

INSPECTION REPORT

HYTHE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Hythe

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 115916

Headteacher: Mrs Pam Fyfe

Reporting inspector: Mr Fred Riches
23235

Dates of inspection: 1st - 4th October 2001

Inspection number: 219053

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 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: School Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Rosemary Dash

Date of previous inspection: 29 November - 2 December 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23235	Fred Riches	Registered inspector	Mathematics, music, physical education and English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14756	John Lovell	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?
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, geography and religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17352	Lorna Flowers	Team inspector	English, art and design, design and technology, special educational needs and equal opportunities	
23812	Carol Slade	Team inspector	Science, history and the foundation stage	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hythe is a large community primary school for children aged four to eleven. There are 274 boys and girls on roll full time and 29 part-time children in the reception classes. The number on roll has been stable for some years. Approximately a third of pupils live in the local area, with the majority travelling from other parts of Hythe and district. Pupils live in a mix of owner-occupied and housing authority homes. Just over 16 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. Almost all families have their cultural roots in the British Isles, with just three pupils coming from other ethnic backgrounds, of whom one speaks English as an additional language. Children's attainment on entry to reception classes is wide-ranging, but broadly average overall. Close to 27 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is broadly average for Hampshire schools. Six pupils currently have a statement of special educational need.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Hythe is an improving school. The school has rigorously addressed serious weaknesses in teaching and leadership. The overall quality of teaching is now good. Pupils throughout the school are learning successfully. Well below average results of tests at age 11 in 2001 still show the effects of previous weaknesses in educational provision, but the school now provides good education through from reception to Year 6 and gives satisfactory value for money. The headteacher gives an excellent lead.

What the school does well

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher, who has created a positive team spirit and established a strong senior management team;
- Good teaching and thorough joint planning ensure that pupils of all abilities are learning successfully;
- A major focus on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes is having a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and enthusiasm for school;
- Assistants offer effective support, enabling pupils with learning and emotional difficulties to improve their attitudes and skills;
- Efficient and friendly administrative staff give very effective support to staff, pupils and parents;
- The governing body effectively supports staff and sets a clear agenda for improvement.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics and science;
- Aspects of the presentation of pupils' work;
- Inconsistencies in marking and homework;
- The narrow hall and the corridor siting of the ICT suite have detrimental effects on pupils' learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The governors and new headteacher have addressed the serious weaknesses in teaching, planning and leadership, which were found when the school was last inspected, in October 1999. The school has made very good improvement in the aspects of leadership needing attention and good improvement in teaching and curriculum planning. The impact of these positive changes is clear in improved standards in reception classes, then a weakness, but not yet apparent in test results at age eleven. Nevertheless, the school is already clearly

effective in promoting good learning. With high morale following the recent appointment of key staff, it is in an excellent position to move forward.

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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	D	C	D	D
Mathematics	D	C	C	C
Science	D	C	D	E

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

Similar schools are those with between 8 and 20% of pupils entitled to free school meals

This table shows the school achieving average standards in national tests at age 11 in mathematics, but below average in English and science. In comparison with their peers in similar schools, pupils did equally well in mathematics, but not so well in English and were well behind in science. In Year 2 in 2000, standards were above average in science, average in writing and mathematics, but below average in reading. Comparisons with similar schools show seven-year-olds doing better in science, as well as their peers in writing and mathematics, but not so well in reading. From 1998 to 2000, standards at age seven and 11 rose in line with the national picture.

Standards at age 11 were similar in reading, but fell in writing, mathematics and science in 2001. This was partly due to pupils' disrupted learning through staff illness and supply teacher changes, but also because the year group, whose results in 1997 tests at age seven were poor, was not as academically able as the previous one. The school met its appropriately lower targets for English and mathematics last year. It is set to meet the much higher, challenging targets agreed for 2002, with standards average in all three subjects at the start of Year 6 in the current year. Standards at age seven improved in 2001, particularly in writing and mathematics. They are average in the current Year 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Children in reception are set to meet all early learning goals by the end of the year and those in personal, social and emotional, mathematical and physical development before the end of the year. Pupils throughout the school are learning successfully.

There has been improvement in information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology, two previous weaknesses, since the last inspection. Standards at ages seven and 11 are now average in art, design and technology, history, ICT, music and science. Standards in religious education are good. Standards have fallen in geography, where they are below average, and physical education, where they are average at seven, but below at 11. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as a result of extra support. Higher attainers are being challenged appropriately in most classes. The very few pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as their peers. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils respond to good teaching by showing enthusiasm and focusing well on their work. A small number find it hard to concentrate.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most behave well at break times, around the school and in lessons, but a small number, mainly junior boys, have developed bad habits which teachers and assistants are tackling well. Rare usage of exclusion has been appropriate.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils gladly accept responsibilities in and around the school, showing initiative in the way they look to help teachers.

Attendance	Satisfactory. In line with the national picture.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Of 62 lessons observed, all but three were satisfactory and three-quarters were good, very good or excellent. Teaching is mainly good in English and mainly satisfactory in mathematics. Teachers focus appropriately on the skills of literacy, making good use of well-chosen texts and involving pupils in active thinking and discussion through thoughtful questioning, listening and prompting. The school is putting a major effort into improving writing standards, which have been very weak. There is still room for improvement in teachers' expectations of handwriting and presentation. Teachers make very good use of questioning and resources in numeracy lessons, which are mainly well paced. There is still a need to sharpen the daily mental and oral sessions, to involve pupils in explaining their understanding to each other and to refine the use of daily and weekly assessment.

Strengths throughout the school include the joint planning and careful preparation of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers have established high expectations, which all pupils recognise and respond to positively. They enjoy their learning in these lessons, because they respect and admire their teachers and want to do their best. Teachers deploy assistants well, usually to support pupils with special educational needs. These assistants make a very positive contribution, as they are well briefed and sensitive in the way they relate to pupils. Teachers in mixed-age parallel classes are working hard at assessment. This is developing well, but still needs refinement. The main areas for attention are marking, which is inconsistent and has previously often been ineffective, and homework, which is not yet being used effectively to promote pupils' learning. In a few classes, teachers still need to reinforce agreed patterns of behaviour, in order to make the best use of time for all.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Meets statutory requirements and is appropriately broad and balanced. Planning systems, previously weak, are now a strength.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans are set and progress towards targets checked. Teachers match tasks to pupils' abilities and brief assistants well, so that they give sensitive and effective support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school has appropriate systems in place to support any pupils requiring additional help. Currently one pupil speaks another language at home and requires no extra support with English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school has placed personal development at the top of its agenda in order to raise pupils' self-esteem and expectations. It provides well for spiritual, moral and social development. Cultural development is satisfactory, but in a mainly white school does not do enough to raise pupils' awareness of other cultures in British society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school offers good support and guidance. Child protection procedures are good. Health and safety procedures are sound. Assessment is satisfactory.

The school's partnership with parents is good. It gives clear information to parents about pupils' progress and parents give good support to their children and the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has worked determinedly to tackle the school's weaknesses. Following the appointment of a new senior management team, the school is now concentrating on developing the monitoring roles of subject leaders, with many new to this role.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Together with the headteacher, governors have set clear priorities and taken appropriate steps to set up effective procedures and appoint key staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Governors and staff, led by the headteacher, have an excellent strategic plan, focused on improving pupils' attitudes and raising standards. The monitoring and support of teaching, coupled with effective in-service training, have already raised quality.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses its funding well to support training and applies the principles of best value appropriately in budgetary decisions.

Staffing and resources are adequate. Staffing is now stable. The school grounds are spacious and most of the accommodation is satisfactory. However, the narrowness of the school hall hinders development in physical education and creates cramped conditions for collective worship. The siting of the ICT suite in a corridor also inhibits learning. Two temporary classrooms are isolated from the main school and this affects pupils' access to ICT, the library and the hall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

22 Parents attended the meeting; 58 returned questionnaires. Percentages refer to questionnaire returns.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school (95%) • Parents find staff approachable (95%) • Teachers expect children to work hard and do their best (92%) • Children are making good progress and the school is helping them become mature and responsible (89%) • Teaching is good (88%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons (54%) • The amount of work to do at home (34%) • Behaviour (19%) • The school to work more closely with parents (19%) • Avoid further disruption to children's education (meeting comments)

The inspection team fully agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. Inspection findings show that the school is successfully addressing the appropriate concerns about behaviour registered by almost one in five parents responding to the questionnaire. The considerable dissatisfaction with activities outside lessons stems from the timing of the questionnaire at the end of the previous school year, during which school had organised fewer activities than previously. The school is now providing a satisfactory range of additional musical and sporting activities. The inspection team agrees that homework arrangements are unclear and have been inconsistently applied. However, the school does work closely with parents, sharing learning targets and providing very good information. The school is very aware of the need to avoid further disruption to children's education and is taking all reasonable steps to provide continuity for all classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1 The considerable and rapid improvements in the school's educational provision have not had time to show their impact on standards reached by the oldest pupils, which remained below average in summer 2001. The much higher targets set for 78 per cent of Year 6 pupils to reach the age-related level or higher in English and mathematics show the school's determination to raise standards rapidly. Teaching and learning seen in lessons at the start of the current academic year show pupils making up lost ground, with most reaching standards on line to meet these challenging targets.

Standards on entry and at the end of the reception year

2 Children's attainment on entry to the school is wide-ranging, but broadly average overall. Children are learning successfully in the reception classes in all six areas of learning¹. Almost all are on course to meet the early learning goals in their personal and social, mathematical and physical development well before they move into Year 1. They are set to meet the early learning goals for communication, language and literacy, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. Children with special educational needs benefit particularly from the reception teachers' structured approaches to play and learning and achieve well. The school has successfully addressed the weakness in young children's learning, reported at the last inspection.

Standards in English, mathematics and science at age 7

3 Results of national assessments at age 7 from 1998 to 2000 show the school's performance rising in line with the national picture. This rise continued in writing, mathematics and science in 2001. In 2000, Year 2 pupils had attained standards in line with the national average in writing and mathematics, achieving as well as pupils in similar schools in writing and better in mathematics. They had attained standards in science that were above the national average and above those of pupils in similar schools. Standards in reading were very slightly below the national average and a little below those of similar schools in 2000. The considerable focus on improving pupils' writing has been effective, but the school is alert to the need to continue to improve pupils' early reading skills. The increase in the proportion of pupils attaining above the expected level for seven-year-olds in reading, writing, mathematics and science in 2001 shows higher attainers doing well. Similarly, the decrease in the proportion of pupils below this level shows pupils with special educational needs doing well, except in reading. Standards early this year in Year 2 are average in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Each of the three classes containing pupils in Years 1 and 2 contains a wide range of ability. Children of all abilities are achieving well because the teachers plan carefully together and set tasks well matched to challenge and support them.

Standards in English, mathematics and science at age 11

¹ *The six areas of learning for children are 'personal, social and emotional development', 'communication, language and literacy'; 'mathematical development'; 'creative development'; 'knowledge and understanding of the world' and 'physical development'. Early learning goals are set for each and 'stepping stones' help track early stages of development'.*

4 National test results at age 11 in 2001 were lower than the previous year and, though the inspection took place prior to publication of national comparative statistics, look set to be well below the national average in English, mathematics and science. These low results stem from several factors peculiar to the year group. For example, the results of the same year group at age seven, with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, were lower than in any other year. There was also a significant turnover of pupils between 1997 and 2001, affecting the continuity of education for the three classes concerned. As the last report, in 1999, pointed out, pupils' achievement in the middle years was detrimentally affected by weaknesses in teaching and leadership. While the school was addressing these, further complications arose, with long-term staff illness and unavoidable changes in supply teacher cover further disrupting the education of some of these pupils. As a result of all of these factors, pupils moving on to secondary education in summer 2001 did not achieve as well as they should in English, mathematics and science during their junior years.

5 Recognising the nature of the year group and the impact of the changes, the school set appropriately low targets for attainment in literacy and numeracy. The year group met the overall targets for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or higher. While the results in reading were satisfactory for the year group, the results in writing were particularly weak. The school's improvement plan continues to place writing appropriately high on the agenda.

