

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ELMHURST JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110286

Headteacher: Mr John Hoile

Reporting inspector: Mrs Stephanie Lacey  
3764

Dates of inspection: 1 March and 4 - 6 March 2002

Inspection number: 220725

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Dunsham Lane Aylesbury Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP20 2DB
Telephone number:	01296 481380
Fax number:	01296 481380
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Watson
Date of previous inspection:	17 January 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3764	Stephanie Lacey	Registered inspector	English, music, special educational needs 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?
9528	Derek Bowers	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?
24019	Ken Parry	Team inspector	Equal opportunities, mathematics, information and communication technology and physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19302	Christine Perrett	Team inspector	Science, design and technology and art and design	
14686	Joan Furlong	Team inspector	Religious education, geography and history	

The inspection contractor was:

### PRIMARY FOCUS

22, Church View  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX16 9NB

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Elmhurst Junior School is a small school with 171 pupils on roll between 7 and 11, with an even number of boys and girls. There are two classes in every year group apart from Year 3, which has one. The school has a new department for six pupils with social and communications difficulties (SCD), with five boys currently on roll. Numbers have fallen slightly since the last inspection two years ago. About 29 per cent of the pupils either joined or left the school during the last academic year, with half of these being Asian pupils who were visiting their families in Pakistan. Most pupils live close to the school in owner occupied or local authority housing. Twenty per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average nationally, but above average for Buckinghamshire. Just over half of the pupils (53 per cent) have their cultural roots in Pakistan. Thirty-six per cent of the pupils have a British heritage. The remaining eleven per cent of pupils are of mixed race, with a small number from other ethnic cultures. Fifty-seven per cent of pupils speak English as an additional language, with two of these at an early stage. When they transfer to the school in Year 3, pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is well below average. Thirty-nine per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational need, which is above average. Seven pupils in the main school and the five pupils in the SCD department have a statement of special educational need.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Elmhurst is an improving school which provides a sound education for its pupils. It is committed to making 'a positive difference to the quality of learning for children in the school'. This positive approach is evident in the everyday work of the school. The school is well managed, teaching is sound and although standards are well below average, pupils make at least satisfactory progress. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils are enthusiastic about school and behave well in lessons and at playtimes.
- There is a very positive ethos in the school and individual pupils are encouraged well.
- Staff and governors work together well as team.
- The school is well managed and runs smoothly.
- The school cares well for pupils and keeps a close check on how well they are doing.
- All groups of pupils, including those in the social communication unit, are included in all aspects of school life.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Some aspects of teaching.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good improvement overall since its last inspection in January 2000, when it was found to have serious weaknesses in several aspects of its work. Staff and governors, with very good support from the local education authority and particularly the attached adviser for the school, resolutely tackled the areas needing attention. Consequently there are now very good strategies in place to foster improvement and there is a clear direction for the way forward. The quality of teaching has improved and most pupils now make at least sound progress. This good improvement has yet to have a significant impact on standards. It is to the school's credit that improvement has been brought about in the face of staffing upheaval and difficulties in recruiting permanent teachers. The school is in a good 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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E*	E*	E	n/a
mathematics	E*	E*	E*	n/a
science	E	E	E	n/a

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E
very low	E*

The table shows that standards have been very low at Elmhurst for some years, with some improvement last year in English. Over the last few years, standards have risen in line with the national trend, but not fast enough to draw nearer to average. On the table, the similar schools column refers to schools in a similar free school meals band. Elmhurst is in the 20 to 35 per cent band. The comparative data has been omitted because it would present a confusing picture of pupil achievement. At Elmhurst, the high proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register and the large number of pupils learning English as an additional language, together with a high pupil mobility mean that the school cannot be easily compared with other schools in the same free school meal band. To its credit the school has set very challenging targets for pupils in national tests this year, which it may find difficult to meet.

The inspection found that standards remain well below average in English and science and are still very low in mathematics. However most pupils make steady progress from a low start in Year 3, with many doing better. (The current Year 6 joined the school in Year 4, because of the Buckinghamshire reorganisation.) There is no significant difference in the achievements of different groups of pupils, with boys and girls, pupils learning English as an additional language, pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils from a British heritage doing equally well. Similarly, most pupils of different attainment levels do equally well within their own capabilities. This is because of the good support provided overall for pupils with special educational needs and the challenge given to higher attainers by setting arrangements in Year 5 and 6. Higher attainers in these year groups are doing well. The greatest stumbling block to many pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge is their limited vocabulary and understanding. This applies both to pupils learning English as an additional language and those who speak only English. Standards are below average in other subjects, but with good improvement in information communication technology (ICT). Pupils in the newly opened SCD unit are doing very well.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and most are very positive about all aspects of school life. They work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. They are sensible as they move about the large site. There have not been any exclusions for inappropriate behaviour in the last year.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils get on well with the staff and each other. They are polite and courteous. When they are given extra responsibility they manage it well.
Attendance	Satisfactory and considerably improved since the last inspection. Most pupils are punctual at the start of the day.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils in:</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory, with some good and very good features. In main school classes, half of the lessons seen were good or better. The remainder were satisfactory, with a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching in the SCD unit was consistently good or better.

Strengths in teaching include good relationships between teachers and pupils, thorough planning and preparation, good teamwork and the specialised teaching of pupils with special educational needs and pupils learning English as an additional language. Learning support assistants also make a very valuable contribution to the work with pupils who have special educational needs. In the best lessons, teachers constantly check that pupils have understood new vocabulary and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills. There are some areas for improvement across the school. These include the quality of teachers' marking, the use of targets to help pupils to improve and expectations of the presentation of work.

Overall both literacy and numeracy skills are soundly taught and pupils make steady gains in acquiring skills. The literacy and numeracy strategies underpin teachers' planning. In the better lessons teachers adapt the strategies to suit the particular needs of pupils at Elmhurst. Staff work hard to meet the needs of all pupils and in literacy and numeracy sessions work is generally well matched to pupils' capabilities. This helps pupils to learn effectively. However, many pupils, especially those with special educational needs, find it hard to retain what they have been taught in one session in order to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in subsequent work.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum is broad and balanced, although the school does not teach swimming and so does not currently meet statutory requirements for physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Well managed provision. Pupils' learning needs are carefully identified. Tasks planned for pupils are appropriate, but sometimes there is insufficient adult support in class.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall. Much improved since the last inspection. Very sensitive support from teacher and learning support assistant, with some excellent teaching. Insufficient additional support. Pupils in the unit are supported very well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. The school now makes very good provision for pupils' moral development and this is the reason for the improved behaviour. It makes good provision for their social development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Successfully. Elmhurst is a safe environment for the pupils. Their progress and development are monitored and supported well.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents, who appreciate all that the school does for their children. A few parents help in classrooms and fundraising events are well supported. The school is trying to involve parents more in helping their children at home.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and staff have a clear commitment to improvement and very good management strategies are now in place to help the school move forward. Many subject co-ordinators are new and are developing their roles effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well overall. Some are very committed and make good use of their talents to help the school to develop. The school has difficulty in recruiting governors, especially from the Asian community, who are under-represented.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Staff and governors have a clear view of how well the school is doing. There are regular checks to measure improvement in all aspects of the school's work, leading to further action if necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is good and closely linked to the school's priorities for improvement. The school considers the principles of best value carefully when making spending decisions. There is wide consultation, for example, and service contracts are regularly reviewed to check for good value.

