

INSPECTION REPORT

HARMANS WATER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bracknell

LEA area: Bracknell Forest

Unique reference number: 130949

Headteacher: Mr Michael Harris

Reporting inspector: Mr John Tyler
20506

Dates of inspection: 30th April to 4th May 2001

Inspection number: 199061

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wellington Drive Harmans Water Bracknell Berkshire
Postcode:	RG12 9NE
Telephone number:	01344 420797
Fax number:	01344 302848
E-mail address	head@office.harmanswater.bracknell-forest.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Mills
Date of previous inspection:	3 rd March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20506	John Tyler	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology Geography	The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31862	Julia Coop	Team inspector	History Physical education Special educational needs Equality of opportunity English as an additional language	
1292	Vera Foster	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
23315	Irene Green	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Music Religious education	
3678	Jo Harris	Team inspector	English	How well is the school led and managed?
27721	Pauline Hoare	Team inspector	Art Information and communication technology	

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Ltd
Langshaw
Pastens Road
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted
Surrey RH8 0RE

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Harmans Water Primary is very large compared with most schools for children aged between four and eleven. The 730 pupils are organised into 24 classes and a Nursery. Pupils come from a broad range of backgrounds and most live either on the immediate estate or nearby ones. About nine per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly similar to the national average, but a significant proportion come from homes with relatively low incomes. The number of girls and boys is reasonably balanced. Few pupils speak English as an additional language or belong to ethnic minority groups. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs is 21 per cent, which is similar to the national average. This varies somewhat between year groups and is as high as 30 per cent in some. The school is currently involved in a pilot scheme to include for part of each week ten pupils with complex learning difficulties, supported by their teachers who come from a local special school. The present headteacher arrived only a year ago and there have recently been other significant changes in the senior management team.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that is, on balance, below average and many have significant weaknesses in language skills. The admissions policy, common in this area, means that relatively few pupils enter Year 1 having experienced the full foundation curriculum in the Nursery and Reception classes, and some have no Reception experience at all.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is doing a sound, effective job. From a below-average start, pupils achieve results that are broadly average by the time they move on to secondary schools. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with particular strengths in some year groups and aspects for improvement in a few subjects or classes. The curriculum is good, pupils are well cared for and the school works well with parents. The leadership and management of the school is good, and especially so in the case of the headteacher. Taking into account the standards achieved, educational provision and cost per pupil, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- ◆ Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well.
- ◆ The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught effectively.
- ◆ Teachers and support staff make learning stimulating, foster good relationships and care for pupils well.
- ◆ The broad curriculum includes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development.
- ◆ The school works well with parents.
- ◆ The leadership of the headteacher and governors has recently brought about significant improvements.

What could be improved

- ◆ Standards in science are below national expectations and pupils are not achieving well enough.
- ◆ Although teaching is satisfactory overall, it is unsatisfactory in a small minority of classes.
- ◆ In common with local schools, relatively few pupils benefit from being in school for the full Foundation Stage.
- ◆ Assessment information is not always used effectively by teachers to plan work that matches pupils' needs, nor to identify aspects of the curriculum that need improvement.

The areas for improvement have already been identified by the school and will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school's last inspection in March 1997 satisfactory improvements have been made. The rate of improvement has increased significantly since the appointment of the present headteacher and the school is in a good position to develop further. Standards have risen in English and mathematics at the top of the school, though they have fallen in science. The management of the school and professional development for staff have improved, and the quality of teaching has risen. There have also been improvements in the school's partnership with parents, the behaviour policy, resources and accommodation, provision for special educational needs and the role of the governors.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools*
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	B	D	C	C
Mathematics	B	D	C	C
Science	A	D	C	D

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

* This refers to schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.

In the Foundation Stage as a whole, children achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points, and achievement in the Nursery is good. From below-average attainment on entry, standards by the end of Reception are below national expectations in all areas of learning for this age group. In the national assessments for seven-year-olds in 2000, results were similar to the national average in mathematics, below average in reading and well below in writing. In the present Year 2, standards are below national expectations in English but in line with expectations in mathematics. Considering their attainment on entry to Year 1, their achievements are satisfactory in English and good in mathematics. In Year 6, the trend in results is up for English and mathematics, but at a slower rate than nationally in English. In the work seen, most pupils were achieving appropriate standards in these subjects but few reaching higher levels.

In science, standards are below national expectations at the end of both key stages and many pupils are achieving less than they could. The trend in Year 6 science results is down. Work seen in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and religious education shows that standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils do well in design and technology. Although pupils achieve satisfactorily in history overall, the depth of study is too shallow in some topics. The standard of singing is good, especially the choir, and the school achieves considerable success in a variety of sports.

Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and make good progress when the work is highly structured and well matched to their needs, such as during withdrawal lessons. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, helped by the support given in class and additional weekly individual lessons to improve spoken English.

The school set appropriately challenging targets for English and mathematics results at the end of Year 6 and has exceeded these.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to their work and are enthusiastic about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good around the school and in lessons. Pupils are polite and generally respond quickly to teachers' instructions. In a very few lessons, behaviour was unsatisfactory because the teacher did not set clear limits.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are good. Pupils support each other in class and play together happily. They are confident and thoughtful of others.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent. Within this successful teaching, it was good in 31 per cent and very good in 25 per cent. In only seven lessons out of over 100 was the teaching unsatisfactory, but it had a marked effect upon the overall quality of learning in one class especially. Examples of good teaching were seen in every year group and in most subjects.

Throughout the school the teaching of English and mathematics is satisfactory, and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well. Pupils often use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The marking of pupils' work is generally sound and sometimes especially effective in improving basic skills. Pupils with special educational needs make rapid gains in literacy skills through effective and varied teaching approaches when they work in small groups outside normal lessons.

Teachers and teaching assistants get on well with pupils and are both firm and fair when applying the school's behavioural code. Pupils consequently feel happy, learn about respect and behave in a way that encourages concentration and attentiveness. In a few lessons, pupils behaved unsatisfactorily because the teacher had expectations that were too low or did not follow the school's procedures consistently. Pupils are often helped to work productively by the organisation of lessons. Teachers usually have resources prepared in advance so that no time is wasted. Teaching assistants play a key role in many lessons, supporting some groups while the teacher focuses on others. Adults work together effectively and, in general, the needs of all pupils are met.