6 Results in summer 2000 had shown average attainment in mathematics at age 11, but below average in English and science. Compared with similar schools, standards were about the same in mathematics, but below in English, because of a weakness in writing, and well below in science. The trend from 1998 to 2000 shows the school's results keeping pace with the national trend, but not all pupils have achieved as well as they should in junior classes during this period. The school is aware of this and has taken rigorous steps to address underachievement, especially in writing.

7 The school has set a clear agenda for improvement and several signs early in the current school year are positive. Standards seen in Year 6 are close to average in English, mathematics and science. The procedures for planning, assessing, setting targets and tracking pupils' progress are tightly organised to ensure that higher attainers are challenged and pupils with special needs receive well-planned support. Although not yet fully consistent across all classes, pupils are responding well in the main to the demands made of them. Nevertheless, there is still a need for increased consistency in teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation of their work, which is unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are responding well to teachers' promptings in lessons, but not to written marking, which was ineffective in last year's books and is not yet consistently applied to improve pupils' quality of work in the current year. Additionally, homework books seen show inconsistent application of the school's policy. Although parents and pupils share knowledge of current learning targets, homework is not supporting pupils to move effectively towards these.

Standards seen in other subjects

8 Pupils' attainment in art, design and technology, history, ICT and music is average at ages seven and 11. This represents improvement in design and technology and ICT, where the school has improved resourcing and planning considerably to ensure that previously unsatisfactory standards were raised. Pupils are improving their ICT skills with the very good support of their teachers and the librarian, despite cramped, difficult conditions in the corridor. Standards in religious education are above average, with significant numbers of pupils exceeding the requirements of the local agreed syllabus at ages seven and 11. Teachers present the subject imaginatively and this catches pupils' interest so that they participate fully, through role-play for example, sharing ideas and views

in a lively manner. Standards have fallen, however, in geography and physical education at age 11. Although pupils' performance is in line with standards expected at age seven, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have missed out in recent years on the breadth of coverage in geography and the discipline and focused effort required to attain suitable standards in physical education by age 11. Teachers are working hard to overcome this, but at this early stage in the year, several lessons lack the pace and urgency required to raise pupils' expectations and help them realise what they can achieve. The narrow hall presents an additional difficulty for teachers working to improve pupils' gymnastic and dance skills in cramped circumstances.

Achievement by different groups of pupils

9 There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment overall. Girls did not do as well as boys at age 11 in 2001 and the school is aware of this, but it is not part of a pattern. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving well in almost all subjects, particularly literacy and numeracy and in ICT sessions, as a result of well-matched tasks and sensitive support from assistants. This had clearly not been the case in the previous year, where work samples seen from Years 3 to 6 show careless work by the least able, particularly in Years 3 and 4. There was also a drop in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 at age 11 in English, mathematics and science in 2001. The school is alert to the need to raise expectations for pupils of all abilities in Years 3 to 6. An increase in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 3 at age seven shows that the school is successfully challenging higher attainers in Years 1 and 2. The very small number of pupils from ethnic minorities make similar progress to their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes to school

10 Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school are a strength. Ninety-five per cent of parents state that their children like school. Pupils value school and what it has to offer, with over one third of the pupils in junior classes participating in one or more extra-curricular activities. Pupils' attitudes to work and play, their good behaviour and relationships, their readiness to accept personal responsibility and respond to opportunities to display initiative make a positive contribution to their learning. These attitudes are similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection, but pupils now display more independence in their learning and responsibility within the school community because staff provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop these attributes.

11 When the pace and challenge is good, as in the large majority of lessons, pupils sustain their concentration well, undertaking work with interest and enthusiasm. For example, pupils in reception fully enjoy observing and describing what happens when common household substances such as soap powder and salt are added to a jug of clear tap water. In another example, Year 3/4 pupils eagerly use CD-ROMs and books to research a history topic, thoughtfully discussing their findings with each other. In a very small number of lessons, when pupils are not fully engaged in an activity or when management strategies are less secure, pupils are occasionally less focused.

Behaviour

12 The behaviour of pupils is generally good in the classroom, in the hall at lunchtime and at play, although, on occasions, a small number of pupils misbehave or fail to follow teachers' instructions. However, on such occasions, the concentration and interest of pupils and the effectiveness of teachers in managing pupils' behaviour usually ensures that it does not disrupt the learning of others. Pupils recognise the importance of good behaviour and positive attitudes in creating an environment in which all pupils can learn.

They are very orderly in their movement around the school. They are courteous and polite. They are trustworthy and look after equipment, resources and property very well. There are no signs of graffiti or litter within the school. Pupils are very conscious of others and know that bullying, racism and oppressive behaviour are wrong, that they can ask staff for support if they have any concerns and that any incidents are dealt with effectively. The headteacher has made very limited use of exclusion during the past year on rare, but appropriate occasions. Behaviour support plans are effective in enabling pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to develop a positive attitude towards school and learning. Overall, the good standards of behaviour make a positive contribution to learning.

Personal development and relationships

13 Pupils usually listen carefully to teachers and to each other, and the good relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and adults working in the school, provide a constructive learning environment in which all pupils confidently contribute and share ideas to extend their thinking and understanding. Pupils display sensitivity and consideration for other people's feelings, values and beliefs and have a good understanding of the impact of their actions and words on others. They work effectively on their own and with others, sharing resources, co-operating and collaborating well with one another. For example, pupils in a Year 3/4 science lesson were able to choose their own partners and collaborate well to develop theories about how much water plants need and plan an investigation. They listened carefully to each other's ideas and, as a consequence, were able to explain how they had planned their investigation. Throughout the school, pupils take responsibility for tasks within the classroom. As they get older, they take increasing responsibility for their own learning, behaviour and actions within classrooms and around the school, as part of a community that cares for and values all of its members and visitors. This makes a positive contribution to the pupils' personal development and their acquisition of skills.

Attendance

14 Overall levels of attendance are satisfactory and have remained broadly similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. Punctuality has improved since the previous inspection, although a small number of pupils are still regularly late. The level crossing, in the adjoining one way street, does not operate to a timetable and sometimes its extended closure can delay the arrival of some pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

Teaching is of overall good quality

15 The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school. All but three of the lessons observed were satisfactory, with almost three-quarters of good quality or better. More than one in four lessons were very good or excellent. The very high quality and good teaching is spread fairly evenly across the school. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when teaching in approximately a third of lessons was of good quality but around one in eight lessons was unsatisfactory. The improvements stem from better planning and assessment, together with the introduction of monitoring of teaching, with written and oral feedback from the headteacher. Weaknesses in teaching were a key issue at the last inspection. The school has addressed them rigorously and made good improvement by raising the overall quality of teaching considerably.

The good quality teaching is promoting successful learning

16 The result of this good teaching is that pupils in almost all lessons are making progress at least as fast as they should and often quicker. This represents a big improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Years 3 and 4, where pupils' learning was unsatisfactory. A major reason for the improved achievement observed among older pupils is their positive

attitude to learning. Unsatisfactory attitudes in junior classes were not apparent at the last inspection, but were recognised by the new headteacher and governors, as well as during later monitoring visits in 2000 by the local education authority and Her Majesty's Inspectors. The improvement in pupils' attitudes this term is because lessons are carefully planned and teachers let pupils know the aim behind the activities and their expectations. In about a quarter of lessons, pupils make very good or excellent progress as a result of the very high quality of teaching. In a very small number of lessons, pupils do not achieve as well as they should, mainly because of inattention or lack of application. Comparisons of work being done at the end of the first month of this school year, in a more settled staffing situation, with work samples from the whole of the last school year show children in Years 3 to 6 are making much better progress this year. Staff, parents and governors remark on the difference in atmosphere in the school. Boys and girls learn equally successfully, teachers involving them equally through their questioning. The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, including one speaking English as an additional language, learn successfully because their teachers know and encourage them well. The teaching of literacy is good, with due attention given to developing pupils' awareness of phonics. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall, though there is still considerable variation in the pace and quality of questioning in these lessons.

Teaching of pupils with special educational needs

17 The teaching of children with special educational needs is well matched to their learning requirements. Individual education plans are well structured and every effort is made to ensure that the learning activities are suited to each child's needs. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils participate fully in lessons and develop improved concentration by skilfully supporting them. Where appropriate, specific advice is sought and acted on from other agencies. The progress pupils make towards learning targets is sensitively monitored and adjustments to teaching made as appropriate.

Teaching in reception classes

18 The quality of teaching in reception is good overall. Teachers plan effectively together, with the more experienced co-ordinator for the foundation stage supporting the newer teacher as they both prepare suitably structured play and learning experiences for their children. Teachers make these experiences enjoyable. They employ effective teaching methods, using a range of senses, which enable the children to become physically engaged in their learning.

Strengths in Years 1 to 6

19 In the best lessons in both infant and junior classes, teachers welcome pupils' contributions and pick up on what they are saying, asking them to clarify and express their own understanding. These lessons are very well planned and teachers convey their own interest in the lesson content by the sincerity of their tone and use of their voices and body language. Another highlight of the best teaching in Years 1 to 6 is teachers' ability manage one or two individual pupils' challenging behaviour without interrupting the flow of the lesson and to engage the interest of the whole class through very well structured questioning and active listening. In one excellent mathematics lesson in a Year 5/6 class, the teacher set tasks to challenge higher and average attainers and deployed an assistant very successfully to work on identified gaps in the knowledge of pupils with special educational needs. The teacher's and assistant's questioning and prompting ensured that all pupils worked to the best of their ability. Everyone knew how much time was available to complete the task and all were fully focused during the activity part of the session. Also of particular note was the teacher's use of techniques to ensure rapid attention from the whole class during introductory and plenary sessions. In a class containing a number of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs, the pupils' respect for their teacher was

apparent in their readiness and enthusiasm to listen to each other and explain what they had done. In the best lessons, pupils recognise the teachers' own enthusiasm through their body language, facial expression and tone of voice. Teachers in these lessons share the lesson aims clearly and through explanation, questioning and instruction ensure that pupils enjoy their learning, concentrate fully and do their best. Teachers and assistants are making good use of ICT to support children's learning in several subjects, although the siting of the suite in a narrow corridor sometimes makes concentration difficult. In almost all subjects, teachers show good subject knowledge. Teachers deploy assistants very effectively, especially in literacy and numeracy lessons, and particularly in support of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers have also recently introduced good procedures for making day-to-day assessments and are beginning to use these effectively. In the large majority of lessons, teachers make useful observational assessment comments to prompt, correct and praise, supporting pupils' thinking and learning effectively.

Areas for development

20 Areas for development noted from the unsatisfactory lessons include teachers' class management skills, clarity of expectations and setting the appropriate pace for the lesson. In the few situations where teachers did not ensure that pupils knew what was required, pupils' learning suffered, as they chattered instead of focusing on the lesson. Another area for development in a significant minority of lessons is the balance of teacher talk and child talk. In a number of lessons, the teacher did by far the most of the talking, involving the pupils at best in direct answers to the teacher. These lessons contrasted with the best, in that pupils were not given the opportunity to develop their understanding or explain their thinking. Early in the school year, teachers are not all making good use of homework to support pupils' learning. Homework books from the previous school year show inconsistencies in approach from class to class, which need to be remedied. Another area of inconsistency is teachers' marking, where written comments are not followed up by observable improvement or correction required. One result of this is that many pupils have not made enough effort in the past to improve standards of presentation in their written work. Again, samples from the previous year show teachers accepting untidy work. The school needs a common approach to marking, presentation and homework for each age range.

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

21 The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum to pupils, which is firmly based on national foundation stage recommendations for children in the reception classes, the National Curriculum and the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education. All statutory requirements are met, including appropriate decisions on provision for education about sex and drugs. A good programme of work for pupils' personal, social and health education is just being introduced. The staff work hard to meet the needs and aptitudes of all pupils through careful planning and assessment.