There are sufficient staff to maintain small classes in all but Year 3 and learning support assistants are deployed well to work with individuals and small groups. Two teachers are from overseas and are not familiar with teaching the National Curriculum. The school is giving them good support. The administrative staff give very good support to the whole school and this helps it to run very smoothly. Lunchtime supervisors, caretaker and cleaning staff also complement a united staff team. The accommodation is good and the school has several specialist teaching rooms. Resources are generally satisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• The school helps children to become more mature</li> <li>• Children make good progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour in the school is good.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents.</li> <li>• Parents would feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• Range of interesting activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection endorses most of parents' positive views and agrees that pupils are happy, well behaved and that most are making sound progress, with some moving on more quickly. It found the teaching sound overall, rather than good, with individual teachers having particular strengths. It is clear that the school tries hard to work closely with parents and staff are very approachable. Overall the inspection found that the homework policy is clear, but there are some inconsistencies in the setting of homework from class to class. The inspection agrees that the information provided about children's progress on written reports could be improved. There is currently insufficient information about standards. The range of activities outside lessons is satisfactory, with more scope for inviting visitors into the school.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

##### *Starting school*

1 When pupils start school at Elmhurst in Year 3, their skills, knowledge and understanding are very low. Most transfer from Elmhurst Infant School, where standards in Year 2 national tests and assessments have been well below average for several years.

##### **Standards in national tests**

2 Standards have been well below average in Year 6 national tests at Elmhurst for several years. In 1999 and 2000 standards in English and mathematics were in the bottom five per cent of all schools. In 2001, there was an improvement, in English particularly. Overall, standards have risen over the last few years in line with the national trend, but not fast enough to compare more favourably with the national average. In most years the school's analysis shows that pupils make good overall progress between their Year 2 and Year 6 statutory tests in English and science, and satisfactory progress in mathematics.

##### *English*

3 Standards in national tests dropped year on year from 1997 to 2000, but rose significantly last year. Pupils do much better in reading than in writing and last year two thirds of the Year 6 pupils reached the expected level 4, with one in eight achieving the higher level 5. Almost half of the pupils reached the expected level 4 in writing, with two pupils achieving level 5.

##### *Mathematics*

4 Standards in mathematics also rose last year after a downward trend since 1997. In spite of this improvement standards last year were still in the bottom five per cent of all schools.

##### *Science*

5 Standards in science have risen consistently for the last four years, with pupils doing better in science than the other subjects. Last year almost three-quarters of the pupils achieved level 4.

##### *Target setting*

6 Staff work out predicted levels for pupils in Year 6 national tests based on their performance in Year 2 national tests. They use these to set more challenging targets for pupils by the time that they reach Year 6. Last year the targets were exceeded in English and mathematics. The targets set for the current Year 6 are very ambitious and the pupils are unlikely to meet them. This is largely because several higher attaining pupils have moved away from the school since the targets were set.

##### *Attainment of different groups*

7 Over the last three years girls have done better than boys in English and not so well as them in science. The performance of boys and girls was similar in mathematics. Last year the pattern changed slightly, with girls doing better in English and mathematics and about the same in science. Last year pupils learning English as an additional language did as well as their peers in English, but not quite as well in mathematics and science. Teachers have the needs of these different groups of pupils in mind when planning work.

## ***Inspection findings***

### *Reasons for low attainment*

8 There are several factors that account for the low attainment of many of the pupils. These are:

- Pupils' limited language competency. Many, not only those learning English as an additional language, have limited vocabularies. They find it hard to understand technical and non-literal language. This affects their progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' special educational needs. About forty per cent of the pupils are on the school's register of special educational need because they struggle with learning tasks. Many have particular problems in developing reading and writing skills.
- Pupil mobility. Many pupils with families in Pakistan spend extended periods visiting relatives. This widens their horizons, but has a negative impact on their more formal education.
- Unsatisfactory teaching in the past. In recent years the school's own monitoring, as well as the inspection two years ago, indicates that in some classes teaching was not good enough to move pupils forward. This has had a negative impact on pupils' learning.
- Support from home. Many parents support their children at home by sharing books with them and encouraging them with their homework. Some parents find this more difficult, especially when they do not speak English fluently themselves. Consequently their children do not have the opportunity to consolidate their learning at home.

### *Improvement since the last inspection*

9 Overall, pupils are achieving better than they did two years ago. The school's own tracking of progress clearly shows that most pupils are making satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science, with some doing much better than this. The reasons for this improvement are:

- Improved quality of teaching, with more effective support for pupils, particularly those learning English as an additional language.
- Careful checking of how well pupils are doing in order to support them more effectively.
- More effective grouping of pupils by attainment in order to plan appropriate tasks for them. Setting arrangements in Years 5 and 6 have been beneficial here.

### *Literacy*

10 Standards remain well below average. The recent improvements in teaching have yet to have an impact on standards. The current Year 6 has a number of pupils with significant special educational needs and a higher proportion are learning English as an additional language. Standards in national tests are unlikely to be as high as last year. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading, but many in all year groups struggle to read fluently. Pupils develop their writing skills across the curriculum, but many find it hard to express themselves easily because they are hampered by poor handwriting and spelling.

### *Numeracy*

11 Throughout the school standards of attainment are very low, although most pupils make at least sound progress. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils learning English as an additional language face the challenge of learning and understanding the specific subject vocabulary that is necessary in order to make more rapid progress in their learning. However, these pupils benefit from good levels of support. Taking their prior attainment into account, their achievements are similar to other pupils.

### *Science*

12 Standards in Year 6 are still well below average. Again pupils are held back by difficulty in understanding and using specific scientific language. Pupils now learn more through practical experience than they did, but until Year 6 have few opportunities to plan their own

investigations. All pupils work hard, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, and their achievement is satisfactory.

#### *Other subjects*

13 Standards in design and technology and physical education are below average. They are well below average in information and communication technology, although rising quickly as a consequence of improved resources. They are also well below average in geography, history and religious education. Standards in Year 6 do not match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

14 It was not possible to make an overall judgement about standards in some subjects but, based on the evidence of work seen, standards are below average in music and average in art and design.

#### *Equal opportunities for all pupils*

15 Most teachers have good knowledge of their pupils and carefully identify those who need additional support. In addition, higher attaining pupils have been identified and are included on the register of able pupils. In Year 6, there are good examples of all groups of pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and the higher attaining pupils, being provided with appropriate work to ensure they are suitably challenged. Some higher attaining Year 5 pupils work with a Year 6 group for English, mathematics and science. In other classes this is not always the case and higher attainers particularly are not always sufficiently challenged. The school carefully monitors attainment and progress in order to ensure fairness of treatment. Teachers take care to give the same opportunities to boys and girls and overall there is not a significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, with higher and lower attaining boys and girls in most classes. However, in common with many schools there are more boys than girls on the special educational needs register.