Although teachers generally have sound subject knowledge of what they are teaching, there are some specific cases where improvement is needed. In science, many teachers lack sufficient knowledge to be able to assess pupils' attainment accurately and to plan lessons that build on their previous learning. In several subjects, including English, some individual teachers lacked expertise in particular aspects. However, other teachers showed great expertise in certain subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The broad curriculum meets statutory requirements and is enriched well through a range of trips and visitors. The school has adopted good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. Planning for the systematic development of knowledge and skills is generally good, but unsatisfactory in science and the Foundation Stage.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are detailed and helpful when planning lessons. Some teachers pay insufficient attention to these plans. Work in small groups with specialists is particularly effective.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good provision includes withdrawal to receive special help with spoken English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, through assemblies, personal, social and health education and in many lessons. Cultural development is fostered satisfactorily.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care of pupils. Procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are very good. Systems for assessing pupils and giving guidance are sound, though assessment information is not used sufficiently to set work at the right level.
How well the school works in	The good partnership with parents supports pupils' academic and personal

partnership with parents	development.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's very good leadership ensures a whole-school commitment to improvement. Subject managers now have clear guidance, which is helping them to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and plan improvements. The school's aims are reflected well in its work.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their duties well and have a good understanding of the school. They play an important part in setting the agenda for school improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The strategy for appraisal is good and senior staff's monitoring of teaching is having a positive impact. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate targets for development, though some sections lack detail.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the available resources with due consideration of best value. The levels of staffing, accommodation and resources for learning are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>The school is well led and managed.</p> <p>Children are expected to do their best, behave well, make good progress and enjoy school.</p> <p>The school is approachable when parents have questions or concerns.</p> <p>Teaching is good.</p> <p>The school helps pupils to become mature and responsible.</p>	<p>The amount of homework.</p> <p>The range of activities outside lessons.</p>

Inspectors broadly agree with parents' positive views. A significant proportion of teaching is good or better although overall it is satisfactory. The amount of homework is similar to that found in most primary schools, though it is not always consistent within year groups. The range of activities outside lessons is satisfactory and similar to most primary schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. In the national assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2000, results were similar to the national average in mathematics, below average in reading and well below in writing. The trend in mathematics is up, though at a slower rate than the national trend. In English, the upward trend for reading has not been matched in writing, which the school has recognised and taken steps to redress. Results in the 2000 Year 6 tests were similar to the national average in English, mathematics and science. The trend in results is up for English and mathematics, but at a slower rate than nationally in English. The trend in science is down and so the school is no longer above average as it was in some previous years and at the time of the previous inspection.
2. In the Foundation Stage as a whole, children achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points, and achievement in the Nursery is good. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is, on balance, below average and many have significant weaknesses in language skills. Inspection evidence shows that, present standards at the end of the Foundation Stage are below national expectations in all areas of learning for this age group. In the present Year 2, standards are below national expectations in English but in line with national expectations in mathematics. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in English and well in mathematics. Standards in the present Year 6 are in line with national expectations in English and mathematics, with most pupils achieving appropriately but few reaching higher levels. In science, standards are below national expectations at the end of both key stages and many pupils are achieving less than they could.
3. Work seen in art and design, geography, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and religious education shows that standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils do well in design and technology. Although pupils achieve satisfactorily in history overall, the depth of study is too shallow in some topics. The standard of singing is good, especially the choir, and the school achieves considerable success in a variety of sports.
4. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall and make good progress when the work is highly structured and well matched to their needs, such as during withdrawal lessons. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress, helped by the support given in class and additional weekly individual lessons to improve spoken English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Parents report that pupils' behaviour has significantly improved over the last year, since the arrival of the new headteacher. Pupils now have good attitudes to their work and behave well. This makes a positive contribution to learning and is an improvement since the previous inspection.
6. Pupils happily come into school in the mornings and quickly settle down to work. They usually try hard in their lessons and take a pride in what they produce. They show enthusiasm and enjoyment, for example when singing and reading both silently and aloud. In the very few lessons when pupils' attitudes were less than satisfactory it was linked to ineffective aspects of teaching. For example, when pupils were given tasks that were either too easy or too hard they sometimes became restless. Pupils are keen to take part in extra-curricular activities such as the sports teams that take part in many competitions.
7. Pupils behave well around the school and in most lessons. They are polite and routinely hold doors open for visitors. In the playground, they behave well and play happily together. In most lessons pupils respond quickly to instructions and move sensibly around the classroom with the minimum of fuss. In a very few lessons, pupils were slow to do as they were told because the teacher's expectations were neither clear nor stated firmly. There have been no exclusions in the last year.

8. Pupils work together well. This was particularly evident during games lessons but was also seen in other subjects, such as design and technology. They listen respectfully to each other's views in circle time and recognise the differences between right and wrong. Relationships within the school are good, with mutual respect between staff and the pupils. This gives pupils confidence because they know that staff value their opinions. Pupils have been very supportive and caring towards those with more complex special educational needs who are currently attending the school as part of a special project. In a swimming lesson, for example, pupils encouraged and cared for a pupil who was reluctant to enter the water, showing great maturity for their age.

9. Pupils with special educational needs throughout the school have good relationships with the teaching assistants and teachers. They behave well in lessons. In particular, pupils respond enthusiastically to the supportive environment in the withdrawal sessions, and as a result they are developing in confidence.

10. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. The level of unauthorised absence is above the national average and this is due to the school rightly refusing automatically to authorise unnecessary holidays in term time, which disrupts the quality of pupils' learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and it has improved since the previous inspection. In the lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent. Within this successful teaching, it was good in 31 per cent and very good in 25 per cent. In only seven lessons out of over 100 was the teaching unsatisfactory, but it had a marked effect upon the overall quality of learning in one Year 4 class especially. Teaching was consistently strong in the Nursery and Years 2, 5 and 6, but examples of good teaching were seen in every year group and in most subjects.

12. Throughout the school, teachers are successful at teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. In the Nursery, adults are good at encouraging children to communicate and to focus on sorting and counting. A particular strength is the way that, through the Foundation Stage, adults value children's early attempts to write and then introduce correct letter formation. In literacy and numeracy lessons further up the school, teachers maintain a good structure and pace in lessons so that pupils undertake a range of activities, remain interested and work hard. Pupils often use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, though some teachers miss opportunities to plan for this. The marking of pupils' work is generally sound and sometimes very effective in improving basic skills, for example when teachers explain precisely how pupils could improve their work and make sure that it is followed up. Pupils with special educational needs make especially rapid gains in literacy skills through effective and varied teaching approaches when they work in small groups outside normal lessons.

13. Teachers and teaching assistants get on well with pupils and are both firm and fair when applying the school's behavioural code. This leads to pupils feeling happy, learning about respect and behaving in a way that encourages concentration and attentiveness. Teachers are quick to praise and reward pupils for good work, behaviour and courtesy. They are also firm in their application of the warning system. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher's persistence was very effective in helping a disruptive pupil to calm down and allow others to concentrate on their work. Following a warning, there was a brief, private conversation to help the pupil understand how to improve his behaviour. In a few lessons, pupils behaved unsatisfactorily because the teacher had expectations that were too low or did not follow the school's procedures consistently. In a design and technology lesson, the teacher did not insist that pupils turn around, put down their work and pay attention, and the result was that they carried on talking and missed important explanations. In a very few lessons, teaching assistants admonished children in a way that was counter to the teacher's approach and the school's policy.