Improvement since the last inspection

22 Staff have worked hard to address the weaknesses identified by the last inspection related to planning of both the work for the youngest children and for the planning of work in National Curriculum subjects. Good progress has been made in these areas and planning is currently satisfactory overall. Good planning frameworks are in place for all subjects and staff are developing detailed plans for units of work in the two year cycles in place in Years 1 to 6. Once these detailed plans are complete and reviewed to check coverage and balance the school will have a good planning structure. Within the frameworks being developed care is taken to identify the challenge for pupils in different

year groups, but within the same class. Planning for all areas of work in ICT is now in place and statutory requirements for this subject are now met. The school is aware that its policies for work in different subjects need review. They are all written in a slightly different format and do not include sufficient reference to equal opportunities or provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Planning for children in the reception classes

23 The curriculum for under fives is planned satisfactorily around the early learning goals. There is generally a suitable balance between learning activities directed by teachers and those chosen independently by children. Opportunities for independent writing could be extended further through all aspects of the reception curriculum.

Planning for pupils in Years 1 to 6

24 Both the literacy and numeracy strategies are implemented well. Staff plan together in parallel classes and this ensures that pupils of the same age, but in different classes, all follow the same programmes of study. Teachers draw elements from objectives they identify for both year groups within a single class. The school has implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies satisfactorily and is improving the consistency of its provision by monitoring teaching quality and ensuring that teachers in each set of three parallel classes plan lessons together to share strengths. It is also reflecting on the effectiveness of current arrangements against possibility of setting older pupils, but is rightly concerned about maintaining stability for pupils after a period of change. In some classes an additional English session follows the literacy hour, which means that some pupils are engaged in one area of learning for an extended period. Staff need to monitor the effectiveness of this arrangement to ensure that pupils do not lose concentration. In other subjects, joint planning also ensures consistency from class to class and enables teachers to share resources and the preparation of materials. Good links are made between subjects, which helps to make the work relevant. ICT is used well in English and history, for example. Good use is also made of visits and visitors and this helps to bring the work alive for pupils.

Planning for pupils with special educational needs

25 Children with special educational needs have full access to the whole curriculum, which is adjusted appropriately to meet their learning requirements. They follow education plans tailored to their individual needs whilst still having access to the full curriculum. The majority of their teaching takes place successfully in the classroom and they are only withdrawn from the class for individual or small group tuition when it is unavoidable.

Equal opportunities for all pupils

26 The school makes every effort to ensure that the educational needs of all pupils are fully met. Boys and girls have equal access to all activities. Curriculum materials and activities are planned to meet the needs and match the interests of all pupils. The school has appropriate arrangements in place for pupils learning English as an additional language. Through its assessment arrangements and sharing of targets with pupils and parents, the school now challenges higher attainers appropriately as well as giving additional support to pupils with special educational needs.

Activities outside lessons

27 Parents show some dissatisfaction with the school's provision for activities outside lessons. The inspection found that this area is satisfactory overall. The range of after-school clubs has decreased since the last inspection partly because there has a high staff turnover and partly because staff have been working hard to improve other areas of the school. Most of the current clubs are connected with sporting or musical activities and are run for older pupils. The school also plans field study trips and visits into work in the

humanities particularly, which helps to make the work interesting. This term, for example, pupils have visited a Victorian museum in Basingstoke, where they dressed up as Victorian children. Every year pupils in Years 5 and 6 have the opportunity to go on a residential visit and again this rich experience helps to broaden pupils' learning experiences.

Links with the community and local schools and colleges

28 The school has formed some good links with the community in order to extend the learning opportunities offered to pupils. These include a close partnership with the local police-school liaison officer and school nurse, both of whom visit the school in connection with the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Local visitors, such as religious leaders, also come into school to talk to pupils about their particular faiths, often within religious education lessons. Several local firms have donated funds to the school, which have been used to improve school facilities. There are developing links with a number of local playgroups and a strong association with the local secondary school to whom most pupils transfer at eleven. These help to make children's early experiences at Hythe and the start of their secondary education positive experiences. The school welcomes students who are training to be teachers and offers them good support.

Provision for pupils' personal development

29 The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This work has a high profile. A good local authority document is being used as the basis for planning. As well as a short time set aside each week for 'circle time' (where pupils sit in a circle and share ideas) or PSHE, staff take every opportunity to raise pupils' self esteem by praise and encouragement. Certificates are awarded at weekly assemblies to reward good work and behaviour and these are then displayed in the entrance hall. The 'Golden Time' on Friday afternoons is a tangible expression of praise for work well done. At this time, pupils who have done well during the week are allowed to plan their own work from a range of activities. This is an improving area and stronger than the already positive picture at the time of the last inspection. All staff are pulling together well to help pupils develop their personal skills.

Provision for pupils' spiritual development

30 The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Although the hall is too small for the whole school to meet together, acts of collective worship for infants and juniors provide good opportunities for quiet reflection. Also, in religious education lessons, pupils are encouraged to explore and think about ideas and beliefs. Both assemblies and religious education lessons are well planned. At other times too, pupils are caught up in feelings of awe and wonder about a particular aspect of their work or play. Some pupils, for example, were very excited about the prospect of finding frogs near the pond area, while others showed thoughtful reflection as they listened to music and portrayed the effect of two contrasting pieces.

Provision for pupils' moral development

31 A good deal of work has been undertaken since the last inspection in order to provide a shared agreement between staff, pupils and parents about how pupils should behave. A good behaviour policy now underpins the work of the school and all are clear about what is expected. All staff approach pupils in a positive manner and foster good behaviour by positive encouragement. Teachers know pupils well and provide very good role models within a community in which everyone is valued as an individual. Pupils are confident that they may approach staff with any problems and they feel that they are well supported. Pupils have been involved in writing the school's 'Golden Rules', now prominently displayed in all areas of the school. Pupils also work with their class teachers to draw up class rules, again displayed clearly. Through these agreed codes, the school is helping pupils

understand the difference between right and wrong. Much of the supervision at midday is good but occasionally staff are not always sufficiently vigilant to identify and address issues. The award of certificates for good work, good attitudes and good behaviour, which are displayed within the school for one week, is very much appreciated by pupils. They take great pride in affixing them to the wall or passing them to the headteacher for her to display.

Provision for pupils' social development

32 Good provision is also made for this area of pupils' development. There are frequent opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills by working collaboratively in class, either in pairs or small groups. An annual residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6 also helps them to develop their skills away from the security of home. As they get older, pupils take on more responsibility, helping at lunch times and in assemblies for example. A school council was formed last year and this provided pupils with the opportunity to discuss school improvements in a structured setting. It has not met so far this year. Throughout the school, however, pupils have opportunities to display independence and initiative within the classroom and around the school, where they may volunteer to assist in the library, with photocopying or other jobs such as litter-picking. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning and research skills through, for example, their use of the library to support topic work.

Provision for pupils' cultural development

33 Satisfactory provision is made for this area of pupils' development. There are opportunities provided for pupils to appreciate the cultural traditions of Western Europe in literature, religious education, music and art, and a few opportunities for pupils to develop knowledge of the cultures of non-Western societies. In assemblies, for example, music from different cultural traditions is played as pupils gather in the hall. In religious education pupils study the beliefs and practices of a number of religions and enjoy visits and visitors from a range of traditions. However, apart from these examples, there is no systematic planning for the multicultural aspect of the school's work. Overall, while cultural development is satisfactory, in a mainly white community the school does not do enough to raise pupils' awareness of other cultures in British society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Monitoring and Supporting Personal Development

34 Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good. The good personal support and guidance which teachers provide assists all pupils to develop their independence within a supportive community and to benefit from the opportunities offered. Outside agencies and education specialists provide good support and advice for pupils.

Monitoring and Promoting Good Behaviour

35 At the time of the previous inspection, the behaviour policy was described as a 'fundamental pillar of the school's support, which has been implemented well.' Nevertheless, shortly after the inspection, the two seconded headteachers became aware of the need to set pupils' attitudes and behaviour as the top priority for the school's improvement plan. The school has introduced good procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its new behaviour policy as well as the behaviour of individual pupils. Staff are concerned to further improve standards of behaviour to benefit the learning of all pupils. They are aware that a small number of junior pupils display elements of unacceptable behaviour and that these need to be managed effectively and consistently, to avoid detrimental effects on the learning of others.

36 The school has a very positive approach to dealing with any concerns about bullying or oppressive behaviour, fully involving parents. Pupils know that they can turn to a member of staff in the case of any difficulties. However, neither pupils nor staff report any incidents of systematic bullying or oppressive behaviour and most problems surround relationship breakdown. The effectiveness of the strategies employed ensures good standards of behaviour and good personal relationships, which have a positive effect on pupils' learning.

Monitoring and Promoting Good Attendance

37 Procedures to monitor and improve attendance are good and new technology has recently been introduced to benefit the maintenance and detailed analysis of attendance data. Parents are encouraged not to remove pupils from school to take holidays during term time. The school works in close liaison with the educational welfare officer who provides effective support in the case of any concerns.

Child Protection

38 Child protection procedures are good, complying fully with requirements. The weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed. The school uses the local area protection committee guidelines. The headteacher, who has undertaken appropriate training, is responsible for child protection and is supported by her deputy. All staff are aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of any concerns. Staff are regularly provided with in-service training and guidance is given to other adults who help within the school. There are sound liaison arrangements with outside agencies and the school exercises its responsibilities with care and sensitivity.

Health & Safety

39 There is a satisfactory awareness of safety throughout the school, which is in the process of introducing a new health and safety policy later this term. Teachers are successful in ensuring that pupils have a very good understanding of safety issues to the extent that they are able to warn the local vicar, taking assembly, of the dangers of lighting candles with matches! The school carries out regular safety audits and is developing a portfolio of risk assessments. Informal risk assessments are carried out but are not recorded. Appropriate procedures are in place for emergencies.

First Aid

40 Two staff hold current first aid qualifications and are designated as first aiders, ensuring that adequate support is available throughout the school day. The previous report identified a deficiency in the number of trained first aiders. Good care and support is provided to those pupils in need of attention. Serious accident records are very good and minor accidents are recorded. Parents are appropriately advised of accidents and, in particular, 'head bumps'.

Assessment on entry

41 Detailed individual baseline assessment takes place during the first few weeks of children's' reception experience. Individual learning targets are set for each child using the information gathered on all areas of learning. Through this process teachers are quickly alerted to individuals who have special educational needs and support can be mobilised at an early stage in their education.

Assessment procedures and the use of assessment information through the school

42 The school has made sound progress in developing assessment practice throughout the school, which was a key issue in the last inspection. The school meets all statutory requirements for the assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of the key stages and for baseline assessment in the reception class. There are clear policies for assessment and

marking, but marking has been inconsistent over the past year and procedures need tightening in order to be effective.

43 The progress of each pupil is being tracked against targets in terms of national curriculum levels in English and mathematics, but this tracking process has not been used effectively in the past to check pupils' progress. More in-depth monitoring of progress against clear learning targets is developing. Each pupil has an appropriate number of targets to work towards over an agreed time-scale. The teachers complete weekly evaluation sheets to record how well pupils are learning. Several instances where teachers had adjusted their weekly planning to accommodate changing learning needs were seen. Such 'fine tuning' of planning is effective in promoting further learning. Parents are actively involved in working with their children to try and achieve their targets, which are reviewed each half term.

44 The quality of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils on their learning is developing across the school, but inconsistencies remain. Where best practice was seen, the marking was closely linked to the learning intentions of the lesson and was constructive in helping pupils to bridge gaps in knowledge and understanding and in promoting further learning. In literacy lessons particularly, teachers make good use of plenary and discussion times to ascertain pupils' understanding of what has been taught. Pupils are encouraged to explain their thinking and reasoning.

45 The school recognises the need to sample pupils' work in order to monitor standards achieved and ensure consistency in teachers' assessment and judgements. Work has begun on this. The opportunity to evaluate the schemes of work, the teaching methods employed and the success or otherwise of the learning activities is also being developed. Regular analysis of pupils' achievements is undertaken to check that no inequalities of provision are affecting their progress, either in terms of gender, ethnic background or other factors.