#### *Progress of pupils with special educational needs in the main school*

16 Thirty-eight per cent of the pupils have identified special educational needs. Two thirds of these have significant difficulties, with seven pupils having statements of special educational need. Some of these pupils are a long way behind their peers, but make at least satisfactory progress because of the sensitive support given to them by class teachers and assistants. They do best when working with support in their class on specially prepared tasks. Some also benefit from individual help from the special needs teacher or assistants in the special needs room, and again make good progress at these times. Some of these pupils find it more difficult to concentrate on what the teacher is saying or work on learning tasks without the direct support of another adult and do not do so well when they are asked to work independently. There are three main reasons why the well-organised support is not having the successful effect it should. Firstly, these pupils' needs are not taken sufficiently into account in teachers' planning when there is no additional support. Secondly, pupils are not made sufficiently aware of what they need to do to improve. Thirdly, pupils' parents are not sufficiently involved in working together with their children and the teachers to address identified needs.

#### *Progress of pupils with special educational needs in the SCD unit*

17 Pupils in the unit make good progress because of the high level of support that they are given. They are acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills well.

#### *Progress of pupils learning English as an additional language*

18 Over half of the pupils in the school are learning English as an additional language. Only two are relatively new to the school and are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Many of the pupils did not understand English when they started in the infant

school. Most pupils are Punjabi and Urdu speakers. Ten speak Pushtu at home with a few pupils speaking other languages. Most pupils have made good progress in the acquisition of English and speak English fluently. Their understanding of idiomatic language is more restricted and, in common with many of the pupils in the school who have English as a first language, their vocabulary is fairly limited. The school's analysis of pupils' progress shows that pupils learning English as an additional language are making the same sound progress as their peers. They achieve as well as pupils from an English heritage. Last year, for example, although no pupils learning English as an additional language reached Level 5 in statutory tests, overall they did better in English than the pupils only able to speak English, but not quite so well in mathematics and science.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

### *Attitudes*

19 Pupils like coming to school. In most lessons they have good and often very good attitudes to their work. They are well motivated, concentrate well in discussions and work consistently well on their individual tasks.

### *Behaviour*

20 The behaviour of pupils is almost invariably good in lessons. This shows a considerable improvement since the previous inspection and owes much to the positive behaviour strategies and active monitoring by staff. The pupils are clear on the school's expectations of good behaviour and regulate themselves well. They act responsibly and are polite and trustworthy. Behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes is very good. In the dining hall there is good order and the warm, friendly atmosphere is enhanced considerably by a marked absence of excessive noise.

21 There have been no exclusions from the school during the past year. There is no evidence that bullying is a problem and this perception is shared by pupils, parents and staff.

22 Five pupils are on the special educational needs register with identified behavioural and emotional problems. Generally they manage well in class and at playtimes because of the support that they are given.

### *Relationships*

23 Relationships between all staff and pupils are very good and are characterised by considerable warmth and mutual respect. Relationships between pupils of all ages are very good. Pupils from all cultural backgrounds work and play very well together, showing respect and care for each other. There is very good mixing at break times with no signs of aggression, racism or bullying. Collaboration in lessons is very good.

### *Personal responsibility*

24 There are limited opportunities for pupils to take responsibility but when they are given tasks they complete them enthusiastically and competently. The range of regular duties includes good help with the library, assemblies, classroom duties, preparing for lessons and clearing away.

### *Attendance*

25 Attendance is satisfactory and is currently in line with the national average for junior schools. It has improved considerably as a result of the active, early and regular monitoring by the administrative and teaching staff. Unauthorised absences have reduced to a level close to the national average this year. Most pupils arrive punctually each morning and settle quickly into their early work during registration.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

26 The overall quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, when there was a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is now satisfactory, with some good and very good features. In the lessons seen over half were good or better and the remainder were satisfactory with a small percentage of unsatisfactory teaching. All the areas of weakness highlighted by the last inspection have been tackled. As a result teaching has improved in Years 3 and 6, behaviour management has improved, teachers' expectations have risen and learning support assistants (LSAs) are well briefed. Consequently pupils are learning much more effectively.

27 The reasons for this good improvement are:

- Careful monitoring of teaching of English and mathematics by local authority advisers and senior staff, leading to extra support where necessary.
- Good support for new staff and most particularly for inexperienced teachers and those from overseas.
- Positive attitudes of teachers and LSAs and a commitment to improvement.

28 There has also been a high turnover of teaching staff since the last inspection. Only two of the class teachers currently in post were at the school at that time.

### *Strengths in teaching:*

29 There are some notable strengths in the teaching that have a very positive impact on pupils' learning.

- Good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Good classroom management strategies ensure that pupils are positive about learning and work hard.
- Preparation and planning for most lessons are thorough and this means that lessons are focused and move at a good pace.
- Good teamwork, both between teachers in parallel classes who plan together and between teachers and LSAs within lessons, means that pupils of all attainment levels are well supported in most lessons.
- The valuable contribution of LSAs, especially to the work with pupils who have special educational needs. LSAs are patient and encouraging and, as a result, pupils do well when they receive extra support. They work well with the teachers and are aware of pupils' individual education plans.
- Improved assessment procedures have helped teachers develop a good understanding of pupils' abilities.
- Specialised teaching of pupils with special educational needs is strong and helps pupils to achieve well when they are given this extra help.
- Specialised teaching of pupils learning English as an additional language is very good and was excellent in one session seen. This helps these pupils to move forward very quickly when support is available.

### *Some teachers have particular strengths*

30 In one class, for example, the teacher uses every opportunity to extend pupils' understanding and use of language. She constantly checks that pupils understand, without slowing the pace of the lesson, by asking questions about meaning and encouraging pupils to talk about words. In other classes teachers are very enthusiastic and inspire pupils with their own love of learning. This is evident in Year 6, for example, where pupils have been swept up in their work on 'Macbeth'. Some staff approach working with pupils very sensitively and an excellent session with an individual boy learning English as an additional language was

characterised by a clear understanding of and empathy with the needs of the learner.

#### *Areas for improvement:*

31 There are some areas for improvement. Some apply across the school.

These are:

- The quality of teachers' marking. This is quite variable and although some of the marking is sound and in line with the school's policy, some is not sufficiently detailed to help pupils to understand how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. In some cases pupils' work is not marked at all and sometimes it is quite cursory with just a tick or a 'well done' comment. Few teachers are marking in relation to the objective set for the work.
- The use of targets to help pupils to improve. Teachers are setting pupils targets for improvement in English and mathematics, but these are not being used effectively to help pupils to improve. There is a range of practice here, with some teachers setting the same targets for the whole class and others setting targets for individual pupils. They are not reviewed regularly.
- Differing expectations of presentation. Again this is inconsistent across the school. Pupils try to work neatly, but in some subjects there are inconsistent approaches to laying work out. Handwriting is not taught systematically.

