities.

89 Teachers shrewdly combine the direct teaching of skills with opportunities for pupils to explore their own ideas. For instance in the lesson seen, the teacher stopped the class from time to time to reinforce a teaching point about cutting or fixing parts of their picture frames. This helped pupils to overcome difficulties. In the juniors, teachers could do more in their marking to indicate what pupils are doing well and what they need to improve. In turn this data could be used to monitor general strengths and weaknesses in the subject.

90 The recently appointed subject manager has begun to compile a useful portfolio of photographs. She has had little opportunity to monitor the teaching or to evaluate the standards being achieved, although planning is regularly scrutinised to check that the agreed programme is being followed. Whilst the subject has not been a recent priority, progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. More work needs to be done on assessment.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

91 Pupils achieve well to reach good standards in history and geography by the age of seven. By the time they leave the school, standards are in line with expectations and most pupils' achievement is satisfactory, although some could work at a higher level. These judgements are an improvement on the situation reported at the time of the previous inspection. This is because staff now have a much clearer programme of work than before, teaching is better and the requirements of the National Curriculum are being met more systematically.

92 By the end of Year 2, pupils have studied their local environment and are beginning to learn about the wider world, partly through the travels of Blackmore Bear. Locally, they can think of ways to improve the school grounds and can draw simple maps, with most pupils understanding that they represent a plan view. By the age of eleven, they can draw and interpret maps, including Ordnance Survey, to different scales. They have studied a contrasting locality in some depth, for instance Mexico, and understand the main features of weather in different parts of the world. The residential visit to the Isle of Wight provides a stimulus for studying aspects of coastal geography. Some work is simply copied from the board after discussion rather than providing opportunities for pupils of all abilities to record their findings at their own level. Consequently, opportunities to apply literacy skills are missed. There is a tendency in the junior classes to use too many worksheets, which limits

the learning for some pupils when they all complete the same worksheet. Insufficient use is made of ICT. In one good Years 5 and 6 lesson, pupils learned to present and weigh contrasting views about the geographical impact of a proposed holiday development, showing a good knowledge and understanding of the socio-economic factors. This well-planned role-play activity showed the potential for some pupils to reach higher standards in the subject.

93 In history, most seven year olds understand that times have changed, for example when comparing kitchens of the past with the present. Some very imaginative work based on the Queen's Golden Jubilee is resulting in a good understanding of change in British life over the last 50 years. A whole-school activity when pupils wrote to grandparents or others of their generation, has resulted in a rich archive of their coronation memories that has stimulated interest and discussion. For example, one seven year old wrote that: "Television was black and white and fuzzy. People only had a little screen."

94 By Year 6, pupils have some understanding of the impact of invaders and settlers in Britain. Some good work was seen in Year 3 when pupils used their new knowledge and experience to produce a brochure for the town. Similarly, older pupils' knowledge of Anglo Saxon life is enhanced by a visit to a recreated village. The good use of visits is a feature of both subjects throughout the school. The local environment is used well. In the current year, junior pupils have completed less work in history and geography than the infants and so progress has been slower and standards are not as high. Throughout the school, pupils lack confidence in their grasp of chronology and the links between different time periods covered.

95 Teaching and learning are good in the infants and satisfactory in the juniors. The mixed-age classes for the older pupils present particular problems in curriculum organisation resulting in pupils from the same year studying different topics. Whilst over time the coverage is satisfactory, teachers do not have a clear enough picture of the skills appropriate to each year group to ensure equal progression for all. Consequently, pupils from different year groups are often learning at the same level and pupils from the same year group are not always given equally challenging work. This was a weakness identified at the previous inspection that has not been fully resolved.

96 The good teaching in the infants is characterised by work that is made interesting to the pupils, a good use of resources, and perceptive marking that identifies clearly what pupils have learned. More is expected of the Year 2 pupils, so that they make good progress. Teaching in the juniors is strongest when pupils are given opportunity to use their learning in meaningful ways. For instance, younger pupils wrote their own arguments for and against change in the village and some older pupils showed good writing skills when retelling the story of Beowulf in their own words. On other occasions, worksheets are used that make little demand on pupils' thinking and junior teachers do not take the same care in marking the work so that pupils cannot see clearly how they are doing and how they can develop. Expectations are not high enough for some pupils.