46 The school has used optional national testing materials with pupils in Years 3 to 6 and set targets based on pupils' achievement, but further analysis has not been undertaken. This form of annual assessment has been under-used. Its thoughtful use will help teachers establish a more accurate picture of individual and class achievement in English and mathematics. It will also enable the school to track the progress of individuals and year groups more effectively. In Years 1 and 2, an appropriate reading test is used to ensure that all pupils are making expected progress, and to trigger extra support if this is felt to be needed. The school does not have a clear system for tracking progress in pupils' writing from Years 1 to 6, however.

Assessment of pupils with special educational needs

47 The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is sensitively undertaken to ensure they receive the most appropriate teaching and are well supported. The requirements stated in the code of practice are maintained and the provisions cited in statements are met in full. Pupils follow appropriate programmes that link into the learning of their peers in class and include withdrawal from the classroom for specialist teaching where appropriate. Thus, all pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. Teaching support assistants know them and their needs very well. They play an active role in ensuring that pupils in their care make optimum progress. They maintain comprehensive records of pupils' responses, achievements and difficulties, which are then used by teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator when conducting the regular review procedures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents

48 The school's partnership with parents is good. A well-organised induction programme for reception children forms the basis for good relationships with parents and carers from the outset. Home visits are established practice and parents and carers are invited to a meet with teachers in school before the summer holidays to discuss procedures and concerns. A useful reading diary establishes a regular dialogue between teachers and parents. The new headteacher has worked together with staff to make significant improvements in the quality of information provided for parents, seeking to involve them more fully in the life and work of the school and in supporting their children's learning.

Contribution of parents to pupils' learning

49 The school works hard to involve parents in supporting their children's learning and the work and life of the school. This partnership is reinforced by a home/school agreement, which has been signed by the significant majority of parents and children. The significant majority of parents provide good support for their children's learning, encouraging them to develop good study habits by, for example, reading regularly at home.

Parents' views of the school

50 Parents are generally satisfied with the school and the education it provides. They are particularly pleased that their children like school. Parents responding to the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection believe that the school expects pupils to work hard and that pupils make good progress. Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with concerns or problems and believe that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. However, a significant minority of parents would like to see standards of behaviour improved and better information provided to parents, particularly about pupils' progress. They would also like the school to work more closely with parents. Over one third of parents responding to the questionnaire wanted to see improvements in homework arrangements and over one half wanted to see improvements in the range of extra-curricular activities that are provided. Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents and recognise the good progress the school has made recently in managing behaviour effectively and consistently throughout the school, to ensure that a minority of pupils do not disrupt the learning of the significant majority. Inspectors judged overall standards of behaviour to be good. Inspectors found that the quality of information provided for parents, and in particular the quality of written reports and sharing of pupils' targets are a strength, although the school recognises that communications with parents on homework can be improved further. Inspectors found that the school operates an 'open door' policy, seeking to encourage and welcome parents to work with staff for the benefit of pupils. Inspectors found that the provision of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory with over one third of junior pupils participating in one or more activity. Inspectors supported parents' concerns about homework and found that, whilst it was satisfactory for children in reception classes, arrangements for infant and junior pupils are not always clear and vary from class to class.

The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress

51 Information provided to parents, particularly about pupils' progress, is very good overall. Parents receive an annual progress report, issued in the spring term. The annual reports are very good and written with great care. They consistently provide a clear picture of progress pupils have made and identify clear targets for improvement, which help parents understand how they can support their children. In appropriate cases, reports comment on how pupils' attitudes could be improved or built upon to benefit their learning. Each term, parents are invited to attend a consultation meeting, which focuses on sharing their child's

targets with them, and an 'open afternoon'. These events are well attended and throughout the school staff, including the headteacher, are readily accessible to parents. Parents whose children have special educational needs are kept fully informed of their child's progress. They are involved in helping their child to achieve agreed targets for learning and in reviewing their progress.

52 At the start of the school year, the staff held curriculum information meetings for parents. Parents receive information about homework arrangements through homework diaries, but these are not always sufficiently clear to enable parents to understand how much homework their children should be bringing home and what they can do to support their children's learning, other than by regularly reading with them. Weekly letters provide good information about the life and work of the school, encouraging parental involvement and detailing key dates.

The impact of parents on the work of the school

53 The role which parents play in the life and work of the school, and the support which they provide, is valued by staff and pupils and makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and to their personal and social development. A small number of parents provide effective assistance in classrooms and the school is currently seeking to encourage more parents to help in this way. The Parent Teacher Association, which is run by a small but very hardworking group of parents, raises money through events such as an 'auction of promises', an Easter Bazaar and the sale of gifts for Mothering Sunday. The funds they raise are used to provide resources such as computers to improve the environment of the school and to provide social events, such as a bar-b-q, for the Year 6 leavers' party.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership by the headteacher and key staff

54 The headteacher's leadership is excellent. This has made a very significant difference to morale within the school and the sharing of a commitment to raise standards of teaching and learning. During an extremely difficult period of staffing upheaval the headteacher has steered the school extremely effectively, leading staff and governors to a deeper understanding of their roles. Having appointed a strong senior management team, the school is now in an excellent position to move forward and raise standards.

55 The previous inspection found serious weaknesses in leadership and management. The new headteacher, who, along with another seconded headteacher, worked on the school's action plan, has developed a very positive team spirit among all staff and governors. The headteacher has carried out rigorous monitoring of teaching and has raised the quality of teaching considerably through this process. The school has made excellent improvement in the quality of its leadership and management by thoroughly addressing the weaknesses highlighted by the last inspection.

56 Systems for performance management and appraisal are in place and all staff have targets set. These are appropriately related to the school's priorities for development, one of which is to develop subject leader roles. With several new staff, including deputy headteacher and key stage 1 co-ordinator, in key roles, the school is set to implement fully the necessary monitoring activities, in order to check current standards and set high expectations. The organisation of classes promotes good teamwork, with four 'phase leaders', one for the two reception classes and one for each of the three sets of three parallel classes throughout the school. The system facilitates small teams of staff working together in joint planning, which is strong, and assessment, where procedures are in place

but the use of information still needs sharpening. The headteacher is effectively sharing and delegating responsibility to key staff, both for subjects and for age groups.

57 The school's aims and values are clearly understood. The placing of improved attitudes as a prerequisite for raising attainment stemmed from thoughtful observation and discussion. The school ensures that all pupils have equality of opportunity. The deployment of teaching assistants promotes a very positive attitude towards educational inclusion. Staff work extremely hard to involve all pupils in all activities. The special educational needs co-ordinator manages this aspect of school life in a sensitive and highly professional manner. She ensures that all teaching staff receive appropriate information, supports them in planning to meet the needs of the pupils and liaises with external agencies as necessary. The member of the governing body with responsibility for special educational needs is very supportive of the school in its aim to ensure that all pupils receive a broad and balanced education and make the best progress possible.

Governors' roles

58 Governors now play an active role in decision-making and the school has made excellent improvement in strategic development planning, turning weaknesses from two years ago into current strengths. All staff and governors share a clear sense of the school's educational direction. The weaknesses in previous educational provision have been understood and resolutely tackled. The recognition of the need to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour, not identified during the previous inspection, but recognised by all staff and governors as the school's first priority shortly afterwards, set a basis for the school to tackle low expectations. Governors have benefited from local education authority support and training while introducing efficient procedures, developing their skills in accounting for the work of the school and acting as 'critical friends'.

Financial and strategic planning

59 The school has excellent financial planning which is clearly directed to supporting the schools educational priorities, which form the basis of its development planning. The responsibilities of the governing body, its committees, the head teacher and staff and areas of delegated authority are clearly defined. The governors contribute very significantly to the planning process by maintaining a strategic overview and bringing to discussions a range of experience and expertise. Strategic planning is extremely effective, marking excellent improvement since the previous inspection, when it was unsatisfactory. It now extends over a four-year period, informing medium term planning and budget setting. Priorities are clearly identified and correspond with the school's current needs. Success criteria are clearly defined, although they are not yet fully explicit in subject managers' action plans. The headteacher rightly decided that teachers taking on new subject manager posts should develop their own detailed action plans during the current term, based on a clear statement of the previous position. There is a close association between educational and financial planning, with prudent budgeting and specific proposals are costed appropriately. Priorities are related to improving pupils' attitudes, raising standards of attainment, improving the learning environment and providing opportunities to involve pupils more in their own learning. Parents, pupils, staff and governors contribute to the school development plan through surveys, which ascertain their views on all aspects of the life and work of the school. Priorities are determined which inform the financial planning in the school.

Financial management

60 The management of the school's finances is very good. Financial control and monitoring, combined with careful review and appropriate action, are also very good and have enabled the school to cope with limited resources, as noted at the time of an HMI visit in October 2000. The governing body, through the finance committee, monitors expenditure

carefully and the impact of its spending decisions, such as the effectiveness of monies allocated to the provision of support staff which led to a review of the allocation of hours. The school uses its resources to very good effect to support pupils' learning. Additional funds such as those allocated to support pupils with special educational needs and the standards fund are used very well and expenditure is closely monitored. The slight budget overspend of one per cent in the previous financial year was due to high supply teacher costs. The current year's budget shows an appropriate balance for emergencies of almost five per cent.

61 Issues identified in the last audit, completed in April 1999, prior to the appointment of the head teacher and administration staff, appear to have been addressed, but the documentation and some records are incomplete. The school's finances are regularly reconciled and appropriate financial regulations and records are in place, such as a register of staff and governors' pecuniary interests.

62 The school's use of new technology to support management is good and recently the maintenance and analysis of attendance records has been transferred to a computer system. Computers are used to maintain the school's financial records, to record pupils' personal details and for word processing. The school has not yet developed the use of new technology to include the recording of assessment data.

Applying the principles of best value

63 The school's procedures for ensuring best value are very good and results and expenditure are compared with those of other schools within the same education authority and nationally. Staff, parents, governors, the local education authority and other appropriate agencies are fully consulted and their views and comments carefully analysed to inform planning. The school is also beginning to involve pupils more fully in its decision-making. The members of the governing body ask pertinent questions, effectively and constructively challenge and many of them are able to fulfil their role as 'critical friends' very well. The use of competition is well established in determining how goods and services can be best provided and this is exemplified by the careful consideration of ways in which further computers could be provided, taking account not only of cost but also of effectiveness and the school's needs. The school and governors view best value as a means to providing continuous improvement.

64 Taking account of the context of the school, children's attainment on entry, the quality of teaching and education provided, the progress pupils make, the standards currently being attained and the levels of expenditure, the value for money provided by the school is satisfactory.

Staffing

65 There is an adequate number of suitably trained and qualified teachers, with a good balance of experienced and recently qualified teachers. New and less experienced teachers are well supported through joint year group planning meetings and friendly supportive staff relationships. A useful school handbook keeps everyone informed about routine management issues, policies and expectations of teachers. A newly qualified teacher receives good induction support from a programme organised by the local education authority. Most teachers have at least one subject leadership responsibility but many are new to their roles and have had little time or opportunity yet to have any impact on standards in their subjects. Teaching assistants are sufficient in number to provide support in the classroom and to work with children who have special educational needs. They are a committed, interested team. Many undertake special training courses to raise their level of expertise. The assistant acting as librarian makes a very good contribution to

pupils' independent learning by encouraging them and supporting them in developing their research skills and through the use of very effective questioning to promote their understanding of how to get the best from a library. She successfully helps to train pupils in the systems used for the storage and retrieval of books. The administrative staff, who are also new, are extremely efficient, have friendly, supportive relationships with staff and are welcoming and helpful to parents.

Accommodation

66 The accommodation is satisfactory. It is kept beautifully clean and well maintained by the school's site manager. Recent new additions to the building are attractively designed and have greatly improved facilities. Extra classrooms have been constructed and beneficial space provided for such activities as music tuition and special needs withdrawal. However, the hall, which is part of the Victorian building, is long and narrow and is inadequate both as an assembly hall and for the teaching of the physical education curriculum. It is impossible for the whole school to meet at one time in it and its narrowness restricts physical activity, especially the use of large physical education apparatus. The storage of large pieces of equipment, including some from the kitchen, also impacts detrimentally on the safe use of the hall. Two mobile classrooms isolate upper school classes in the playground. Plans are being negotiated for the possible provision of a new hall and two new classrooms. The grounds have great potential for development and the school will receive support from the local education authority in the coming months to improve them. The secure play area for under fives lacks a safe landing surface and challenging play equipment. It too is scheduled to be updated in the near future.