32 In some less successful sessions the aspects that slowed pupils' learning were:

- Overlong whole class sessions, where pupils were expected to listen for too long.
- Lack of challenge for pupils of different attainment levels.
- Slow pace.
- Inconsistent use of homework to help pupils move forward. This confuses parents.

#### *Teaching of literacy*

33 Overall, literacy skills are taught soundly and pupils make steady gains in acquiring skills. The literacy strategy underpins teachers' planning and this helps teachers particularly in work on language structure. Teachers do not usually identify the development of speaking and listening skills in their planning, although in one or two classes this is tackled well. In some classes work on good quality literature is used as a basis for developing reading and writing skills and in these classes pupils are particularly enthusiastic and achieve well.

#### *Teaching of numeracy*

34 Numeracy skills are also soundly taught. Good teamwork in Years 4 and 6 has underpinned stronger teaching in these classes. Overall, teachers plan carefully, basing their plans on the national numeracy strategy. In some classes higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.

#### *Teaching of other subjects*

35 Again teaching is satisfactory overall, with some teachers having particular strengths in different subjects.

#### *Teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the main school*

36 Pupils with special educational needs account for at least 30 per cent of each class. In one class it is as high as 50 per cent. This means that teachers are particularly careful to plan appropriate tasks for these pupils. This is particularly the case in English and mathematics, when work is well planned for pupils of different attainment levels. In planning, the class teachers do not note pupils' targets on their individual education plans because in the circumstances this would be unmanageable. However, the school is considering setting group targets in the future. Teachers are nevertheless mindful of the needs of individuals. In many instances these pupils have additional support from LSAs in English and mathematics. This helps them to tackle work with more confidence and experience some level of success. However, English and mathematics lessons are timetabled for the same time throughout the

school and so at the moment some classes are without additional help at these times, because there are insufficient LSAs to cover all classes simultaneously. There is some teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the special needs room, when individuals and groups are withdrawn for extra support. This is undertaken by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and LSAs. This work is well planned and clearly focused on helping pupils to develop their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils do well in these sessions, but often find it hard to transfer what they have learnt to other lessons.

#### *Teaching of pupils with special educational needs in the unit*

37 There are clear strands that underpin the teaching in the SCD unit. These are the good levels of adult support, the well-organised room, the very tightly structured day, good relationships and the clear expectation set for the pupils. Consequently the pupils have settled well into their new class and are making good progress.

#### *Teaching of pupils with English as an additional language*

38 The teaching of pupils learning English as an additional language has improved since the last inspection and is now at least satisfactory in most classes. Teachers are aware that some pupils have difficulties in understanding a very wide vocabulary and that most find it hard to understand idiomatic phrases. Most teachers modify their spoken language appropriately and take care to explain words that appear unfamiliar. In the best lessons, teachers are constantly checking that all pupils understand what they mean and take every opportunity to clarify meaning. Some of the specialist teaching is excellent. In one session seen, for example, the teacher worked with an older pupil to help him to understand homonyms and idioms. The session was very well structured and moved at a good pace. The boy made great gains within a short time because of the sensitive approach of the teacher and the very appropriate activities planned.

#### *Teaching of higher attaining pupils*

39 In most year groups higher attaining pupils are catered for within their own class and teachers set more challenging tasks for them. In some sessions there is room for even higher expectations of these pupils. In Year 5, several higher attaining pupils work with Year 6 pupils for English, mathematics and science in order to challenge them more effectively. The school is considering setting for these subjects lower down the school.

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

40 The school provides a satisfactory range of curriculum and other opportunities to promote pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development. The emphasis given to the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is relevant to pupils' needs. The curriculum is reasonably broad and balanced, although a weakness in the provision for physical education means that it is not fully meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. In other respects statutory requirements are well met for religious education and special educational needs. Equality of access for all pupils is ensured and satisfactory use is made of the local community and extra-curricular activities to support pupils' learning. Most of the minor weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection have been dealt with satisfactorily. These include a revision of the school timetable to make better use of classroom assistants, the computer room and the hall. However, the timing of some lessons is still to be resolved.

#### *Curricular planning*

41 Teachers' planning in literacy and numeracy is based firmly on the recommended national strategies and, overall, these are being implemented satisfactorily through the school. However, weaknesses occur, as in the present Year 5 classes, where teachers have not been trained in using these strategies to plan work that is at the right level and builds



on pupils' earlier learning. The Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus is used to support planning for religious education and national guidelines have been adopted in all other subjects. In some, these are supplemented effectively by other materials, for example in physical education by a commercially produced scheme of work. The guidelines have been used well to produce a long-term plan that allocates topics and themes for study to each age group. In information and communication technology this has been done carefully to provide opportunities in the new computer room for older pupils to catch up on knowledge, skills and understanding missed earlier. However, in physical education the school makes no provision for swimming and therefore is not meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. In art and design and in design and technology the programme does not ensure that important subject specific skills are developed year on year as pupils move through the school. Teachers plan well together in Years 4 and 6, ensuring that pupils in the same age group have similar learning experiences. In Year 5 this is currently a weakness.

#### *Curriculum balance*

42 The curriculum is balanced satisfactorily between the subjects, with literacy and numeracy quite correctly being given the largest proportions of time. However, on a day to day basis there are a number of constraints and pressures that cause difficulties. Because of the way that the timetable is arranged, mid-morning sessions are not long enough for all subjects. For example, while the thirty-minute lesson is fine for handwriting, religious education or personal, social and health education, it does not give teachers enough time to develop skills fully in subjects such as physical education. In the afternoons, some sessions are too long and, as in a science lesson, this makes it difficult for pupils to sustain concentration. This has a particularly strong impact on the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

#### *Equal opportunities*

43 The school is firmly committed to the principle of equal opportunities. This is expressed clearly in its comprehensive policy and other documents that reflect its all-inclusive approach. Teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils enjoy equal access to the full range of opportunities provided. Pupils are equally and fully included in the curriculum and indeed in all aspects of school life.

#### *Provision for pupils with special educational needs in the main school*

44 Provision for pupils with special educational needs is currently a combination of in-class support and withdrawal for extra help. In Year 6, pupils are set for English, mathematics and science and this means that pupils with special educational needs can be easily grouped together. In all classes these pupils have extra support from a learning support assistant in some English, mathematics and science lessons. This helps them to tackle similar work to their peers. In some classes, especially in Year 3, the SENCO works with a group of pupils with special educational needs. Her deployment to support within literacy and numeracy lessons particularly is a very good use of her time. Pupils work on appropriately planned tasks in these sessions. In some other subjects all pupils work on the same activity and this is occasionally too difficult for pupils with special educational needs.

45 At times groups are withdrawn, for work on the additional literacy strategy (ALS) for example. This happens during the first session of the day, when all are engaged on 'early work' tasks. Some other withdrawal to support individual pupils is planned in the afternoons. Staff keep a check to make sure that pupils do not miss the same lesson every week and are moving towards supporting pupils within class.