14. Pupils are helped to work productively by the organisation of lessons, the interesting range of activities and well-chosen resources. Teachers usually have resources prepared in advance so that no time is wasted. In some Year 6 science lessons, for example, groups moved from one table to the next

revising different topics. The teacher was able to focus on one aspect while most pupils got on by themselves using reference materials and boxes containing the necessary resources. Teaching assistants play a key role in many lessons, supporting some groups while the teacher focuses on others. Adults work together effectively, having a shared understanding of what needs to be done and the needs of particular pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants are familiar with individual targets for pupils with special educational needs and these are generally used appropriately to plan suitable work. In a few lessons, however, work does not match these pupils' previous experience or precise needs and this limits their progress.

15. Although teachers generally have sound subject knowledge of what they are teaching, there are some specific cases where improvement is needed. In science, many teachers lack sufficient knowledge to be able to assess pupils' attainment accurately and to plan lessons that build on their previous learning. In several subjects, including English, some individual teachers lacked expertise in particular aspects. Other teachers showed great expertise in certain subjects. One teacher, for example, was capable of giving very good instructions and asking searching questions that helped pupils to build a multimedia presentation on computers.

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

16. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The school offers all pupils a wide and rich curriculum that fully meets the statutory requirements for the National Curriculum and religious education. It is enriched by a good range of field trips and outside visits. There is sound provision for extra-curricular activities. The activities offered, mostly to pupils in Key Stage 2, include clubs for French, recorder, art, computers and various sports. Curriculum planning takes place within year groups, where decisions are also taken about the balance of time between subjects. This has led to differences in the emphasis given to certain subjects and so the school is now developing a whole school overview of curriculum planning (a curriculum map) both to ensure progression in pupils' learning experiences and continuity between years. In science and the Foundation Stage the curriculum does not plan effectively for the systematic development of knowledge and skills and so pupils are achieving less than they could.

17. The provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. Pupils often discuss important issues and share ideas during circle time. Year 6 pupils receive sex education and have recently taken part in drugs awareness workshops run by a theatre company. There are strong links with the local community and the contribution which it makes to pupils' learning is sound. Outside speakers and sports coaches regularly visit the school and grandparents formed a panel for Year 5 to question in their World War II project.

18. The school's approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy is effective. The school is implementing the national strategies in all classes. Pupils are grouped by ability in sets for mathematics in Years 1 to 6 and for reading comprehension and extended writing sessions in Year 6. Extra time has been given to Literacy to improve standards in writing, particularly at Key Stage 1. Literacy skills are used well in other subjects. This helps pupils through practising skills such as writing and using reference books and through understanding subjects better by having to explain their thinking. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily across the curriculum.

19. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils' needs are quickly identified and appropriate support given. Currently, pupils are taught in withdrawal groups for parts or all of some lessons although every effort is made to ensure that they do not miss important aspects of other subjects. This strategy is proving beneficial in developing pupils' confidence in the use of the basic skills of reading and writing. The school works very well with outside agencies and its active participation in a special schools project has had a considerable impact on developing staff skills. It has also had a significant, positive impact on pupils' social development.

20. The school provides well for pupils' spiritual development in some very good assemblies taken by the headteacher, other staff and members of the local clergy. In one assembly, a local clergyman inspired Years 3 and 4 by painting a Cornish seascape during the assembly to illustrate the role of Jesus Christ as being the light of the world. The pupils were obviously enthralled. Some lessons also contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. For example, older pupils had the opportunity to reflect on Bernadette's vision at Lourdes.

21. The school's ethos and good relationships are central to the teaching and reinforcing of social and moral values, which is done well. Teachers specifically teach these issues during personal and social education lessons as well as in assemblies. During these times, pupils are encouraged to think about the consequences of their actions. The system of sanctions for unacceptable behaviour includes time for pupils to reflect on their behaviour and to improve it. Even when kept in at play times, the emphasis is initially on offering pupils the chance to consider how to behave better in future. This helps both their moral and social development. Teachers organise pupils to work in different groupings during lessons and this is effective in helping them to learn to work co-operatively. The sports teams for older pupils are also very effective in building team spirit.

22. Art, music and dance all make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' cultural development. Pupils have the opportunity to study art from mainly European artists. The contribution of non-European cultures does not extend to all subjects although there are satisfactory examples in music, dance and religious education.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

23. The school looks after its pupils well, as was reported following the previous inspection. The good relationships staff have with pupils and the good understanding they have of them underpins this care.

24. Most teachers implement the school's behaviour policy very well to promote good behaviour. The use of rewards such as smiley faces is particularly effective and pupils are keen to have good behaviour and work recognised by staff. The system of warnings is also effective and offers pupils the chance to reflect on their behaviour and improve it before sanctions are applied. The headteacher has very clear strategies about how to deal with any cases of alleged bullying. Pupils and parents are confident that he would deal with any such issues effectively. The school closely monitors pupils' attendance and actively dissuades parents from taking holidays during term time. The school is rightly rigorous in authorising holidays only if parents must take their holidays in term time due to their work. The recording of pupils' attendance now meets statutory requirements.

25. The school takes good steps to ensure the health and safety of pupils. The welfare assistant provides very good care for pupils who have minor accidents in the playground as well as looking after those pupils who become unwell at school. Governors fulfil their role in monitoring the site for health and safety issues. Procedures for child protection are good.

26. Pupils with special educational needs are quickly identified and given good support. Individual education plans have improved since the last inspection and are detailed, with precise targets. The annual reviews of statements are good and the school liaises effectively with outside agencies who support pupils and staff. This close professional working relationship is having a positive impact on the improving provision. The school has rightly identified the need to use a greater range of diagnostic assessments.

27. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment in subjects across the curriculum are satisfactory but the information gathered is not always used effectively to monitor pupils' progress or to guide curriculum planning. An example of how assessment information can be used effectively is seen in English. The school identified a weakness in writing, analysed the causes and adopted new approaches to teaching that are beginning to have a positive affect. A central computer database has recently been set up to store assessment data from the core subjects and data is currently being used for setting targets in future national tests.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

28. The new headteacher has been effective in building a good partnership with parents. Parents recognise this and value his availability at the beginning and end of the school day. They report that there have been huge improvements in the communication with staff since he joined the school.

29. Parents are supportive of the school. They are confident that they can bring problems to the staff, who will listen to them and address any issues. They are impressed with the leadership of the headteacher. Parents feel that teachers have high expectations and that their children make good progress. Some parents are unhappy with the amount of homework their children have and they would like more out of school activities. Inspectors found that the work sent home and the range of activities out of school are similar to those in most primary schools. They agree that the headteacher provides very good leadership, and found that pupils make satisfactory progress.