Learning resources

67 Resource provision for most subjects is satisfactory. There are a few exceptions. On the positive side, resources for the teaching of English are good. Sets of books for guided reading are varied to meet a wide range of interests and abilities and titles are of particularly good literary quality. For similar reasons the library is a good resource for reference books. The height of chairs is not properly matched to the height of tables in the ICT suite, however, with the result that some pupils cannot position their hands comfortably at computer keyboards.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

68 In order to build on current strengths, raise standards and improve the quality of education provided, the headteacher, governors and staff need to:

- (1) Raise standards by age 11 in English (especially writing), mathematics and science by building on current good teaching, planning and assessment and raising expectations of pupils;
(paragraphs 1, 3-7, 20, 23, 80-89, 90-99, 100-104)
- (2) Raise expectations of the quality of presentation in pupils' work;
(paragraphs 7, 9, 20, 84, 99, 120)
- (3) Remove inconsistencies in teachers' marking and the setting of homework by agreeing procedures and monitoring the quality of marking and homework;
(paragraphs 7, 20, 42, 44, 50, 52, 87, 99, 101)
- (4) Pursue current plans to develop a new hall and classrooms (considering the constraints on physical education, ICT and collective worship in the current cramped provision and the isolation of two classes from the rest of the school); also develop the school grounds, particularly the area for reception pupils.
(paragraphs 8, 30, 66, 67, 78, 79, 127, 128)

69 The following minor points should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Improve standards in geography throughout the school; *(8, 113-118)*
- Improve standards in gymnastics and dance in the junior years; *(8, 137-141)*
- Develop the roles of subject leaders, as outlined in the improvement plan; *(56, 59, 65)*
- Raise pupils' awareness of the richness, variety and contribution of many world cultures to British society today. *(33)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	62
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	13	29	14	3	0	0
Percentage	5	21	47	23	5	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 one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (Full Time Equivalent for part-time pupils)	289
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	50
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	84
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	20	44

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	21	18
	Girls	16	20	17
	Total	36	41	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	82 (79)	93 (87)	80 (85)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	18	22
	Girls	18	18	20
	Total	39	36	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (87)	82 (89)	95 (87)
	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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	29	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	13	14
	Girls	20	19	23
	Total	32	32	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (69)	70 (69)	80 (77)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	13	13
	Girls	20	20	21
	Total	29	33	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (69)	72 (74)	74 (74)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	258
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	3	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)	12.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.8
Average class size	26.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	205

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	613529
Total expenditure	633583
Expenditure per pupil	2071
Balance brought forward from previous year	13966
Balance carried forward to next year	-6088

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	260
Number of questionnaires returned	58

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	43	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	45	9	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	62	14	5	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	48	29	5	0
The teaching is good.	36	52	3	3	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	50	16	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	40	3	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	33	59	5	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	28	53	17	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	19	60	5	2	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	29	60	9	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	12	17	40	14	17

Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number and may therefore not total exactly 100

Other issues raised by parents

A few parents at the meeting and on questionnaire returns expressed concern about the disruption caused to their children's education last year. This was because the school was unable to ensure continuity through the series of supply teachers recruited to cover long-term teacher absence through sickness.

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

70 Children start school in the reception classes at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. Full-time provision is available at the outset for children who are five in the autumn term. Part-time education is available at first for those who are five during the following spring and summer terms. Full-time provision for all children in the year group is gradually phased in towards the end of the autumn term. Most children have had prior experience in one of several playgroups in the area. Very few have attended nursery school. Children's attainment on entry to reception in their social, emotional and intellectual growth is around the average.

71 There has been a significant improvement in provision for reception children since the last inspection. The curriculum is now planned effectively around the areas of learning, aiming towards the early learning goals. Most children are set to meet the early learning goals in their communication, language and learning skills, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world by the end of the reception year. They are more advanced in their personal and social, mathematical and physical development and most have achieved the early learning goals for these areas of learning before the end of the reception year.

72 The quality of teaching in reception is good overall. Teachers plan together, with the co-ordinator for the foundation stage supporting the less experienced teacher in creating a suitably structured play and learning environment. The two teachers make learning experiences enjoyable for their children. They often use effective multi-sensory approaches, which enable the children to be physically engaged in their learning. A well organised induction programme from the outset establishes good relationships with parents and carers. Prior home visits and helpful contacts with pre-school providers give teachers a good early understanding of their children's personalities and learning needs. Further information is gained from detailed individual assessments, which take place during the first few weeks in reception and are monitored by the local education authority. On the basis of this combined information, teachers set individual learning targets and are quickly alert to children who have special educational needs and those who are more advanced than usual in their learning. All children have equal access to all activities.

Personal, social and emotional development

73 The teaching of this area of learning is good and helps children achieve the early learning goals for this influential aspect of development before the end of the reception year. It also underpins success in attainment in other aspects of the foundation stage. Most children enjoy school and are eager to learn. Teachers and assistants are caring and patient. They praise children often and help them to feel confident and happy. Where children are feeling less secure, adults are sensitive and reassuring in their support. There is a satisfactory balance during the school day between activities chosen independently by children and activities directed by the teachers. Most children express opinions and make confident choices. They concentrate appropriately and persist at tasks to the best of their ability. They are usually willing and co-operative and have relaxed relationships with adults. Most listen well and respect each other's opinions. Most understand the need to raise hands to speak when in a group, though some are still learning this skill with the firm but friendly support of their teachers. Older children help younger ones from time to time.

All enjoy extra class responsibilities such as taking registers to the office, tasks they manage confidently. This term reception children have begun to participate successfully in infant assemblies. These lively, daily events are usually well pitched to young children's interest and understanding and reception children use the good behaviour of older pupils from Years 1 and 2 as successful role models for their own. Children receive bronze, silver or gold certificates each week during a celebration assembly. The children learn the school's 'Golden Rules' for living together and understand right and wrong behaviour. They manage their personal hygiene and many are successfully able to change their clothing independently for physical development activities in the hall.

Communication, language and literacy

74 At the beginning of language sessions children are often effectively reminded through action phrases of their need to use eyes, ears, tongues and brains during the ensuing group activities. They have many speaking and listening opportunities in which to gain social confidence and to articulate and share their ideas and feelings with each other. They use all their senses effectively, as well as physical movement by signing, to learn and discriminate letters of the alphabet both visually and through the different sounds they make. The children have a good understanding of how to use books and take pleasure in sharing storybooks with grown ups. They use illustrations to gain a context for stories and know that print conveys meaning. They turn pages correctly and understand that words move from left to right across the page. A few children already attempt to decode some words on the basis of meaning and memory of letters they have been learning securely over a relatively short time. Classrooms have writing corners where children can begin to make marks on paper as another means of expression.

75 Whilst the teaching of communication, language and literacy skills is generally good, there are some areas in which it can be improved even further. Letter formation on published worksheets is a regular aid to children's learning about the alphabet, but there are few opportunities during the school day for children to write for particular purposes. Children regularly hear stories read to them as a class, but there are no electronic recorders with earphones so that they may listen independently to stories of their choice. Computer programmes to aid the development of communication skills are also underdeveloped.

Mathematical development

76 Although some children are still settling in at this early stage in the term it is evident that at their current rate of learning many of them will have achieved the early learning goals for mathematical development before the end of the reception year. Children thoroughly enjoy the regular singing of number songs. Most have a secure understanding of one to one correspondence as they point and count and carry out such activities as laying out table settings in the home corner. Many children count to ten and beyond and select sufficient objects to match a single digit. They are beginning to develop mental imaging and can order their fingers behind their backs to copy accurately the number and pattern of fingers displayed by the teacher. Children are learning the days of the week and gaining a sense of the sequencing. Teachers' planning shows how learning aims for mathematical development are matched with the early learning goals. Assessment and teaching are good overall.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

77 The teaching of this area of the foundation stage is satisfactory. Children confidently explore the properties of materials as they enjoy experimenting with a variety of play learning equipment in the water tray. These include siphon hoses and water wheels. They compare the characteristics of water with those of dry sand as they burrow out spoonloads

to patiently fill a variety of moulds and containers or try to bury objects secretly beneath the sand surface. Some children make fairly accurate daily weather observations and select best-fit picture cards to match with what they have seen. They fix them to a board with Velcro for the rest of the class to see. Both classes have displays of man-made and natural materials for the children to handle. They observe and compare the varied colours and shapes of leaves, fruits and seeds at this time of year. The children successfully manoeuvre the computer mouse to direct the cursor on the screen and activate a process by clicking onto appropriate areas. There is only a limited selection of computer software programmes available for early years at the moment.

Physical development

78 Children have many opportunities to develop their physical confidence and skills. The teaching for this area of development is good overall, though a little was unsatisfactory, largely due to difficulties in class management in the hall. There was also some very good teaching of physical development. Despite the fact that some outdoor play provision is inadequate at the moment, most children still make good progress in this aspect of their learning. A majority of them are set to achieve the early learning goals for physical development before the end of the reception year. Pencils, pens, scissors and many other smaller tools help children to develop manual dexterity and good hand-to-eye co-ordination skills. As children write in the air with large body movements they exercise physical control as well as learning how to form particular letters correctly. In the hall most children jump, skip and twirl confidently as they gain a sense of joy in vigorous bodily movement through space. They do so with growing awareness of and respect for other people's space. They balance carefully as they make their way along a bench under the watchful but never intrusive supervision of the learning support assistant. Working in successful co-operative pairs, many children are already able to throw and catch a ball accurately.

Creative development

79 Planning for creative development is appropriate and supports satisfactory teaching of this area of learning. The use of a puppet theatre is planned later in the term. Children have regular opportunities to stimulate their creativity through role-play in home corners as they pretend to cook, clean and care for babies. In one class children create flowers to give the exterior of their home corner a country cottage feeling. Some dressing up clothes are available but were little used during the inspection. Children regularly enjoy singing songs with accompanying dramatic actions. They have frequent opportunities to draw and to paint pictures, some of which are attractively displayed in classrooms, motivating children to practise and develop their skills. However, there are no free-standing, upright painting easels for indoor or outside use to support independent activities. The outdoor play space, which is underdeveloped at present, has good potential as a creative play area. There are plans to redevelop the outside environment of the school grounds, including the foundation stage area during the coming months.

ENGLISH

80 Standards in English, as reflected in national tests at age 11 in 2000, are below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Results in 2001 are similar to those in 2000. However, the school has met the targets set for the year group. Most pupils achieved as expected for their age in reading, but not in writing. Comparisons with results achieved by the same year group in 1997 show that higher achievers made better progress than pupils whose reading and writing was already weak at age seven. In 2001 tests, seven-year-olds have sustained an improvement in writing shown in the previous year, when standards were average and in line with those of similar schools. Standards in reading at age seven were a little below average and below those of similar schools in

2000. Results in both reading and writing improved in 2001. Inspection findings indicate that pupils in the current Years 2 and 6 are making good progress in all aspects of English, attaining average standards overall.

81 In Years 1 and 2, the pupils demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning, being happy to talk to adults about what they are doing. The younger pupils develop secure reading skills and are able to apply their knowledge of letter patterns and sounds to help them puzzle out new words. Older pupils are able to apply a range of reading strategies to help them with understanding text. Where pupils are supported in their reading at home as well as at school, they make good progress and clearly enjoy reading a range of books. In Years 3 to 6, pupils read with increasing fluency and expression and are confident in talking about their preferences in reading. Book reviews displayed in classrooms further exemplify the children's growing love of literature and their ability to review and evaluate books that they read. Library skills are positively fostered throughout all year groups. The school has a well-resourced and organised library. Younger pupils are ably supported in their use of library systems, and older pupils use it independently but are confident to seek adult help should they need it. They have a good knowledge of how to find relevant information books in the library and are able to find specific information efficiently.