#### *Provision for pupils with special educational needs in the unit*

46 Every opportunity is taken to ensure that pupils in the unit have full access to the curriculum. They follow the National Curriculum and the locally agreed RE syllabus. Work is

tailored to their individual needs. Pupils join with other classes for assemblies, lunch times and playtimes. One or two pupils work in the main school for some sessions with support.

*Extra-curricular and other activities, including educational visits*

47 Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range of experiences outside lessons. After-school clubs and activities include seasonal sporting activities such as athletics and cricket, a choir and recorder group, and an art and games club. These provide opportunities for pupils to develop their intellectual, artistic and sporting interests outside normal school hours. A limited range of educational visits is arranged to places of interest including museums. These are mainly to local venues because of restrictions imposed by transport costs and the preferences of many of the parents. Visitors to school include the school nurse and dentist, who have supported classroom projects. Other recent initiatives have included workshop sessions similar to one that occurred during the inspection, which gave pupils an excellent opportunity to use their mathematical and scientific knowledge while extending their understanding of the design process. It also made a significant contribution to their personal development as they collaborated to explore a variety of challenging tasks. However, there remains scope for the school to develop a broader range of activities, especially visits and visitors, to stimulate pupils and to enhance their learning.

*Links with the community and partner institutions*

48 Sound links have been established with the local community. These include a Christian group that takes assemblies and assists with religious education and the school choir has performed at their local church. The school is actively trying to secure firmer links with the local mosque. The school premises are used regularly by clubs and youth groups and more recently the new computer room is being used by the local adult education centre to run evening classes. The strongest feature of the links with other schools is the partnership that has evolved with a local 'Beacon' school (a school identified as having some excellent features). The headteacher reports that this has been invaluable in enabling Elmhurst to make good progress since the last inspection. There are mutually supportive links with the infant school and satisfactory arrangements are made to ensure the smooth transition of pupils to their secondary schools. The network of local primary headteachers provides a useful forum for the exchange of ideas and is now being extended to include other members of staff such as assessment co-ordinators.

*Personal, social and health education*

49 Arrangements for personal, social and health education are good. Each class is allocated a regular slot on the timetable that teachers use in a variety of ways. In the younger classes this is usually a circle time session in which pupils begin to develop the responsible and positive relationships seen throughout the school. Until recently teachers have not been provided with sufficient guidance to follow a structured theme. However, with the good support of the Beacon school this aspect of the curriculum is developing well and an annual cycle of topics for study by each age group is now mapped out.

*Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*

50 The school's provision for pupils' development in these areas has been consolidated and improved since the last inspection and is now good overall. There have been particular developments in the provision for pupils' moral development.

*Spiritual development*

51 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound. Religious education, in particular, provides good opportunities for reflection on the values, beliefs and cultures of those within the school community and the wider world. Assembly, 'circle time' and personal, health and social education provide additional opportunities to think about values and experiences and help to foster self-awareness. However, within the subjects of the curriculum, the school is

yet to have a consistent approach, or understanding, of how spiritual development can be promoted. There are occasions when pupils are caught up in the wonder of creation, when Year 6 pupils were involved in a 'dome construction' in the hall, for example. However, these tend to occur on an 'ad hoc' basis and are not identified in planning.

#### *Moral development*

52 Provision for pupils' moral development is now very good. The new strategies introduced in the last two years, based on positive reinforcement through rewards, have been very successful. Pupils continue to create their own class rules and discuss how they should work together. Staff are good role models, and are ready to use opportunities in lessons to promote moral development. For example, in a Year 4 literacy class pupils discussed 'how bad people become good' through the process of change. Assembly and 'circle time' also provide good opportunities for discussing and understanding issues and conflicts and for reflecting on the school's moral values of right and wrong, care, respect, honesty and responsibility.

#### *Social development*

53 Provision for pupils' social development is now good. The oldest pupils are given opportunities to take responsibility as library monitors, in the ICT suite, looking after equipment during assembly and undertaking lunchtime duties. Opportunities for pupils in the rest of the school are mainly connected with classroom duties. These are undertaken with a good degree of self-reliance. 'Circle time' and assembly offer opportunities for conversation and social integration. Lunchtime is also a sociable occasion. There have been increased opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in the classroom, such as in the making of circuits in Year 6 and in paired work on the computers in Year 3. The planned initiative to start a School Council will provide opportunities for pupils to acquire democratic skills and have an influence on the life of the school. There are still too few opportunities for pupils to take initiative in their learning, particularly through the use of the library and through homework tasks. There is a range of competitions and charity work to motivate and provide social interaction in activities outside the classroom. The 'Hosanna Rock' musical, to raise money for the 'Shoe Box Appeal', was a delightful social occasion, well supported by parents and pupils. It generated positive community spirit and reflected well the co-operative, good-natured and respectful qualities that clearly underpin the school's caring ethos. For those who are able to attend, the Buckinghamshire 'Young People's University' offers good opportunities to mix with others, through a variety of Saturday morning activities.

#### *Cultural development*

54 Provision for pupils' cultural development remains satisfactory. Although there is some evidence of valuing the cultures of the school in photographic displays around the school, there is insufficient celebration of the rich cultural diversity of the school community. Cultural and multi-cultural awareness are not planned into the whole school curriculum to ensure teachers are aware of such opportunities, except in religious education. This was the situation at the time of the last inspection. The strategy to invite visitors in from the local community to enrich the pupils' experiences of the world around them is developing slowly. In the past an artist and poet have visited school, but such opportunities are not a planned part of the curriculum. They cannot fully compensate for the lack of residential and day visits which provide opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of our British heritage as well as the diversity and richness of other cultures. Pupils do now visit the local museum and a local river in their geography work. There are some developing business links for sponsorship reasons. The cricket club, which had a higher percentage of Pakistani pupils last year and is open to both boys and girls, was helped in this way. The William Harding trust for Aylesbury town also supported the school by giving a substantial sum towards the new computer suite.

### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

55 The very good relationships between staff and pupils provide a good basis for the care of the children. Channels of communication with the school are very open and accessible so that parents confidently raise any concerns with staff. When the need arises the school's bilingual assistant and those in the adjacent infant school communicate effectively with parents who speak little or no English.

#### *Behaviour management*

56 Since the last inspection two years ago substantial effort has been put into the development of positive behaviour management strategies. Reward systems and progressive sanctions are implemented consistently. These, together with close, regular monitoring have resulted in substantial improvement in classroom behaviour and attitudes. All staff are made aware of any issues concerning behaviour so that they can monitor particular pupils throughout the day.

#### *Monitoring of attendance*

57 During the past two years the school has put in place good monitoring procedures and implemented effective strategies to improve attendance. The administrative staff and teachers work closely together to follow up absences quickly and are given good support by the education welfare officer. Good attendance has a high profile in the school and the pupils are keen to earn the individual certificates and class awards that have been introduced.

#### *Child Protection*

58 There are good guidelines for child protection. Staff are familiar with the procedures and refer any concerns appropriately to the responsible member of staff. Courses on child protection are included in the induction programmes for new staff.