97 Neither subject has been a focus for major development recently, although the introduction of schemes of work has brought convincing improvement in the coherence of the curriculum since the last inspection. Although they have had limited opportunity for monitoring, the subject managers have some useful information about their subjects from talking with colleagues and looking at some completed work. Monitoring will need to be more systematic if subject managers are to play a full part in raising standards further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

98 Good progress has been made since the last inspection in raising the standards achieved by pupils. They were below expectations and are now above them by both Year 2

and Year 6. This reflects the hard and effective work of the co-ordinator, successful teaching, and the impact of the school's use of the recent grants from the government for resources and training.

99 By the end of the juniors, pupils can produce complex presentations of information that incorporate pictures and sounds as well as text, and include links between the different 'slides' they produce. When working with art programs, pupils confidently select shapes, change their size, fill them with colours and produce a range of effects with different size brushes and spray cans. Their skills in using these tools are clearly evident in the high quality pictures they have produced, for example those done in the style of Monet. They have good knowledge of databases in particular, and spreadsheets and understand the concepts of files, records and fields and cells, columns and rows. They can, for example, search through information using two criteria and sort it into ascending and descending order.

100 Pupils lower down in the juniors, for example in Year 4, are relatively further on and are often working a level above what is usually expected. They use a wide range of tools when writing and presenting their work using word-processing programs and can send and receive information using email. Their skills in using the features in art programs are similar to those found in Years 5 and 6. They can use formula when calculating with a spreadsheet, choose appropriate graphs to present information, such as the data they collected when monitoring the changes of water temperature.

101 Year 2 pupils can select colours as well as different fonts and letter sizes to use when writing on the computer and can create effects to make labels stand out, for example shadow effects or by distorting the shape and appearance of their writing using tools, such as *WordArt*. They make effective use of brushes and tools, such as fill and spray cans, to produce good quality pictures. They can select and use *clipart*. Recently they have learnt how to give instructions to the Roamer, a programmable toy, to make it move from one place to another. As in all year groups, pupils in Year 2 are reflective in their use of ICT and can make valid comparisons between employing computers and other methods of achieving what they want.

102 Analysis of pupils' work reflects teachers' high expectations for the quality of pupils' work. Pupils respond well and always produce good quality results. They enjoy working with computers, think about what they are doing, evaluate what they and others do and behave well. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised by increasingly confident teachers and techniques and tasks are explained clearly. Pupils' behaviour is well managed and little time is wasted. The quality of teaching enables the planned learning to be successfully achieved and good progress to be made over time. The recently established networked suite has resulted from good use of the funds available for ICT. It is used well and supports the effective teaching of skills. The curriculum is currently appropriately matched to the different stages of development of pupils in each year group and the ICT club provides an opportunity for higher attaining, older pupils to extend and enhance their learning. Teachers' skills and confidence have been effectively developed and training opportunities carefully matched to the staff's needs. The progress that pupils make against key learning objectives is appropriately recorded and soon assessment will be supported by a computer program that should help teachers to monitor progress more easily and plan the next steps in pupils' learning more precisely. The subject is well led and managed.

MUSIC

103 Standards in music are satisfactory by the time pupils reach the age of eleven. Although there was the opportunity to see only two music lessons, pupils' singing and the

playing of instruments in school assemblies has also been taken into account. This judgement is similar to that made during the previous inspection.

104 Pupils enjoy music, especially singing. Infant pupils have learned the words and tunes of several songs well and are beginning to sing tunefully rather than shouting the words. They develop their appreciation of the music of Saint-Saens well through listening to his composition 'Aquarium'. The teacher skilfully guided them into the piece using colourful fish they had made in an art lesson. These were used creatively in a shadow puppet show that further helped pupils to interpret the music. Speaking and listening skills were well developed, with pupils describing the moods of the music and how it made them feel. The lesson for older pupils was equally good as they explored the music of the sixties and seventies. The music of the Beatles figured strongly and pupils were able to make comparisons between the musical tradition of the sixties and the music played now. Video clips were used well to illustrate this. It also gave pupils an opportunity to look at social history through the reactions of teenagers in the sixties to pop groups and to look at sixties fashion. Pupils developed their understanding of rhythm very well, learning the meaning of 'on' and 'off' beats and, having mastered this, divided into groups to 'play' the instruments of the band. This successfully improved their understanding of beat and rhythm and contributed to them asking sensible questions about what they had learned. Pupils' understanding of the music of the 20th century is good and they know about dance bands, swing and military band music. The singing in assemblies is tuneful and older pupils provide good quality accompaniment, playing recorders, flute and guitar.