82 Pupils listen well when involved in both class and group work and are keen to respond to questions. In Years 1 and 2, pupils enjoyed reading about how to make the Indian yoghurt drink, Lassi, and identified the book as being a non-fictional and instructional book. In another instance, they were seen to concentrate well in sequencing sentences for information writing and applied the skills to new situations, such as brushing their teeth (which they also enacted). They support each other in their work, such as helping one another to find words in dictionaries, which they use appropriately. In Years 3 to 6, pupils participate actively in discussion. In planning the introduction to a story as part of their history study on Victorian life, they discussed the use of different adverbs and adverbial phrases to form an atmospheric start to their writing. They listen well to each other and are happy to offer and receive suggestions.

83 The focus on the quality of writing is already having an impact on pupils' confidence as writers. Those in Year 1 are keen to have a go at writing and by Year 2, they are confident in writing simply structured, but quite lengthy stories and reports. As they progress through Years 3 to 6, they develop skills and confidence in writing in different genres and in evaluating and editing their work. The older pupils were observed working on journalistic writing, taking eyewitness accounts and producing newspaper reports. The more able pupils compared different eyewitness accounts to try and ascertain the truth of events. This led to high level discussion, and the production of well focused writing in the appropriate genre. Writing produced so far this term is of at least satisfactory quality and reflects the standards expected. A display of writing about different world religions reflects pupils' abilities to organise and present information in an informative and clear manner.

84 Pupils' ability in spelling is varied. However, the focused teaching of phonics in Years 1 and 2, together with further work on spelling patterns is having an impact. Handwriting is improving. The majority of older pupils are writing in a joined and legible style, but teachers' expectations in terms of pupils' presentation of their work are inconsistent, with the result that some sets of books are not as well presented as they should be.

85 Good use is made of ICT in the learning process. Groups of pupils were observed working directly on word processing, skilfully drafting and editing their work.

86 Children with special educational needs make good progress. They have clear individual education plans that focus upon their own learning needs. Within the classes, they participate fully in the lessons and activities to promote their learning are well planned. Assistants have a good understanding of each pupil's needs and play an active role in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers also recognise higher attainers and set appropriately challenging work for them during group times.

87 The teaching of English is good across the school, although there are variations in teachers' skills. Lessons are carefully planned and prepared. Good quality teaching materials are used. There is a high degree of consistency in lesson planning between classes with the same age groups. Lessons are well structured with an appropriate mix of class, group and individual work. Pupils are given clear instructions and are aware of the learning intentions of the lesson. Regular evaluations of the lessons are maintained so that the progress of children can be monitored. All pupils have targets for learning. These are shared with parents and pupils' progress towards achieving these targets is monitored regularly. Several instances of daily planning being adjusted to accommodate pupils' learning needs were observed. The majority of lessons seen commenced with a review of earlier learning, enabling the teacher to elicit the current level of pupils' understanding. This was particularly effective where extracts of pupils' own work were used to clarify issues that had emerged in the marking process. Where good marking was seen, the teacher's comments were constructive and well focused on the element of learning that needed development or improvement. Work samples often showed less effective marking, however, with little apparent response from pupils to teachers' comments. Samples of work seen also showed inconsistencies in teachers' use of homework in the previous year, with arrangements for the current year not yet fully in place.

88 In the better lessons, teachers use open questioning techniques skilfully and sensitively to improve pupils' thinking skills. This was very evident in the lessons where the older pupils were trying to ascertain the truth of a situation from several eyewitness reports. In the majority of lessons seen, activities and focused teaching were well matched to pupils' learning needs. Where the match was less successful, the learning was inhibited and pupils became restless. The pace at which lessons are conducted has an impact on the pupils' response. Where the class teaching element became over long, pupils began to lose concentration. Plenary sessions are generally well used to consolidate pupils' understanding and to enable the teacher to ascertain if any misunderstandings are occurring.

89 The management of English is good and the subject is well resourced. The co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject and a clear vision on how the subject is to develop. Analysis of assessment results has resulted in the current strategic plan to raise the children's attainment, including the close monitoring of pupils' attainment against their targets for learning. These measures are already having a positive impact on achievement.

MATHEMATICS

90 Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' work a month into the start of the school year are average at ages seven and eleven and throughout the school. This overall picture masks a considerable range in ability in all classes. A significant number of pupils, about a third in all year groups, show high attainment in mathematics. A slightly smaller number have special educational needs and most of these, with the exception of a few with emotional and behavioural difficulties, show lower attainment. This picture at the start of the Year 6 represents a return to average standards, in line with similar schools, reached in 2000, following a dip in 2001. Standards in 2001 tests at age 11 were predicted to be low and show a fall since the last inspection. While standards early in the current Year 6 are

average, the school is aware of the need to raise standards for pupils of all abilities, particularly in the three oldest classes, in the coming year. Standards in the current Year 2 are average, not as high as in 2001 in a more able year group, but similar to those achieved in 2000.

91 The steps taken since the last inspection to tighten planning and assessment are clearly visible. They came too late, however, to have any impact on standards reached by Year 6 pupils in 2001. The impact on pupils is already visible throughout the school in this new school year. While previous inconsistencies in teaching are not yet fully overcome, the strategies in place are raising teachers' and pupils' expectations.

92 Last year's low attainment in national tests for eleven-year-olds, with only three in five pupils reaching the age-related level, is partly attributable to special educational needs factors in the particular year group. (Results of national tests taken by the same year group in 1997 were low. The school had therefore already predicted lower results than in other year groups, which contained fewer pupils with special educational needs.) The target of 60 per cent was set following a high turnover of pupils and poor progress made by the year group during their early and middle junior years. The education of several was disrupted by discontinuity of staffing due to illness and a lack of consistency in supply teacher cover during previous years.

93 Pupils' improved attainment in national tests for seven-year-olds shows the fruit of consistent planning and implementation of the numeracy strategy in the Year 1/2 classes in the previous year. Throughout the school, however, there is room for further development of the use of ICT to support numeracy and for pupils to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects. Examples were seen in science and design and technology, but these were isolated and a clear plan is needed, recognising opportunities in different subjects for each year group.

94 Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use number lines and number squares to help them add and subtract by counting on and back. Higher attainers in both year groups have developed some known number facts in their minds, but not enough pupils show mental recall of the addition of numbers to ten. The least able pupils recognise coins and their values, but have difficulty totalling the value of mixed coins, counting coins as units, to make a 2p and three 1ps a total of 4p for example. Higher attainers in Year 1 recognise how to add coins of different value and to give change from 20p. Pupils of average ability in Years 1 and 2 use a number line or their fingers to help with their shopping for fruit, paying 3p for a banana and 4p for an apple for instance. They understand the concept of adding to find the total cost, but few show a readiness to add two numbers up to ten in their heads. Pupils with this wide spread of ability happily count together as a class in twos to 20 and tens to 100 and enjoy recognising the patterns in numbers. They are all learning the concept of place value, and recognising that 13 is a ten and three ones. The majority of Year 2 pupils fully understand this. A wide spread of ability is apparent, however, with a few pupils in one class still struggling to recognise numbers, while the highest attainers enjoy doubling numbers such as 24 and 130 in their heads. Pupils in one class showed good ability to explain their counting, adding and subtracting strategies, but in lessons observed this practice was not encouraged consistently well.

95 Within each class, the considerable range of ability is again apparent. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of the understanding of assistants, who work sensitively to involve these pupils in listening and thinking during the mental and oral and plenary sessions. Pupils showed good ability to explain their thinking. Their teachers have clearly worked hard at encouraging them to use the larger number first,

to make ten and to partition when adding or subtracting a series of numbers. Adding $16+9+4$, one child added 10 and took 1 away before adding 4; another added the 4 first to make 20 before adding 9. Pupils understand terms used in metric measurement and higher attainers know the relationships between millimetres, centimetres, metres and kilometres. When choosing appropriate instruments for their assigned measuring tasks, a number still show a lack of appreciation of the need for different units of measurement. A number of pupils in one class thought a metre in Hythe would be different from a metre in Southampton. Pupils' understanding in 'shape and space' work is not a good as in number.

96 Higher attainers in Years 5 and 6 show very good mental and oral skills, showing ability to multiply 53×7 for example. These pupils have very good understanding of place value, add and subtract using decimals and multiply and divide using appropriate pencil and paper methods. They have a good command of their multiplication tables. Pupils of average ability understand place value and are able to use methods learned to record addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, but are not so adept at using mental recall, with the result that initial mental and oral sessions show considerable hesitancy. Pupils with special needs or whose current knowledge shows gaps in their earlier learning are receiving good support. This was outstanding in one class, where these pupils made excellent progress, as the tasks assigned helped them use a protractor after recognising that acute angles are less than a right angle and obtuse angles greater.

97 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Years 3 to 6. Teachers are now implementing the numeracy strategy consistently throughout the school by using joint planning for parallel classes, although there are differences in the pace of teaching and in teachers' skills in questioning and ensuring pupils explain their mathematical understanding. Pupils in the mixed-age classes are covering the appropriate activities for each year group, as lesson plans show the expectations for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils separately. The best teaching was characterised by excellent questioning and prompting, following the precise use of assessment to target groups with appropriate support and challenge. The match of tasks and the pace of the best lessons ensured that all pupils put in maximum effort and all recognised their achievement when they shared what they had learned in the closing plenary session. Teachers throughout made clear the purpose of the lesson, presenting it in written form and explaining it at the outset. All teachers also deployed assistants well and made very good use of resources. The rooms all include a mathematical area, with useful aids to learning, such as the useful signs promoting mental and oral strategies and the variety of number lines. In the large majority of lessons, class management ensured good focus. A feature of the best lessons was the way teachers listened to pupils explaining their understanding and encouraged them to speak to the class, rather than just address the teacher with a short answer.

98 Areas for development include greater consistency in the use of a quick pace in mental and oral sessions. Where teachers waited for answers, rather than rephrasing or moving to another pupil, pupils became edgy. Similarly, the regular involvement of pupils in explaining their understanding and use of strategies is not yet commonplace across all classes. In one or two lessons, teachers did not ensure that pupils all listened and understood instructions. Also in a number of lessons, teachers did not make clear to pupils how much time they had to complete an activity. Teachers' records show useful procedures for assessing whether pupils have met, exceeded or not reached the targets set for the week's five lessons. They also show an assessment of pupils' current ability against National Curriculum levels, with a target for the end of the year. The common systems are in place, but teachers now need to share assessments across the parallel

classes to ensure that pupils of similar ability in each year group are making similar progress.

99 The school has made good improvement in its provision for mathematics since the last inspection. The development of joint planning systems and assessment procedures, together with more rigorous monitoring of teaching are addressing previous inconsistencies. A few still exist, however. Marking practices are not always effective and teachers are not using homework consistently to support pupils' learning. Expectations of the way pupils present their recorded work in mathematics are also too variable from class to class, though this has improved since last year. The school has been slow to develop the use of information from tests to track pupils' progress. The new subject leader is set to gain an overview of standards across the school, in order to check these and track pupils' progress more effectively.

SCIENCE

100 Standards seen during the inspection, with good teaching and learning in the large majority of lessons observed, are broadly average for pupils at age seven and eleven. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection, but better than those achieved by 11-year-olds in the past two years, which were not as good as previously.

101 Even at this early stage in the school year it is apparent that some pupils are achieving at a higher standard than pupils of a similar age and stage did last year. Attainment levels in standardised infant assessments in science were about average for seven-year-olds in summer 2001. However, in the same school year, by the time pupils were ready to leave the junior school, achievement in national tests had declined for pupils aged eleven, of all ability levels. In 2000, the school's performance was below average when compared to all schools and well below those of a similar social context. In 2001 standards fell further. There are several reasons why achievement was so poor during the last school year. Time was not allocated for science consistently on the timetable. A significant proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory because teachers' expectations were too low. Work for less able pupils and those with special educational needs was insufficiently matched to their previous learning because target setting and assessment measures that had been in place were abandoned. There was not enough emphasis on high quality investigation work that made full use of literacy and numeracy skills. Marking was inconsistent. Where work was not sufficiently and regularly monitored teachers had an incomplete understanding of the attainment levels of all pupils.