#### *Health and safety*

59 Health and safety practices and procedures are well established, although the health and safety policy is under review and currently there is no governor representative. However, the headteacher, caretaker and staff representative undertake regular inspections and risk assessments.

#### *Assessing pupils' attainment and progress*

60 Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. They reflect clearly the well-written and helpful policy. Good use is now being made of the information gathered in this way to plan for the whole school and to plan the next steps in learning for individual pupils. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when significant weaknesses were identified in both the school's procedures and its use of assessment data. These improvements are based firmly on the co-ordinator's confident understanding of the purposes and uses of assessment in the ongoing efforts to raise standards. One shortcoming is that the school is not yet doing enough to identify pupils who are not achieving their true potential, whatever their prior attainment, in order to provide focused teaching and additional support where appropriate.

61 As well as the statutory tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6, teachers carry out regular tests and assessments of reading, spelling and mathematics, using a wide range of standardised tests throughout the school. This provides them with a clear view of standards of attainment in each age group to be compared with standards expected nationally. In addition, at the end of each year they assess pupils' progress towards National Curriculum levels in all subjects. These procedures are relatively recent initiatives and therefore are not yet having a significant impact on standards. A positive strategy to involve pupils more actively in the assessment process is the traffic light system of red, amber and green used by pupils to evaluate their own progress in particular lessons. Often,

however, teachers do not give sufficient guidance to enable them to get a clear view of gains made in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

#### *Using assessment information as a basis for planning*

62 In these ways the school is gathering a considerable amount of information about its pupils that over time will build into a detailed picture of their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, most teachers know their pupils well and use the results of these tests to match their performance to National Curriculum levels. The deputy head rigorously analyses test results to identify areas of weakness. At a whole school level, for example, it was seen that a large proportion of pupils experience difficulties with problem solving. In order to address this issue staff training has been arranged to improve the teaching of this aspect of mathematics. Test results are also used to form teaching groups within each class. In Year 6 they have been used effectively to set pupils across the age group into classes of similar prior attainment for literacy, numeracy and science lessons. This is an arrangement that benefits all attainment groups, enabling teachers to match the work more closely to the needs of pupils. Higher attaining pupils in Year 5 have been identified and work with pupils in Year 6 for these lessons in order to ensure they are appropriately challenged.

#### *Monitoring pupils' academic performance*

63 Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are good. Every pupil's National Curriculum level in each subject is recorded on a class list each year. Comparisons between classes in the same age group are made and discussed with teachers to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all. In addition the deputy uses a specialist computer program very efficiently to monitor the results and progress of different groups of pupils including boys and girls, higher and lower attaining pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. However, although these results are collated across subjects giving a subject overview, there is no simple year group tracking sheet to provide an overview of pupils' progress as they move through the school. This would enable the school to record its growing bank of assessment information in a straightforward manner. As a result, the pace of individual pupils' progress is not always easily and regularly reviewed. Teachers throughout the school set individual targets for improvement in English and mathematics. However these are very broad and therefore do not identify small enough steps in learning to motivate pupils sufficiently or to guide teachers' planning. They are not being used consistently by all teachers.

#### *Monitoring of progress of pupils with special educational needs*

64 In addition to the detailed assessments kept of all pupils, staff keep a careful check on the progress of pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly and new targets set. In some classes the number of individual education plans makes it impractical to take sufficient account of them in planning lessons. The school is considering setting some group plans. Statements of special educational need are reviewed annually in line with statutory requirements.

#### *Monitoring of progress with pupils learning English as an additional language*

65 The school monitors the progress of pupils learning English as an additional language carefully. Some of these pupils have also been identified as having special educational needs and receive extra support from the special needs staff. The English as an additional language teacher works very effectively with staff, including the SENCO, to identify pupils who need extra help in understanding and using English.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

### *Parents' views of the school*

66 Parents have positive views of most areas of school life. They feel that their children like school, that they are making good progress and that the school is helping the children to become more mature. The overwhelming view is that behaviour is good, teaching is good, that the school works closely with parents and they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with a question or problem. The evidence during the inspection strongly supports these positive views.

67 Parents are less satisfied about the amount of homework set each week. In some classes homework is set regularly and in sufficient quantity to support the curriculum but in others there is some inconsistency in the regularity of the work set.

68 In response to the dissatisfaction of the 18 per cent of parents who feel that they do not receive sufficient information about their children's progress, the inspectors agree that more information could be reported to parents, particularly on standards achieved. The computerised annual reports, which were introduced last July, cover all subjects but there is less detail than in previous years, particularly in the foundation subjects. Strengths and weaknesses are discussed in the core subjects but there is no indication of standards reached. However, if asked, the teachers are always willing to discuss the half-termly test results with parents at the consultation evenings.

69 Approximately one-sixth of parents are dissatisfied with the range of activities provided by the school outside lessons. The number of additional activities has increased in recent years and the inspectors conclude that the school's provision is satisfactory, with more scope to invite visitors into the school.

#### *The information provided by the school*

70 The quality of the general information provided by the school for parents is good. Key aspects of school life are explained clearly in the prospectus, induction booklets, frequent letters and the governors' annual report for parents. Usually the information is not provided in languages other than English, although there is a small booklet in Urdu about hearing children read at home, but much effort is made by the staff to communicate with parents through older siblings, friends and neighbours. This is a particular challenge because about half of the Asian mothers do not speak English fluently. The bilingual assistant and two colleagues in the adjacent infant school make valuable contributions to effective communication with parents. A local religious leader brings to the attention of parents in his mosque the information in school notices.

#### *The partnership with parents of pupils with special educational needs*

71 The school keeps parents informed about their children's progress through the twice yearly parent-teacher consultation evenings. At these times there is an opportunity to discuss pupils' individual education plans. Some parents do not attend these evenings and the school sends home the individual education plans for parents' consideration. This is not a satisfactory arrangement because staff are not then able to explain to parents how they can help their children to progress. Parents of children who have statements of special educational need are suitably involved in their annual reviews.

72 The school has good links with parents of pupils in the SCD unit. Frequent face to face meetings are not so easy to arrange because the pupils live some distance from the school, but the teacher makes frequent contact with parents by telephone.

#### *Parents' support*

73 Many parents give good support for their children's learning at home, particularly with

reading. However, a minority of parents do not appreciate fully the importance of this additional help. There is very good support for the work of the fundraising committee and it has made significant contributions to improving resources. A few parents help regularly in lessons and with the library. Parents have also volunteered to assist with the refurbishment of the classrooms and three rooms have already been re-decorated.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### *Improvements in leadership and management*

74 The headteacher, staff and governors, supported very well by the local education authority, have resolutely tackled the serious weaknesses in leadership and management identified by the last inspection. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are now good.

### *Improvement in the face of outside challenges*

75 This improvement has been brought about in spite of difficulties in recruiting staff. In the current year the school has employed teachers from overseas to take two classes. This has presented some challenges and the school has invested time in monitoring and support for these teachers in order to continue to provide a sound education for the pupils.