30. The school provides good information for parents. Year-group newsletters and occasional workshops give useful information about what children are learning. Recent workshops have included one on how the school teaches mathematics. Information about pupils' progress is satisfactory. The annual reports to parents include good information about what pupils understand and can do in English and mathematics. In some other subjects, notably design and technology, geography and history, information on pupils' progress is minimal. In many cases, there is just a grade given for effort and achievement. In most subjects, teachers identify areas that pupils need to concentrate on in order to improve their work.

31. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are now fully informed and involved with the reviews of individual education plans, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Parents who have concerns are able to meet and discuss issues with the special educational needs manager, who ensures that advice and guidance is provided from outside agencies if required.

32. The headteacher canvasses parents' views regularly through the feedback forms. Then the school considers their views in future planning. Relatively few parents help regularly in school, but they are keen to help on school outings and this enables pupils to benefit from valuable experiences. The Harmans Water Parents' Association raises substantial amounts of money to improve the resources of the school, most recently for computers and a new cooker. The school provides regular homework and encourages parents to support their children's work at home.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The headteacher, who has been in post for one year, is providing very good leadership and giving clear direction for the school's improvement. He has a strongly held vision, which includes the desire to raise standards, to develop staff in their management roles and to further engage parents' involvement in the school. Governors, parents and staff speak very positively about the many improvements since his arrival, including the fact that he has opened up channels of communication most effectively and sought to improve the working environment. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has joined the senior management team in supporting the headteacher effectively in this large school. The clarification of management roles, with associated job descriptions, has addressed one of the key issues from the previous inspection. The headteacher shows a strong commitment to creating a caring ethos through the school, and has improved relationships and behaviour very successfully.

34. Each curriculum aspect has an identified subject manager, with one in each key stage for English. The subject managers have recently been given clear guidance, which has increased their understanding of the role and associated responsibilities. In some subjects such as religious education, physical education and special educational needs, their leadership is proving particularly effective. Subject managers are becoming better at evaluating strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and planning for improvement. Provision for special educational needs has improved very rapidly, with especially effective development of the role of teaching assistants. Some managers are newly

appointed and not yet sufficiently involved in the monitoring of standards.

35. The headteacher and senior management team undertake classroom observations, providing feedback to each member of staff. While the quality of teaching remains unsatisfactory in a few lessons, improvements have been made in classroom organisation and management as well as in the setting of focused learning outcomes. The school's vision statement and aims are clearly reflected in its work. The commitment to and capacity for further improvement are good, though will be influenced by the ability to appoint permanent teaching staff, which is proving difficult at present.

36. The governing body provides good support for the school and fulfils its statutory duties. The committee structure has changed since the arrival of the new headteacher, and governors feel the new structure is more efficient and effective. Governors' visits to school are focused as they are attached to year groups. The headteacher and some subject managers report to the curriculum committee about developments. As a result of their visits and reports received, governors are involved in school life and are aware of the strengths of the school and areas requiring improvement. They each have a copy of the school improvement plan, having discussed it at draft stage in their committees.

37. The detailed school improvement plan includes useful analysis of performance data, which helps identify areas for development. Each subject manager has produced an action plan. The format and quality of these varies, with some lacking dates, resource and financial implications and quantitative success criteria. The main priorities for development are appropriate and the school is working hard to achieve its targets. Expenditure is correctly related to these priorities. The efficient bursar ensures that the school's financial management systems are good, and the recommendations in the last auditors' report have been addressed. Careful budgeting since the arrival of the new headteacher has resulted in a large deficit being substantially reduced. The school seeks to obtain best value for money when purchasing equipment or services. Any grants have been used for their designated purposes. Very good use is made of new technology in the management of the school, and now includes the analysis of information about pupils' performance.

38. Although the school has an adequate number of permanent teachers who are well qualified and hold appropriate subject responsibilities, a significant minority has been appointed on a temporary basis. At present, both Reception classes have a job-share arrangement. The temporary nature of teachers' appointments in Reception classes is unavoidable due to admission procedures, but it is neither in the best interests of the school nor of the children. Recruitment difficulties generally, have necessitated the appointment of some teachers without relevant or recent experience of teaching particular ages of children. Newly qualified teachers are allocated a mentor and have the required time out of class to attend training and observe colleagues. Pupils throughout the school are supported well by suitably trained teaching assistants.

39. Accommodation has been much improved since the last inspection and is good overall. It is generally bright and well cared for. The school makes very good use of the on-site Leisure Centre for swimming and sports activities, the adventure playground and a new information and communication technology suite. The latter is too small for the needs of the curriculum and the school's plans to extend this room and the library are entirely appropriate. The information and communication technology suite is not sufficiently ventilated. Most classrooms are a good size. Although the Nursery unit has its own fenced outdoor area, Reception children do not have the same facility. They are unable to share the Nursery area as their classrooms are situated at some distance.

40. The school is well resourced overall. A substantial purchase of new books has enhanced provision for literacy. The library is used well, despite the fact that it is rather small for such a large school. The school has invested heavily in improving resources for information and communication technology and the suite is well resourced, although the number of computers is limited by space. Learning resources are at least sufficient in all subjects, and good use is made of loans from the local library service and of museum artefacts.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

41. The school should now:

- (1) raise standards in science by increasing teachers' subject knowledge and writing a scheme of work that develops knowledge and skills systematically;
(see paragraphs 64-67)
- (2) improve the quality of teaching by increasing the focus on particular teachers with identified weaknesses, whilst continuing both the good programme of monitoring and support and the aim of establishing a stable staff;
(see paragraphs 11-15)
- (3) within budgetary constraints, seek ways to fulfil the school' vision that all pupils have access to a full Foundation Stage;
(see paragraph 43)
- (4) make better use of assessment information when planning series of lessons, and when reviewing the effectiveness of the curriculum.
(see paragraphs 27, 14-15)

42. In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- ◆ the role of subject managers needs further development and improvement plans for some subjects need greater detail; (see paragraph 34 and 37)
- ◆ the curriculum and assessment in the Foundation Stage do not ensure continuity of learning; (see paragraphs 16 and 44)
- ◆ a continued focus on the teaching of writing; (see paragraph 55)
- ◆ opportunities for using and applying mathematical knowledge and skills are limited; (see paragraph 60)
- ◆ continue with plans to improve the information and communication technology suite; (see paragraph 73)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	106
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	23	31	37	7	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	39	691
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	172

English as an additional language	No. of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No. of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	57
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	38

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	49	44	93

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	40	36	48
	Girls	38	38	42
	Total	78	74	90
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	84 (85)	80 (82)	97 (94)
	National	84 (82)	85 (83)	90 (97)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	40	48	46
	Girls	37	42	41
	Total	77	90	87
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	83 (85)	97 (95)	94 (90)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	65	54	119

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	46	51	56
	Girls	47	39	48
	Total	93	90	104
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	78 (67)	76 (60)	87 (79)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	43	52	57
	Girls	45	42	51
	Total	88	94	108
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4	School	74 (76)	79 (76)	91 (78)

or above	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	3
Indian	5
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	565
Any other minority ethnic group	11