102 The quality of teaching in lessons seen during the inspection was good overall. In one it was very good, whilst in another it was excellent. Teachers make lessons stimulating and interesting and as a result pupils are fully motivated and work hard. They relish the hands-on, practical investigations and work well in co-operative pairs and groups, sustaining interest and concentration. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to help pupils to access previous learning, build upon it and apply it to new situations. Very good questioning skills gradually draw infant pupils into observing how bar magnets, with one half painted blue and the other red, have the ability to repel if attempts are made to match like colours. They also confirm that the same magnets have the more familiar ability to attract should unlike colours be matched. In the lower juniors, pupils develop manageable small group investigation plans in order to successfully explore the hypothesis 'The more water a plant is given the better it will grow'. Pupils show good levels of thinking skills. They also have a good understanding of fair testing as they develop appropriate enquiry methods. Many change their original assumptions about the statement as a result of their planning. Another good example of successful investigative science was shown in an

upper junior lesson where pupils revised and extended their enquiry skills. They then combined these with previous knowledge of the function of the heart and circulatory system in order to investigate meaningfully and to quantify the effects of exercise on their own pulse rates. High levels of co-operative learning took place amongst pupils at all phases of the investigation. Some excellent teaching helped pupils make significant advances in their research skills and in their understanding of the physiology of their bodies as they evaluated their findings.

103 The subject leader for science has only been in the school for a month, but has already completed a perceptive first evaluation of the status of the subject and formed some opinions as to why standards last year, at the end of the junior phase, were so low. With his efficient management of science there is genuine potential for standards to be improved. He has begun to prepare an action plan, which will form the basis for a four-year development cycle. As an excellent role model for the teaching of science, he has great potential as an in-service training resource for raising and maintaining high teaching standards throughout the school.

104 Parents have worked hard this year and funded efforts to improve the pond area. The school is one of just a few in the local education authority to receive support to further develop the environment of the school grounds for curriculum use, which will include science. The subject leader is alert to the potential development of literacy skills for science, such as report writing, to be integrated into the literacy hour with a similar development for science numeracy skills. ICT is used insufficiently to support the science curriculum. Whilst some resources are adequate for whole class investigations resource development is identified as a focus for future growth.

ART AND DESIGN

105 The satisfactory standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained at ages seven and eleven and pupils throughout the school achieve well. Comprehensive portfolios of pupils' artwork collected over the key stages exemplify their development in artistic skills. Although no samples of three-dimensional work were available, photographs of models pupils had made, using a range of techniques such as building structures using paper and paste, clay tiles, clay models illustrate the good standard of work achieved. Work on display, such as the printing of repeated patterns, is well annotated to explain the study and thought that goes into producing the finished work. In Years 1 and 2, observational work in drawing and colouring leaves illustrated the pupils' growing ability to observe closely and to mix oil pastels to create different tones.

106 A limited number of lessons were observed, but in these it was evident that pupils greatly enjoy art lessons and work with concentration and enthusiasm. In Years 1 and 2, pupils were drawing a pineapple. Before they commenced the activity, they were encouraged to make their own observations. When the teacher cut the pineapple, their curiosity was really aroused, sparking such comments as 'It's bright yellow!' 'Look at the juice!' In commencing the drawing activity, their attention was drawn to earlier work they had done on colour mixing and they were given opportunity to select which colour paper to work on. They set to work, observing and commenting on the form and colours. By the end of the afternoon, they had all produced good quality drawings, reflecting the effort that they had put in. In a Year 5/6 class, the pupils were working on portraits. They studied and discussed a selection of portraits from Tudor times, giving consideration to proportion, use of colour and shading. They then commenced work on portraits of each other, studying each other carefully, and discussing techniques. They worked very sensibly and

maintained a good level of concentration. They were happy to evaluate their work and sought and accepted guidance from the teacher.

107 The lessons seen were well planned and prepared. The teachers introduce the lessons clearly, building on work carried out so far. They show good subject knowledge and encourage pupils as they work and guide them in using different techniques. Pupils are well motivated and learn successfully as a result of teachers' careful organisation, good relationships, high expectations and good use of prompting and praise.

108 The subject is well managed by an experienced and knowledgeable subject leader. The scheme of work is comprehensive and designed to promote progression in learning and experience of different media. Links with other subjects are made as appropriate and help to enrich the learning experiences. The portfolios of pupils' work are a valuable exemplification of the standards achieved. The focused annotation of these samples is helpful in moderating standards across the school. The resources for art are sufficient and of high quality. Pupils enjoy a good breadth of experience, using a range of media. A greater focus on the teaching of skills, using examples of work by higher attainers, will raise standards still further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109 Standards are in line with expectations at ages seven and eleven and there has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the junior years, where evidence of good quality work having taken place in the previous academic year was seen. The samples of the children's work in Year 6, in designing and making slippers, included detailed advance planning and research, the production of the slippers and a following evaluation. These were of good quality and when compared to standards of attainment in earlier year groups, demonstrated good progression in learning.

110 A limited number of lessons were seen. In these, pupils were enthusiastic about their work. In Years 1 and 2, the pupils had already planned and designed the fruit salads they were to make. They responded well in discussion and had clearly gained an understanding of associated health and safety factors. They worked well together in their groups, explaining their reasons for including certain fruits. All participated in the activity, pupils with special educational needs receiving appropriate support from an assistant. The lesson was well planned and prepared and the teacher gave clear instructions and explanations ensuring each pupil knew what to do. Links with literacy work were well used in supporting pupils in writing reports of what they had achieved.

111 In a Year 3/4 lesson, pupils reported back to the class on the research into sandwich preferences that they had undertaken for homework. All had attempted this work, and were keen to share their findings. This led to a quality discussion on food values and the components of a balanced diet. The children listened well to each other and to their teacher, asked questions and volunteered appropriate information. By the end of the lesson, they had gained a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet, and how a well-designed sandwich could be a nutritious component of a healthy diet. Again this lesson was well prepared and sharply focused in promoting pupils' learning.

112 The subject leader manages the subject well. The scheme of work is comprehensive and meets all the elements described in the National Curriculum. The units of work ensure that the acquisition of skills and progression in learning and takes place. All units feature ideas and suggestions and are appropriately resourced. The evaluation element of the subject is given due regard and this enables pupils to become involved in assessing and

evaluating their own work. Good links are made with other subjects, especially mathematics, where data handling and measuring are key elements in much of the work undertaken, and English, where speaking and listening skills are fostered through discussion. Care is taken to ensure that all pupils participate in the practical nature of this subject. An area for development is the use of assessment at the end of units, to check which pupils have met requirements and whether any have exceeded them or not managed to meet them. This information can then be used in future planning of support and challenge.

GEOGRAPHY

113 There was very little evidence of pupils' work in geography at the time of the inspection. No lessons were timetabled because geography alternates with history in half-termly blocks. Work kept from last year showed the areas of study tackled, but consisted of photocopied sheets and maps, with very little of pupils' own work. In conversation with pupils in both Years 2 and 6 it was evident that their skills, knowledge and understanding were not as good as one would expect for their age. This means that the subject has slipped backwards since the last inspection, when standards were in line with those expected for pupils' age and progress was satisfactory through the school.

114 There are several reasons for this apparent lack of development in geography. Firstly staff have, quite rightly, been focussing their attentions on driving up standards in English and mathematics, which means that geography has had a relatively low profile. Secondly the subject leader has only recently taken on responsibility for the subject and so has not had opportunity to develop planning or her monitoring role sufficiently.

115 There are some strengths in the work. Mapwork, for example, is given a high priority. Younger pupils recalled with enjoyment the maps that they had drawn to show their route to school and Humpty Dumpty's route to the hospital. In Years 3 and 4 pupils use a variety of different scale maps in their Portsmouth study and older pupils look at world and continent maps in their study of Kershapur. They achieve satisfactorily within a limited area, but pupils' mapwork skills are not as developed as they should be. Older pupils, for example, have little understanding of co-ordinate work with more than one figure, they find difficulty in identifying continents on a globe and are unaware of the position or significance of latitudinal lines, such as the equator.

116 Field study work is also used well to make the subject interesting and relevant. A trip within the local area, or further afield, is a feature of most of the study units. In Years 1 and 2, pupils have visited Lepe beach. This was an interesting study, with good links with science. Pupils recalled how they had followed a route to the beach and what they saw. There was a limited amount of recorded work. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 did not record what they had learnt in any depth on a very interesting field study trip to Portsmouth. Their work was not well presented and there was little evidence in the work sample of higher attaining pupils achieving more than their peers. A river study is planned in Years 5 and 6. This had to be abandoned last year because of the flooding in the area, but is a well-planned piece of work.

117 Teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory, with some areas for development. These include planning work to challenge all pupils, higher expectations of work presentation and completion of work and over dependence on photocopied sheets. Strengths include joint planning and interesting topics.

118 However, the prospect for the future is a positive one. The subject leader is very well qualified and is able to offer good support to staff. There is a clear plan for future developments, including planning in opportunities to develop extended writing, improving the use of ICT, developing a portfolio of work to be used as an exemplar and improving planning to match the learning needs of all pupils. Resources are generally adequate. They would be easier to use if they were organised into topic boxes or packs.

HISTORY

119 Judgements are made on evidence gathered from the observation of two lessons in junior classes, an analysis of pupils' previous work, displays around the school and discussions with the new subject leader for history.

120 No lessons were observed in Years 1 and 2. On the basis of evidence from last year's work, attainment in history for pupils at the infant stage is around the level to be expected for pupils at age seven. Standards in history at age 11, judging from lessons seen, are also around the average. Across the school they are now at a similar level to those identified during the previous inspection. However, standards at the junior stage dipped to unsatisfactory levels during the previous school year because topics were poorly planned and managed and teachers' expectations were low. Consequently, pupils' learning was superficial, significant amounts of work were unfinished and pupils showed insufficient pride in the presentation of their work.

121 During their time in the infants, pupils are given an effective grounding in the early skills of historical enquiry. They understand that knowledge of the past depends on what is left behind after living things have moved on. They explore kitchen waste from a modern family's rubbish bag and make appropriate deductions on the basis of the evidence before them. They look carefully at artefacts from 20th century kitchens and compare them with those in use today. Previous work shows how pupils have role-played as eyewitnesses to memorable historical events making good use of literacy skills. They make detailed step by step reports on the Great Fire of London and illustrate their narrative with lively pictures or write extended diaries of events.

122 The quality of teaching in lessons seen in the junior years is good. Teachers give pupils access to a wide variety of interesting historical evidence. Pupils are challenged and motivated by the information at their disposal and tasks set for them. For example, lower juniors carefully combine knowledge they have gained from a recent visit to a museum with information from books. They then construct an accessible, sequential timeline of key events which enables them to see how gradually, changes were made through legislation to improve the harsh lives of working class Victorian children. Good use is made of information technology, as pupils access a variety of additional sources to gather information. Upper juniors extend their knowledge of life in Tudor times as they explore with interest the outcome of each of the marriages of Henry VIII. The teacher provides well-judged pictorial resources, showing revealing portraits, painted in their lifetime of Henry and his six wives. These make a significant impact on pupils' learning. Pupils make interesting observations about each picture and explore the King's varied motives for each of his marriages. They make good use of previous historical evidence gathered from books, video sources and a recent well timed television series which many have been motivated to watch at home. Pupils recently enjoyed a successful Tudor music afternoon. Rich opportunities were provided for them to experience musical instruments which would have been familiar to the ears of Tudor kings and queens and compositions to which they may have danced and sung.

123 A new subject leader has been in place since the beginning of this term but as yet she has had little time to review and influence the profile of history in the subject curriculum. An appropriate curriculum map is in place, which forms the basis of teachers' planning over a two year cycle. As yet there is no agreed assessment process to accurately measure pupils' levels of achievement in history. Book resources for the teaching of history projects are generally good as are information and communication technology resources. Whilst the school's own resources for history are satisfactory, good use is made of the local education authority's historical artefacts bank. Pupils also enjoy a variety of relevant extra curricular experiences to museums and places of historical interest.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

124 The school has made great strides in its provision for work in ICT since the last inspection and these improvements are beginning to drive up standards. At the time of the last inspection resources were limited and those available were under-used, some staff lacked subject expertise and there was not full coverage of National Curriculum requirements. The whole area was identified as one needing substantial improvement. Staff and governors have worked hard to address the identified weaknesses. Consequently pupils are now achieving well and in the work seen pupils at ages seven and 11 and throughout the school are reaching levels expected for their age.