### *Clear vision for the future*

76 There is a clear vision for the future, crystallised in the school's new mission statement: *'We will make a positive difference to the quality of learning for children in our school'*. This is fully subscribed to by both staff and governors. Consequently there is a very positive feel to the school. This is apparent to visitors from the moment they enter the building. Attractive displays line the entrance hall, the reception staff are warm and friendly and pupils passing through are polite and courteous.

77 The headteacher has encouraged and supported staff in their work to drive up standards. He has made very good use of the support offered from outside and has worked well with the school's attached adviser on improvement strategies and the monitoring of teaching. He has welcomed the link provided with a Beacon school in the south of the county and used their expertise to support the work of subject managers. He has been very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who has only been in post a little over two years. She has brought verve and enthusiasm to the staff team and has helped staff to develop their skills by her good example and boundless energy.

### *Very good management strategies*

78 This good improvement has been underpinned by the introduction of very good management strategies, which now form the bedrock of school improvement. They consist of:

- A programme of monitoring and support for teachers.
- A very detailed short term school improvement plan.
- Regular checks on progress through 'key dial' meetings.

### *Monitoring and support for teachers*

79 There is now a clear programme for monitoring the work of all teachers, which is clear to all involved. Initially, and with the help of the local authority, there was a concentration on monitoring the teaching of English and mathematics. This is now extending to the monitoring of work in other subjects. As a result of the monitoring some teachers were given extra support and records show that this has helped them to improve their teaching skills.

### *School improvement plan*

80 In order to address the weaknesses identified by the last inspection and to drive up

standards, the school drew up a short-term improvement plan. It is very clear and has provided a very good agenda for improvement.

#### *Key dial meetings*

81 The school has regular 'key dial' meetings to check how well the school is progressing in different aspects of its work. The 'key dial' analogy refers to an aircraft's instrument panel, where the pilot looks at the dials to check how the plane is flying. There are currently twelve key dials, each with at least one attached governor. Dials relate to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance, assessment, SEN, ICT and improvements in other curriculum areas. Five dials are related to improving standards. This is a very effective and focused way of checking how well the school is doing.

#### *Work of governors*

82 The work of the governors has improved since the time of the last inspection. Apart from the provision of swimming instruction, all statutory requirements are now met and they are more involved in the work of the school. There is a core of very committed governors, who use their talents well in the best interests of the school. The chair, for example, has been associated with the school for many years. He works very well with the headteacher and, although is not able to visit the school during the day because of work commitments, meets the headteacher every week to discuss the school's progress. The governors fulfil their responsibilities through a number of committees and key dial meetings, in addition to full governor meetings. Some also visit the school during the day to help in classes or the library. Consequently they have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and offer challenge and support from an informed viewpoint. Currently there are some governor vacancies and only one representative from the Asian community, which means that the governing body does not fully represent the local community.

#### *Leadership and management of subject co-ordinators*

83 This is an improving area. Effective strategies have been put in place to help staff to develop their management skills. There is a clear format for co-ordinators' files, for example, and a structured programme for co-ordinators to monitor different subject areas. Staff report that work with the Beacon school has helped them to improve their practice. English, mathematics and science are managed well overall and most other areas are managed at least satisfactorily. Many staff are new to their co-ordinator responsibilities and so have had not yet had the opportunity to develop their roles. Some have a heavy workload, with responsibility for three areas. Currently the deputy headteacher, for example, is responsible for mathematics, science, DT and assessment in addition to her other responsibilities. She is managing these areas well, but this is unsustainable in the long term. This is unavoidable in the current year because two staff are temporary and one is newly qualified and so not able to undertake additional responsibility. The school is aware that it needs to review the allocation of responsibilities from September.

#### *Leadership and management of work with pupils with special educational needs*

84 A new special educational needs co-ordinator took up post last September and she has already had a positive impact on work in this area. A new draft policy has been written, which clearly sets down the principles of the new code of practice, for example, and a special needs base has been set up in the main school block. The timetabling of staff has improved and many classes now have support from the teacher or LSA during literacy and numeracy sessions. There is scope for more improvement here and further opportunities for special needs staff to work with pupils in literacy and numeracy sessions could be created if the whole school did not work on numeracy and literacy at the same time. The school is looking towards providing an LSA in every classroom, which would be very beneficial. There is still some withdrawal from classes in the afternoons but the school is working towards a fully inclusive programme from next September. At the moment the SENCO also has



responsibility for art through the school and is not a member of the senior management team. This needs reviewing in the light of the new code of practice.

#### *Leadership and management of the SCD unit*

85 The unit is a new addition to the school since the last inspection. It opened with two pupils last summer in temporary accommodation and moved into a purpose-designed building last September. The teacher in charge of the unit has worked hard to establish an attractive and safe environment for the pupils. She works very well with the two LSAs who support the pupils on a full time basis and there is a very effective staff team. There is a clear sense of vision for the way forward and this is summarised in the policy. This needs adjusting in the light of the new code of practice and the special needs policy for the whole school.

#### *Leadership and management of work with pupils learning English as an additional language*

86 The teacher responsible for leading the work with pupils learning English as an additional language has a clear vision for the way forward. She works sensitively with staff and pupils and draws on outside specialist support when she needs to. She is working hard to develop links with the local community in order to involve parents more in their children's education. At the moment she is assisted by a bilingual LSA for two days a week. The staffing levels are low, but the school struggles to recruit suitably qualified staff.

#### *The school's commitment to equal opportunities*

87 The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils and this is emphasised in the school's written equal opportunities policy. This commitment is also explicit in the school's aims and other documents that support a shared, whole school approach to equal opportunities. It is based on the caring attitude of the headteacher, who sets a clear example for all staff, and is reflected in the good and inclusive ethos for learning. It also fosters the very good relationships seen among all members of the school community.

#### *Financial planning*

88 Financial planning is good and links closely with school improvement planning, with a strong focus on raising standards. This is reflected clearly in the choice of priorities and the degree of monitoring and evaluation. This aspect of management has improved considerably in the past two years. Budgets are set to maximise the use of the annual income for the benefit of the current pupils while avoiding going into deficit. This has been achieved through a period of fluctuating pupil numbers and difficulties in staff recruitment, which have been largely outside of the school's control. High supply teacher costs will probably reduce the reserve at the end of this financial year to a level that is less than the recommended five per cent maximum of annual income.

#### *Principles of best value*

89 The principles of best value are applied well and this shows an improvement since the last inspection. There is wide consultation and involvement of all staff and governors in planning and monitoring. The roles of the subject co-ordinators have been strengthened. Staff, governors and parents actively seek additional sources of funds and combine income imaginatively for development projects. For example, the £35,000 spent on equipping the new computer suite was financed by a local trust and the parents provided the money for the new furniture. There is a much improved awareness and securing of value for money since the last inspection. For example, substantial planning and monitoring now ensures much better use of classroom assistants. The school is beginning to make use of the comparative data provided by the local authority.