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	25.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5
Average class size	27.1

Education support staff: YR– Y6

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	783

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	39

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	74

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	99-00
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	£
Total income	1,097,921
Total expenditure	1,228,388
Expenditure per pupil	1,778
Balance brought forward from previous year	103,333
Balance carried forward to next year	51,564

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	700
Number of questionnaires returned	107

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	37	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	41	8	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	59	5	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	47	20	5	2
The teaching is good.	46	46	3	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	50	14	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	27	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	4	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	50	16	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	53	45	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	52	9	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	33	17	1	19

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

43. The Nursery is organised in two part-time sessions, with a maximum of 39 children in each session. New children are admitted each term (the term after their fourth birthday) and are grouped according to the term in which they enter the Nursery. The oldest group move into a Reception class in the term after their fifth birthday. Children whose birthdays fall between April to August move straight into Year 1 in September, and have no time in Reception. Although this admissions system is common in this area, it creates a difficult situation for the school in terms of continuity of learning for children, and for staff recruitment. The necessity of appointing temporary staff each year makes it very difficult for the school to ensure a consistently satisfactory quality of teaching. Teaching in Reception classes is not as good as that in the Nursery, where the teacher is a permanent member of staff. The quality of teaching in the Nursery is good overall in all aspects of learning, but ranges from good to unsatisfactory in Reception. Children who move from Nursery into Year 1 are disadvantaged by not having sufficient experience of an appropriate curriculum based on the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals. For example, some pupils in Year 1 had to be reminded of how to sort objects according to colour.

44. Children enter the Nursery with a range of attainment, but on balance their skills are below average. About a third of the children have significant weaknesses in communication skills. Good use is made of assessment in the Nursery to plan an appropriate curriculum for children. Procedures for observations are very systematic, and give a comprehensive picture of each child's strengths and weaknesses. In Reception, curriculum planning does not sufficiently build on children's prior learning and assumes that children will adapt easily to more formal teaching and learning when they are not ready for it. Overall, children of all abilities achieve satisfactory levels in relation to their starting points, although their attainment remains below average in all areas by the start of Year 1.

Personal, social and emotional development

45. Good quality interaction between staff and children in the Nursery helps children to settle in quickly. The good daily organisation enables staff to give much individual attention, and this promotes children's confidence and self-esteem. Children are helped to behave appropriately and to know what is unacceptable. Staff work well as a team, following children's choices as well as providing suitable focused activities. Children's personal, social and emotional skills develop less well in Reception, mainly due to some inappropriate expectations, such as expecting children to sit and sustain concentration for too long. This causes them to become restless and distracted. Opportunities for children to become independent are limited, and they take little responsibility for selecting resources and activities.

Communication, language and literacy

46. Strong priority is given to this area in both Nursery and Reception, but the quality of teaching is very variable. In the Nursery, children are given good opportunities to develop their communication skills through focused activities, structured play and spontaneous events, such as talking about objects that children have brought in for the interest table. Children regularly participate in the school speaking competition. Staff use good questioning techniques to encourage speaking and listening skills, for example, 'Who are you phoning?' (during role play) or 'What do you think comes next?'. Children show enjoyment of books and stories, and look at them in the comfortable book area. Handwriting is taught well, and children learn to form letters according to the school cursive script. Message pads are provided in the role-play area for children's independent writing, along with a well-equipped writing area with very simple dictionaries. Reception teachers follow a formal literacy framework, which is in marked contrast to children's previous experience. Some elements are effective, and this was evident in children's progress during the week in understanding rhyme, but there is an overemphasis on the use

of worksheets that limit pupils' response. Some children spend a lot of time cutting, sticking and colouring, or wasting time because they are not clear about what they have to do, how to do it, or even why they are doing it. In an unsatisfactory lesson, children were not helped to sustain concentration. For example, texts were not clearly visible to enable children to follow the words, or to look closely at illustrations. Consequently, the standard of behaviour deteriorated. This brought some obtrusive reprimands to children from teaching assistants, which caused even further disruption.

Mathematical development

47. Staff take every opportunity to encourage counting, for example spots on a ladybird during show-and-tell sessions, collage hedgehogs on the wall, or checking the number of children present in the Reception class. By the end of their time in Nursery, most children count to 10 by rote. In one lesson, some children matched numerals 1 to 3 to spots on a dice, and gained an understanding of how to recreate a simple pattern. Children are introduced to language of size, position and shape. Adults make good use of observations to plan suitable future activities for children, which helps them to make good progress. Reception children have a reasonable balance between practical and written activities, but worksheets are not always used effectively. Children's folders of work contain many worksheets that are often undated and repetitive. More effective teaching can be seen in displays, for example where children have used their own footprints to learn about longest/shortest/widest. High attaining children achieve well. For example, they add and subtract simple numbers and can complete a number line to 50.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

48. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world develops well in the Nursery through a variety of suitable topics, such as 'People who help us' and 'The senses'. They have opportunities to investigate and explore objects on the interest table, as well as structured activities to look at similarities and changes, such as the life cycle of the frog. Reception children have fewer opportunities for independent learning, but learn successfully about growing plants and have a sense of past and present, using baby photographs of themselves. Both Nursery and Reception classes use information and communication technology well to support learning. Younger children control the mouse well and operate a tape recorder to listen to stories. Reception children use a graphics program effectively to create flower pictures.

Physical development

49. Children's physical skills are very varied. About half the children in Reception have satisfactory manipulative skills, whereas others use scissors and small tools with difficulty. All staff in the Foundation Stage give good attention to pencil control and closely supervise children's writing, copying and tracing activities. Reception children do not have access to an appropriate outdoor area and so important opportunities for large muscle development are missed. Nursery children who are unable to pedal effectively have insufficient opportunity to develop this skill once they move to Reception. Good teaching was seen when a Reception class worked in the school hall. Children were taught about the need to warm up before vigorous activity, and their throwing and catching skills developed well using different sized balls and equipment to match their ability.

Creative development

50. Children enjoy a range of art activities, including drawing, painting, collage, printing and making models. Although many tasks are adult-directed, children learn new skills and techniques well and then apply these to their independent activities. Imaginative play features strongly in the Nursery, but is developed less well in Reception classes, where it is not an integral part of learning. Children enjoy singing, and use percussion instruments to accompany songs and develop a sense of rhythm.

ENGLISH

51. Results of the year 2000 national assessments for Year 2 were below the national average for

reading and well below for writing. Compared with similar schools, results were well below average for both reading and writing. Test results in English for Year 6 were close to both the national average and the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level 5 was also similar to the average and the school exceeded its agreed target.

52. Many pupils enter the school with significant weakness in language skills. The admission arrangements have a negative impact on Key Stage 1 results. The overall attainment of pupils currently in Year 2 is below average, with few pupils attaining the standards required for the higher level 3. The percentage of pupils in Year 6 attaining level 4 is similar to national expectations, but few are working at the higher level 5. Approximately one third of these pupils are on the special educational needs register, almost all with identified literacy difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress when withdrawn by the support teacher for help with the development of oral skills. Overall, pupils achieve appropriate standards in relation to their previous attainment.