125 In Years 1 and 2 lessons, for example, pupils used information previously gathered to make pictograms. They worked very well in pairs to select information and entered this onto their graphs. All concentrated well and most worked very quickly. They used their ICT skills well. All, for example, were confident in printing their own work unaided. In Years 3 and 4, pupils were editing text during the inspection. Most used the cursor well to insert text and tool buttons to change font, print size and colour. Some knew how to use the spell check facility. Some pupils' key board skills were more advanced than others. Few, for example, were consistent in their use of the space bar to mark the gaps between words. In Years 5 and 6, pupils used the computers to access stored information in order to frame questions about the planets. Pupils loaded the programme confidently from disk, and explored it in order to find what they needed. Again they worked well in pairs and supported and helped each other sensibly.

126 Pupils' work shows that they use their ICT skills well in writing, another positive development since the last inspection. Older pupils also have an intensive week refining their skills on their annual residential trip. Year 6 pupils, for example, spoke with enthusiasm about the work that they had undertaken on spreadsheets on their Osmington Bay trip in the Summer.

127 The quality of teaching in the lessons seen ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. Strengths included very clear directions, interesting and relevant tasks and the good levels of support given to pupils by staff, including the librarian and part time teacher. Areas for development included checking that the seating is at the correct height for all pupils and keeping a monitoring eye on pupils working away from the main group.

128 One of the most significant factors in the improvement in this subject has been the purchase and installation of new computers. Although there were some problems with the initial set up, these machines are now functioning satisfactorily. In effect there are now two small computer suites. The one for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is split between two corridors and has the newest machines. The suite for the Year 1 and 2 pupils is in the corridor outside their classrooms and has the older machines. This new arrangement means that teachers are now able to teach ICT skills to a class group, rather than to small groups or individuals.

This has had a very positive impact on pupils' skills development. The school is aware that the next step is to upgrade the machines used by the younger pupils so that the two systems are compatible and pupils can transfer their skills more easily. The school is continuing to seek professional advice about possible future improvements to its hardware. The current provision is better than the school had previously, but there are still some difficulties associated with the siting of the suites. Often lessons are disrupted by people walking through to other parts of the building and the suite for older pupils is quite cramped. The school is seeking ways to improve this.

129 Staff confidence has also improved and a new training programme has begun this term for all staff. There are also several staff with advanced skills, who offer support to colleagues. The librarian, for example, is always at hand to offer support to pupils and teachers in the suite and this helps them to achieve well because of the focused attention that is available.

130 Planning has improved and the refined two-year programmes clearly show that all of the required work will be covered by the time that pupils leave the school. Obviously older pupils have some gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding because of work missed when they were younger, but in the lessons seen they achieved well and did as well as they should for their age in the areas covered. Detailed planning for all the study units are still to be completed, but the existing planning shows that staff are undertaking this well.

131 The subject leader has a good grip on both provision and standards and is very clear about what needs to be done to improve the area further. She is planning, for example, to develop a portfolio of work to go alongside each study unit to provide exemplars for staff.

MUSIC

132 Pupils throughout the school enjoy music lessons. Standards seen at ages seven and 11 and in all year groups in class music lessons are average. Pupils benefit from the skills of an additional teacher, who supports class teachers by using particular musical knowledge and expertise with the guitar. The subject leader ensures that pupils with a particular interest in music have good opportunities to develop their talents. Additional peripatetic lessons, for 38 pupils currently, give these pupils good opportunities to develop instrumental skills. Recorder classes and a choir club also help ensure that pupils with musical gifts achieve well. The school has maintained its quality of provision and standards since the last inspection.

133 Pupils in Years 1 and 2, together with those in the reception year, show tuneful and lively singing abilities in acts of collective worship led by the music subject manager, using guitar accompaniment. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 also sing well in the hall, using a CD accompaniment to sing 'We all sing together' with expression. The attention to detail in a Year 5/6 lesson supports the development of good singing skills. Using a selection of love songs of different styles and eras, the teacher reminded pupils how to breathe effectively. One pupil modelled good breathing while others commented on the quality of his breathing, feeling their diaphragms move and ensuring their shoulders remained still. An additional teacher demonstrated the need to breathe particularly well to reach the highest notes in 'Greensleeves'. The lesson caught pupils' interest, involved them actively and succeeded in improving the quality of their singing, as well as their recognition of the variety of styles from Tudor, through Sinatra to modern pop.

134 In another very successful lesson, pupils in a Year 1/2 class listened to the 1812 overture and 'The Swan'. The teacher made extremely good use of these contrasting pieces, asking pupils what pictures came into their mind as they listened. By sitting them first in a circle on the carpet and asking them to show a physical response to the music, the teacher fired their imaginations. Their comments showed the composers' success in establishing contrasting moods. On the second playing, the teacher asked pupils to represent the pictures or feelings the music created in their minds through two drawings. The effectiveness of this lesson was shown in pupils' responses. One boy, for example, responded not only in the contrasting content of his two pictures, a hurtling rocket and an island with waves lapping the shore, but also in the grip, weight and speed of his pencil strokes. This kind of listening and appraising contributes very effectively to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

135 Teaching observed was good overall. Of four lessons seen, two were very good, one good and one satisfactory. Joint planning is a particular strength in this subject. The school is fortunate in having a high proportion of confident class music teachers. The planning system clearly supports non-specialists. The effective deployment of a teacher with specific subject expertise adds to the effectiveness of the teaching. In two Year 3/4 lessons, pupils showed a sound sense of rhythm and a few showed an ability to maintain a repeating rhythm against a regular pulse kept up by others to the tune 'Portsmouth' by Mike Oldfield. Pupils throughout the school handle percussion instruments sensibly and play them well because teachers demonstrate how to play them, how to hold a beater and let it 'bounce' on a xylophone or glockenspiel bar for example. The pace maintained kept pupils fully involved and interested in most lessons. In one, well-deployed support for a pupil with special educational needs enabled his full participation in the lesson. In another, a few pupils with emotional and behavioural needs found it difficult to focus and to wait their turn without additional support, which affected the overall pace and effectiveness of the lesson.

136 Few examples of pupils' recorded musical notation were seen. Older pupils' books from the previous year reveal inconsistency in what was planned and expected. Also there was little evidence of teachers recording pupils' own class and group music-making. The subject manager has ensured that the school's planning is effective. The assessment procedures are only just being put into operation. Overall the school makes good provision for higher attainers and the subject makes a positive contribution to the school's ethos.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

137 Standards in gymnastics and dance at age seven are average. At age 11, however, they are below those expected for pupils starting secondary school. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but the pace of lessons is often slow, with pupils spending too much time sitting evaluating each other's brief bursts of active work. The narrow school hall was described as a constraint in the last inspection report. It inhibits pupils travelling safely in a controlled way at even medium speed from making good use of space when developing sequences of movement. Lessons observed included indoor, but not outdoor games activities. All pupils and staff wear appropriate clothing, with teachers ensuring quick, efficient changing. The school's records show that standards in swimming are satisfactory. Overall, however, standards have fallen since the last inspection, when they were satisfactory.

138 The quality of teaching observed was good in two lessons, one infant and one junior, with the majority of lessons satisfactory. Teachers encourage good awareness of the effect of exercise on the human body, helping pupils understand the value of the initial warm-up. In several lessons, however, the warm-up did not lead to further demanding

exercise. With the focus on developing a sequence of balances, pupils in three of the lessons spent too much time watching others in order to make evaluative comment and not enough time in active effort to refine the quality of their movements. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 show satisfactory levels of skill in throwing and catching and in creating short dance phrases to communicate moods. The focused planning was a strength in these lessons, enabling the teachers to help pupils work at improving skills through observation and commentary. Pupils show imagination and a few show good expression in their interpretation of music.

139 Pupils in junior classes are learning to listen carefully to instructions and developing an understanding of their teachers' expectations. Teachers all feel the need to take lessons slowly, ensuring pupils understand what to do and set about tasks safely. This slows the pace of lessons, as teachers rightly insist on attentive listening, when pupils are eager to engage in activities, but teachers know that a few are liable to be silly unless carefully supervised. There is currently a need to clarify expectations in class and use the time in the hall more fruitfully. A few pupils in each class show good body control, holding difficult balances and moving purposefully to the next position. The majority balance and move without fully focusing their whole body and mind on what they are doing. As individuals or pairs practise, they tend to chatter, rather than use their minds to focus. The noise level in the narrow hall quickly rises. Teachers are not directing pupils with sufficient attention to detail in order to raise pupils' expectations and self-knowledge of what they can do, particularly through use of the word 'focus' and the need to work silently when required. Standards achieved by the majority are below average.

140 The school offers a number of additional activities, including tag rugby, netball and football and the subject manager has organised a number of friendly and tournament fixtures with other local schools. The school is aware that several parents are unhappy that the school was offering fewer extra activities. This situation arose through a period of unusually high staffing turnover. Current provision is improving since the time the questionnaires were issued, before new arrangements for the autumn term were in place. A high proportion of older pupils enjoy participating in the activities.

141 The subject leader is aware that standards are not as high as they should be. The school has improved resources for outdoor activities and has plans to develop a new hall. The current hall will continue to present organisational challenges, though the removal of all mobile obstacles will improve safety. The grounds, both hard surface and grassed area, offer good facilities. While teachers are doing their best to develop pupils skills in the hall, there is a lack of subject expertise in physical education. The staff would benefit from in-service training in order to raise their confidence in maintaining a good pace and challenge to already well planned lessons with focused objectives.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142 This subject has moved on well since the last inspection. Standards are above average, with pupils' understanding, skills and knowledge meeting the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus by both Years 2 and 6, with some pupils exceeding these. This improvement is the consequence of consistently good teaching and improved subject planning.

143 Work on the two aspects of the Agreed Syllabus; exploring and responding to human experience and investigating religious traditions go hand in hand. In Years 1 and 2, for example, pupils are studying the story of Joseph. In lessons seen, pupils listened very attentively to the story, hanging on the teachers' every word. In discussion it was evident

that they entered into the spirit of the story and clearly understood the feelings of love and jealousy expressed. In these sessions role-play was used very well to reinforce the story and to help pupils appreciate the emotions involved.

144 Teachers take care to capture pupils' interest. In Years 3 and 4, for example, pupils were designing and making model sukkahs during the inspection in connection with their work on the Jewish festival of Sukkot. They clearly understood the main features of the construction and the significance of the shelter for Jewish people. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are studying communities this term and in the session seen, an Anglican minister came to answer questions about the Christian community of believers. Pupils worked very well together to outline questions to pose him and many of these showed a good understanding of the complexity of religious belief and practice. This is also evident in their written work. One boy, for example, in paraphrasing the Lord's Prayer wrote: '..In the sky of heaven ..I will transform earth into heaven, where everything is holy Give me your daily love.'

145 In the lessons seen teaching ranged from good to excellent, with two good, two very good and one excellent lesson seen. The particular strengths in the teaching are the efforts made by staff to make the work interesting and the good use of questioning to extend pupils' thinking and understanding. These both help pupils to be fully involved in their work and to look beyond the literal. An analysis of work from last year shows that only a small amount of work is recorded by pupils. This was noted by the last inspection and although it is not always appropriate to require pupils to note down everything that they have learnt, it would be useful for them to keep some written account of work studied, so that they can look back and refresh their memories.

146 The subject is well led by an experienced and well-qualified teacher. Planning for work is nearing completion and ensures full coverage of the Agreed Syllabus. The subject leader is looking towards forming further links with representatives from a range of religious beliefs and putting together a portfolio of pupils' work for each of the units studied. Resources are generally adequate and good use is made of the strong ecumenical links in Hythe to extend the curriculum. Visits are used well and pupils have looked at local churches and visited a synagogue in Bournemouth.