105 Pupils collaborate well, sharing ideas and focusing well on the tasks provided. This was apparent in both the lessons seen and pupils were keen to join in, especially when it was a practical activity. Pupils respond well to teachers' questioning and the majority listen carefully and respect the views of others. The teaching in the two music lessons seen was good. Lessons were lively and well organised, and challenged the pupils appropriately, building on previous work and experience. Specialist music teachers add well to the quality of music tuition and help to raise standards. Opportunities for pupils to sing and play in concerts extend and enhance the pupils' music curriculum.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

106 Because of timetabling arrangements only two physical education lessons were seen during the inspection and it is therefore not possible to make an overall judgement on standards. Teachers' planning and interviews with pupils indicate, however, that all the areas required to be taught, gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletics, games activities and outdoor adventurous activities, are covered. Standards in an athletics lesson for older pupils were satisfactory. In a swimming lesson for younger children, pupils demonstrated ability well above that normally expected for their age with most pupils being able to swim.

107 The two lessons seen were well organised and structured and pupils were active for most of the time. Teachers' planning benefits from a helpful and informative scheme of work which provides detailed information on the skills to be learned in each area of the physical education curriculum. In the swimming lesson the teacher used her good levels of knowledge to ensure that pupils understood what they had to do to improve their stroke techniques and this successfully raised standards. Older pupils have a good understanding of survival and water safety techniques. Opportunities to attend a regular out of school club help pupils to improve water skills and swimming standards. In the athletics lesson pupils completed warm-up routines and knew the benefits of taking exercise. The teacher provided a good range of opportunities for pupils to practise their high and long jumping skills and pupils measured the distance they jumped. This provided a good incentive to improve standards

and was an appropriate link with mathematics. Pupils worked well in groups, co-operating with each other to evaluate and improve their performance. In the two lessons seen, pupils had good attitudes towards physical education and enjoyed the subject. Relationships are good and pupils have the opportunity to share their talents and ideas. Teachers are enthusiastic and provide good role models.

108 Pupils across the school benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities and there is a good level of staff support for these. Additional sports activities include basketball, football, netball, swimming and athletics and regular Jazz Dance sessions. All extra-curricular sports activities are well attended with several open to younger pupils from the infants. Many sports activities involve inter-school competitions and these benefit pupils' social development. School teams are open to all pupils. The school enjoys good facilities, both indoor and out, and pupils benefit from a spacious and well-equipped hall, a swimming pool and extensive, enclosed playing fields.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

109 By the age of eleven pupils are attaining standards in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is a similar judgement to that made at the time of the last inspection. Only one religious education lesson was seen during the inspection but pupils' previous work has been taken into account when reaching this judgement. School assemblies also add to the quality of pupils' experiences of both Christian teachings and those of other faiths.

110 Religious education is a regular part of the school's curriculum. By the age of eleven pupils have looked at a variety of faiths but have also explored ideas such as friendship, honesty and trust. Pupils use their writing skills appropriately when writing about and looking at the lives of those less fortunate than themselves, for example, the need of people to get clean fresh water. They write poetry, with one pupil describing friendship as being like "a cool fresh spring". Pupils are very aware of the need to protect the environment and express strong views on pollution. They know and understand the meaning of stories such as 'The Good Samaritan' and have looked at the life of Chad Varah and the work of the Samaritan organisation. Pupils are able to recall the stories from other religions such as the story of Rama and Sita, of Krishna and of the Hindu gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The one lesson seen provided pupils with a good experience of the Puja ceremony from the Hindu religion, in which the teacher extended pupils' understanding and vocabulary well. The teacher created a positive atmosphere using artefacts effectively. Most pupils show respect for the values and beliefs of others in the lesson. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are able to join in with lessons.

111 School assemblies are well planned and based on a series of themes that run over a period of weeks. These themes make an important contribution to the religious education curriculum; for example, the current theme is celebrations and teachers' planning shows that this idea is built into the religious education teaching. The theme of celebrations and the story of the lost sheep were used well to illustrate this in one of the assemblies. Visiting speakers add effectively to pupils' religious understanding.