53. Most pupils listen attentively to the teacher and other pupils. Many are confident speakers, some with a wide vocabulary. Technical vocabulary is emphasised by teachers in most subjects, with key words often displayed in classrooms. Circle times help pupils develop the ability to articulate opinions and value views of others. Drama lessons are timetabled for most classes and play an important part in developing pupils' confidence and co-operation. An annual public speaking event helps pupils of all ages to develop their oral skills. Pupils work well collaboratively, as in Year 6 when groups of pupils took turns and evaluated each other's work while using a computer program. Standards of speaking and listening are similar to national expectations through the school.

54. The standard of reading is broadly in line with national expectations by Year 6. Pupils enjoy reading the good range of books in classrooms and the library. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 read challenging texts fluently, often with good expression. They discuss favourite authors, but some are not able to justify their opinions. Year 1 pupils made very good progress as they were encouraged to use pictures, the context and phonic knowledge to read unknown words. The range of reading undertaken has improved considerably since the previous inspection. For example, Year 6 pupils enjoy comparing poems by T. S. Eliot, versions of Cinderella and Betsy Byars stories. Group reading and daily quiet reading times give pupils opportunities to read regularly and enjoy books. Parents are encouraged to listen to their children read at home and the support of those who do has a positive impact on standards.

55. The school's plans for improving writing are beginning to have a positive impact. These include valuing emergent writing by the youngest pupils, providing specific times for extended writing and setting writing targets for individual pupils in most classes. Standards are below average, mainly because few pupils are working at the higher levels. There is a good range of writing undertaken in most classes, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Many of the youngest pupils enjoy writing and have made good progress over their first year in school. They are taught a neat handwriting style that is easy to join later. By Year 6, the range of writing includes imaginative stories, reports, different styles of poetry and arguments. The correct style is used for formal letters, biography and autobiography and newspaper reports. Higher-attaining pupils spell most words correctly, have a neat, joined style of handwriting and use varied and interesting language. However, through the school, some pupils take insufficient pride in the presentation of their work and are not yet using joined handwriting. Pupils develop their writing skills across the curriculum, for example in history through letter and diary writing. Displays in classrooms help pupils to spell correctly. Pupils plan and draft some of their work but not all have opportunities to engage in the full drafting process. In a good Year 5 lesson, pupils had written a first draft of a recount and were revising each other's work in pairs, prior to proof reading and presenting the final version. Pupils use the computer confidently to word process some of their work.

56. The quality of teaching is good overall though it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Very

good teaching in Year 2 enabled pupils to understand different tenses of verbs. The lesson was well prepared, with work that challenged pupils of different abilities and a good pace was sustained. An excellent closing discussion helped to reinforce what pupils had learned. Year 5 pupils enjoyed the active involvement of a game, in which the teacher's good subject knowledge helped pupils to make very good progress in composing compound sentences. In a Year 1 lesson, insecure knowledge led to pupils becoming confused with certain speech sounds. Inadequate discussion led to missed opportunities to develop pupils' understanding and they made less progress than they should. In a lesson in Year 4, there was insufficient emphasis on ensuring that pupils met the learning objective, time was not well used and some pupils made little progress. In general, however, lessons were brisk and good questioning helped pupils to focus on what they were meant to be learning. In some lessons the text shared with the class was too small for all to read and the plenary was ineffective in reinforcing pupils' learning. The marking of pupils' work is of high quality in many classes, with reference to the objectives and giving helpful points for development. Teaching assistants provide very good support for lower-attaining pupils. Good relationships help most pupils of all ages to be enthusiastic learners and behave very well.

57. The successful establishment of the literacy strategy, improvements in teaching and better book resources have led to a rise in standards since the last inspection. The newly appointed subject managers recognise that the scheme of work requires some revision. Suitable records are being kept of pupils' progress with reading and writing, but there are few records of pupils' developing speaking and listening skills.

MATHEMATICS

58. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 1 remained steady in 2000 after rising in the previous two years. In 2000, they were average both in the context of the national results and those for similar schools. Pupils did better in mathematics than in reading and writing. The proportion of pupils achieving at least the nationally expected level 2 was above average, but a below-average proportion achieved the higher level 3 than nationally. Pupils performed at a similar level in all attainment targets. The standard of work of pupils currently in Year 2 is in line with the national expectation. When compared with their attainment at the end of the Foundation Stage, pupils' achievements in mathematics are good at Key Stage 1

59. Results in end of Key Stage 2 tests have fluctuated since the last inspection. In 2000, the results were average when compared with national figures and those for similar schools. Pupils performed as well in mathematics as in English and science. The level of attainment of the present Year 6 pupils is in line with national expectations. Most pupils achieve at appropriate levels in relation to their previous attainment and present Year 6 pupils have made good progress through Key Stage 2.

60. Overall, teaching is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength and this enables them to give clear explanations. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils quickly learned to divide 3.6 by 4 because the teacher was able to explain the approach in a range of ways that suited different pupils. Lesson planning is effective. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils gained a good understanding of the 24-hour clock because the work built suitably on their previous learning and enabled them to apply that knowledge in a real life context at an appropriate level. Overall, the opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics are satisfactory. There is an investigative approach to some number work but too few opportunities for pupils to carry out broader investigations. The well-planned mental mathematics activities at the start of each lesson are enabling good development of pupils' mental mathematical skills. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 count in 2s and 10s at speed, while higher attainers in Year 4 use number bonds to 50 and 100, and Year 6 higher attainers double decimal numbers. Good use is made of resources including pupils' individual whiteboards. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to the pupils' learning.

61. Although teachers set objectives for each lesson, these sometimes focus too much on the activities

which pupils will be doing without considering what the pupils will actually learn by the end of the lesson. In the most successful lessons seen, plans included objectives that focused very clearly on the precise concepts and skills that pupils would be developing and then activities were chosen to achieve the objectives. Pupils occasionally became confused when work that they were asked to do from the textbook did not sufficiently match the work that had been taught to them in the main part of the lesson. Some misbehaviour was observed in these lessons and when work was not well matched to pupils' prior learning, so that pupils found the work too difficult. In general, however, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships are positive. Pupils are mostly well motivated and show an interest in their work. The setting of pupils from Year 1 has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and on the standards they attain because, on the whole, it makes it easier for teachers to set work at the right levels within a class.

62. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has contributed to the raising of standards in both key stages. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of number. Not enough use is made of information and communication technology in mathematics. The good accommodation and resources have a positive impact on the quality of learning.

SCIENCE

63. Standards in the work seen for science were below national expectations at the end of both key stages. In the teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2000, the proportion attaining the nationally expected level 2 was average, but a below-average proportion reached the higher level 3. The results of the 2000 national tests for Year 6 were average in relation to national figures and slightly below the average for similar schools. The trend in the school's results from 1997 to 2000 is down while, over the same period, the national trend is up. Many pupils are achieving less than they could, especially in their understanding of life processes and living things, and in some enquiry skills. Their knowledge of materials and physical processes is in line with national expectations. These two aspects have improved since the last inspection.

64. The overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, and it ranged from good to unsatisfactory. In many lessons, teachers demonstrated a lack of subject knowledge and pupils were either misled, confused or mistakes were not corrected. In a lesson about mammalian features, for example, pupils were misinformed about the meaning of the terms 'warm-' and 'cold-blooded'. A significant number of pupils in Key Stage 2 believe that the light plants need to plants need to grow healthily must come from the sun. In lessons about plants this was not recognised and corrected. Enquiry skills are sometimes taught at inappropriate levels for the ages and experience of the pupils. Some lessons for younger pupils included too much discussion of how to plan a fair test, while some work from older pupils includes insufficient analysis and interpretation. Teachers are not helped enough by the scheme of work. This places some topics in a confusing order so that they need considerable adaptation in order to teach them at the appropriate level for different age groups. In one year group, for example, the first of two topics about forces expects pupils to 'understand' that forces act in a particular direction, while the second topic expects them to 'recognise' the same concept. Some topics planned for younger pupils require investigative skills and knowledge more suitable for Year 6. Teachers who have insufficient subject knowledge are not successful in recognising inappropriate parts of the scheme of work and so plan some lessons that are at the wrong level for the needs of the pupils. This problem is exacerbated by ineffective assessment. Teachers often plan and teach lessons without checking first to see whether pupils have sufficient prior knowledge and skills.

65. Teachers are very successful at motivating pupils. Major factors in this are the practical, investigative approach that is used throughout the school and the positive relationships between staff and pupils. Lessons are generally well organised and include a good balance of direct teaching, discussions and active investigation. In a very few cases, teachers spent too long in discussions, pupils became bored and restless and the pace of learning was slow. However, in many lessons, the mixture

of good organisation and great enthusiasm led pupils to learn effectively. In several lessons, even though the teachers' subject knowledge was weak, pupils made satisfactory progress because their inquisitiveness was encouraged and they worked hard. Year 6 pupils, for example, were organised in small groups and encouraged to discuss a range of problems and use reference books. While their learning of some aspects, such as food chains, was unsuccessful, in other aspects they made good progress. Pupils make good use of literacy skills to record and communicate their findings. Teachers set high expectations in this aspect of science and pupils respond positively. Numeracy skills are used satisfactorily, though insufficient use is made of graphs, especially by older pupils. This limits their capacity both to communicate their findings clearly and to draw generalised conclusions from their own results.

66. The curriculum is strongly enriched through events such as a science week, visits to places of interest and the after school science club. The club won a major national competition last year with its very detailed investigation of paints. Science is led with enthusiasm, but although there are appropriate systems for monitoring and supporting teaching these do not always work successfully in practice. Planning for improvement has been successful when the focus has been firmly on standards. For example, an analysis of Year 6 tests identified the need to raise standards in work on physical processes, and the success of initiatives to achieve this was measurable. In many aspects of science in most year groups, however, there is not an accurate perception of standards and so aspects for improvement have not been accurately identified. The result is that unsatisfactory areas of teaching and the curriculum have not been dealt with and standards have fallen overall since the last inspection.

ART AND DESIGN

67. In the work seen, standards in art and design were in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. Standards in graphic design were above expectations, while standards in drawing were below what is expected nationally in Year 6. Pupils are familiar with a range of artists. In Year 4, for example, they compare the work of Archimboldo, Dali and Magritte while considering how to create a surreal collage. Skills in line drawing and observational work are developed systematically through Key Stage 1, but the same depth and focus is not maintained in Key Stage 2. Sketchbooks are used throughout the school, but the contents are of variable quality: some contain thoughtful portraits that indicate a progression of artistic ideas, others are a collection of favourite cartoon images. In some upper Key Stage 2 classes, teachers have systematically built up pupils' skills, encouraging them to reflect and develop their techniques. In other classes, art does not contribute significantly to pupils' aesthetic development. Pupils in both key stages create colours and shades using paint, pastel and pencils and show good skills in matching colour and tone to mood and atmosphere. Throughout the school, teachers and pupils use a wide range of artistic stimuli from different cultures. For example, the work on surrealism is linked to previous teaching about aboriginal Australian Dreamtime paintings. Some teaching is especially sensitive and fosters an awareness of the value and uniqueness of different cultures and beliefs. Pupils benefit from visiting artists and art groups and there is evidence of previous involvement in clay work. There is no subject manager at present, and issues of consistency across year groups and key stages are not being addressed effectively.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

68. In the work seen in design and technology, standards were above national expectations. A significant factor in bringing about improvement since the last inspection has been the introduction of a scheme of work. This helps teachers to plan lessons that develop pupils' skills systematically and to cover the full breadth of the subject. Pupils enjoy design and technology and are proud of their designs and products. A lighthouse that included a switched electrical circuit was justifiably the cause of much delight and pride in Year 1. Pupils throughout the school recognise the importance of design. Some Year 4 pupils spoke enthusiastically about how they investigate ideas as part of the process. This was while they were trying a range of linkages to help plan books with moving parts. In one lesson, the teacher kept asking pupils how the different movements might be used in their own book designs and

this encouraged them to think of stories and illustrations as they experimented. By the end of the school, pupils are good at considering the needs of the end user and evaluating both the quality of their products and the effectiveness of the processes involved in production. Throughout the school, pupils take great care to make their products neatly and to give them a good finish. Most projects are very practical and relevant and so pupils are enthusiastic about them.

GEOGRAPHY

69. Standards in the work seen were in line with national expectations. Although standards are broadly similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection, there have been improvements in several aspects of provision. The new scheme of work is helpful to staff when planning lessons that methodically develop knowledge and skills. Aspects such as mapping and climate are studied in increasing detail as pupils get older. In Year 2, for example, they gain a general impression of the differences in climate between Britain and Mexico: in Year 6 they learn why the two sides of a mountain range can have radically different climates. Work in Year 5 comparing Bracknell with Alfriston is extremely detailed and makes very good use of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. This work involved a great deal of first-hand experience during a valuable field trip. In the one lesson seen, the teacher drew on pupils' own experiences as much as possible to help them learn about life in France. Very skilful questioning and carefully prepared resources helped pupils greatly to increase their knowledge. They were highly motivated and carried out some very successful individual research using reference books. The subject manager is developing a useful portfolio of pupils' work to help teachers assess pupils' attainment. Some of it is very well annotated with explanations of the strengths and weaknesses in particular pieces of work.

HISTORY

70. Standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books were broadly in line with expectations for the ages of pupils. These have been maintained since the last inspection. Overall, pupils are developing a sound knowledge and understanding. Younger pupils develop an appropriate awareness that life in the past was different when they compare old and new household objects and talk about the changes in seaside holidays. Junior pupils recognise the key features of ancient societies, the Tudors, Victorians and the events of World War 2. The curriculum is very broad, covering a wide range of topics. However, junior pupils currently cover too many topics and this leads to a limited depth of study in some cases. Pupils do not always have the opportunity to interpret the motives of key people and consequences of events. Teachers' planning indicates that they generally plan interesting activities and use a good variety of resources, visits and visitors. Pupils are interested by their work in history. The use of Egyptian artefacts borrowed from a museum successfully enthralled Year 4 pupils who were encouraged to compare Egyptian and modern day life. In Year 6, pupils have researched topics using a variety of sources and are aware of the chronology of events. More able pupils are currently using the internet to find out about Ancient Greek society and are producing their own presentations using computer technology. However, in some classes too many worksheets are used and these limit opportunities for pupils to develop their own writing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

71. Standards at the end of both key stages are in line with national expectations. Pupils of all ages use computers to find things out, develop their ideas, make things happen, exchange and share information and to review, modify and evaluate their work as it progresses. Pupils in both key stages have sufficient opportunities to carry out simple programming and there is some work on sensing and measurement. Year 2 pupils use CD-ROMs in geography when they investigate life in other countries. Pupils in one Year 5 class were seen using a spreadsheet and automatically altering the width of columns. They perceived the spreadsheet as a tool for manipulating data, not as a subject, and this indicates a high level of familiarity. Discussion with other pupils indicates that this high level of learning is not consistent across the school. Older pupils achieved especially well when they used publishing software with flair and sophistication as part of a multimedia presentation. They are also very adept at

finding information on the internet and using e-mail. All pupils know the school code for use of the internet, understand why it is in place and also voluntarily use it at home. When asked about its purpose, one Year 5 pupil replied, 'It's like crossing the road – you've got to be careful.'

72. Teaching in the information and communication technology suite is generally good, characterised by enthusiasm on the part of both teachers and pupils. Lessons are very well planned, with a good balance between teaching skills and using the skills to enhance a particular subject. Teachers assessed pupils' progress effectively during lessons and offered good support when pupils needed it. Assessment of longer-term progress is underdeveloped. The quality of teaching in classrooms varies across the school. Some teachers are experts in teaching information and communication technology, while others are at an early stage of learning. The school is addressing this through training programmes. Good provision is made for higher-attaining pupils by the use of interesting open-ended questions that challenge them to find solutions for themselves. Pupils with special educational needs have specific allocated time slots to practice basic skills in literacy and numeracy using programs that automatically provide work at a challenging level and the opportunity for consolidation.

73. Good strategic planning by the subject manager has led to the effective introduction of new elements of the National Curriculum. The school has made good progress in teaching pupils to use e-mail for communication and to be able to talk about the uses of information technology. Sound improvement has been made in other aspects of the subject. The school has used funds effectively to provide a 10-station suite, which is part of an 18-station network within the school. The current suite is cramped and lacks suitable ventilation. Appropriate ventilation that maintains proper working conditions and safeguards the capital investment in hardware is an immediate priority. The school's plans to extend the network to 30 stations are at an advanced stage.

MUSIC

74. Attainment in the work seen was in line with that expected for pupils' ages. Singing is a strength of the school, with pupils of all ages participating enthusiastically. Occasionally, very young pupils sing too loudly and become less tuneful, but all the words can be heard very clearly. The choir, which is formed from pupils from junior classes, meets and performs regularly, and sing two and three part songs accurately and pleasantly. Their performance of Reach was very uplifting. Pupils have many opportunities to listen to and appraise music from a range of cultures. Pupils in Year 6 showed particular empathy with music written after the death of a composer's son, and thoroughly understood what is meant by inspiration. Pupils with special educational needs made a valuable contribution to the discussion. In the most successful lessons observed, the teachers showed a thorough knowledge and preparation of the musical content, and planned a good range of activities. In one lesson, pupils were expected to compose or perform according to criteria with which they were not already familiar. This made tasks too difficult. Although pupils listen to music in lessons, music is not played regularly in assembly. This is a missed opportunity. Many pupils are learning to play instruments, such as the recorder, keyboard, guitar and violin. The range of musical opportunities offered to pupils has been extended since the last inspection, and the new manager has improved staff confidence in the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

75. In the lessons seen, standards in physical education were broadly in line with expectations for the ages of the pupils. Standards in swimming exceed national expectations with some pupils achieving considerable success in competition. Swimming is strength of the school. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The scheme of work has been effectively improved by the subject manager and helps non-specialist teachers to plan lessons well, so that pupils systematically develop skills from year to year. Pupils enjoy lessons and co-operate well. Suitable emphasis is paid to health and safety. Pupils are aware of the effects exercise has on their bodies and how to use apparatus safely. Teachers use demonstration and evaluation appropriately, which enables pupils to improve skills, but there are too few opportunities for pupils to make helpful suggestions about each other's performance, for example when developing fielding skills. The use of specialist coaching, together with

the wide range of sports and activities offered enhances the provision. All pupils have opportunities to participate in this wide range, with many pupils achieving high standards, especially in field games as shown in their success in area competitions. The quality of resources and accommodation is very good, with pupils benefiting from an onsite swimming pool and a hard court playing area.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

76. Pupils in both key stages attain standards in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Since the last inspection, staff have gained confidence in the subject, which now has a higher profile within the overall curriculum. The scheme of work provides good progression from year to year, so that pupils' knowledge is built methodically. For example, Year 2 pupils are able to talk about a special journey, such as Mary and Joseph going to Bethlehem. By Year 3, pupils understand that a pilgrimage is a special journey. By Year 6, pupils know the significance for some Christians of travelling to Lourdes.

77. In the few lessons seen, teachers demonstrated sound subject knowledge, and dealt confidently with pupils' misconceptions and questions such as 'Do Jews and Christians have the same God?'. Teachers gave clear explanations, and helped pupils to understand difficult terminology. In a lesson about the Ten Commandments, discussion focused on modern day equivalents. However, expectations were a little too high and pupils were given too much information too quickly. They were unable to assimilate so many ideas. For example, they did not probe further what it means to respect your mum and dad. Pupils show enthusiasm for religious education and some pupils stated that it was their favourite subject. In a particularly successful lesson in Year 6, the teacher's very good reading of the story of Bernadette inspired pupils to imagine a place where they felt safe and peaceful. Pupils participate fully in class discussions, and apply themselves well to independent tasks. The quality of pupils' written work varies considerably from class to class and does not always reflect pupils' ability or the breadth of study undertaken. The subject is well managed, and the curriculum is enriched by guest speakers, visits to local churches, pupils' re-enactment of bible stories and the use of good resources that include artefacts and CD ROMs.