#### *Day to day financial management and administration*

90 The very competent, experienced administrative staff give very good support to the whole

school. There are good records and routines in place. Financial management and control are very good and this was confirmed by the judgement of the auditors in their most recent report in July 2001. Their overall assessment of 'very good routines and practices' is high praise!

91 The income for special needs and the Standards Fund is used for the purposes intended and is accounted for fully. The school reviews service contracts regularly to seek best value for money. The service package offered by the local authority is attractive for smaller schools. The school employs its own cleaners and has negotiated its own catering contract to secure better services. The staff, buildings and learning resources are deployed effectively.

### *Staffing*

92 The school has a generous number of teachers who are appropriately qualified to meet the demands of the curriculum and to promote learning. There are at present two temporary overseas teachers who are not yet totally familiar with the methods currently used in English schools. The good ratio of teachers to pupils means that classes are small, and pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs receive extra support. The provision for pupils who have English as an additional language has improved since the last inspection, and the school now has a well-qualified teacher to help these pupils improve their language skills. However, the school has had difficulty in recruiting appropriately qualified assistants to work specifically with these pupils and is understaffed in this area. Otherwise there are an appropriate number of LSAs who are all receiving training. The deployment of these assistants has improved since the last inspection, and they give valuable support to pupils, and feel very much part of the team. They liaise closely with the class teacher, are well briefed as to their roles, and effectively promote learning. In some English and mathematics sessions, timetable constraints mean that not all classes have additional LSA support and this has a negative impact on the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

93 Teachers new to the school receive a high level of support, and there are good procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers. Systems for the appraisal of staff are in place, and procedures for performance management have been successfully introduced. Other non-teaching members of staff help to make the school run smoothly and promote a caring positive ethos. The caretaker and cleaning staff work hard to ensure that the learning environment is clean, pleasant and well maintained. The dinner supervisors help to make lunchtimes quiet and enjoyable social occasions.

### *Accommodation*

94 The accommodation is good, with spacious classrooms and specialist rooms for the teaching of art and design, design and technology, science, music and special educational needs. There is a very well equipped ICT room, which is used by all classes. This very good facility is now more widely used than at the time of the last report. The school has a number of disparate buildings, but the school is mindful of the needs of teachers and different groups of pupils when allocating them to the outlying classrooms. These classes do not feel isolated and are very much part of the school. The grounds provide good facilities for all kinds of play activities and physical education. The conservation area also supports pupils' work in science.

### *Resources*

95 Resources remain satisfactory, as they were at the last inspection, but the deficiencies seen then have all been addressed. The resources for teaching pupils with English as an additional language have improved, and there are now good resources for pupils with special educational needs. The school has a large number of computers, but there is a shortage of

appropriate software to support some subjects, such as history, geography and religious education. At present the school has no sensors to support work done in science.

*Planning for the future*

96 Wisely, the current school improvement plan encompasses only this academic year, because staff and governors wanted to evaluate improvement before they set new objectives. The school is now in a good position to plan more effectively for the longer term in the knowledge that their current strategies have been successful. In discussion, it is clear that the main focus of improvement will continue to be on raising standards, with most other areas targeted within an ongoing maintenance plan.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

97 In order to build on recent improvement the headteacher, staff and governors need to:

- **Raise standards, especially in English, mathematics and science** by:

1. Extending pupils' understanding of every day and subject specific language.

*(Reference paragraphs: 8, 38, 112, 117, 120, 128 and 133)*

2. Further improving the support for pupils with special educational needs within the classroom by:

- moving towards providing a learning support assistant in every classroom;
- teaching pupils with special educational needs in small groups, perhaps by setting pupils in English, mathematics and science.

*(Reference paragraphs: 36, 84 and 92)*

3. Increasing the level of support for pupils learning English as an additional language.

*(Reference paragraphs: 86, 92 and 117)*

4. Assessing pupils' potential more closely in order to target their learning needs more effectively.

*(Reference paragraph: 60)*

5. In English:

- improving the opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, including the use of drama and role play activities;
- increasing the time spent on working with and listening to good quality fiction and non-fiction texts;
- making class libraries more attractive areas to browse and enjoy books.
- implementing the handwriting policy more systematically throughout the school.

*(Reference paragraphs: 10, 31 and 108 - 118)*

6. In mathematics:

- improving pupils' understanding and use of mathematical language;
- ensuring more consistent use of the numeracy strategy;
- using ICT to reinforce and extend learning;
- identifying the next steps in learning for pupils.

*(Reference paragraphs: 11 and 119 - 127)*

7. In science:

- improving pupils' understanding and use of scientific language;
- improving pupils' presentation;
- challenging higher attainers from Year 3 onwards;
- planning for pupils to work in designing and carrying out investigations throughout the school;
- using ICT to reinforce and extend learning.

*(Reference paragraphs: 12, 15, 31, 39 and 128 - 133)*

8. In the foundation subjects and especially physical education, art and design and design and technology:

- including provision for swimming in the curriculum;
- planning for skills development more systematically;
- adjusting the length of some sessions.

*(Reference paragraphs: 13, 40, 41, 42, 134, 137, 159 and 163 - 167)*

- **Improve the overall quality of teaching** by:

1. Continuing to support less experienced staff. *(Reference paragraph: 27)*

2. Implementing the marking policy more consistently. *(Reference paragraph: 31)*

3. Using individual target setting more effectively and linking this to pupils' individual and group education plans. *(Reference paragraphs: 31 and 36)*

4. Adjusting the balance of time pupils spend listening to the teacher and being actively involved in learning tasks. (*Reference paragraph: 32*)

98 The headteacher, staff and governors should consider the following minor issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- Long term strategic planning. (*Reference paragraph: 96*)
- Developing the partnership with parents, including improving written reports about pupil progress and homework arrangements. (*Reference paragraphs: 32, 67, 68 and 73*)

## THE WORK OF THE UNIT FOR PUPILS WITH SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

### *New provision*

99 The unit opened in its present room in September 2001 with five pupils, one teacher and two learning support assistants. Two pupils had been admitted in the previous April and were supported in a small spare room within the main building. The unit is part of the county's provision for pupils with social and communication difficulties. Pupils are drawn from a wide area and all travel to school in taxis. The teacher in charge of the unit reports to the headteacher of Elmhurst Junior School, but also has close links with county support agencies.

### *Settling in*

100 The five boys in the unit, who are in Years 3 and 4, have settled in very well. They come happily into school and respond well to the structured support of staff. The reasons for this smooth transfer from their previous schools are:

- clear daily routines, which help pupils feel safe and secure;
- good level of adult support, so that pupils are helped and encouraged;
- calm learning environment;
- detailed knowledge and understanding of pupils' learning needs;
- good links with parents.

### *Teaching and learning*

101 Pupils achieve well in lessons because of the effective teaching by both the teacher and LSAs. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and these set a firm foundation for learning. Strengths in the teaching include very clear expectations of both behaviour and hard work. Pupils respond well to this challenge and most manage to stay on task for most of the time. The teacher and staff are also very clear in their explanations and this helps the pupils to grasp instructions and new ideas more quickly. The good levels of staffing mean that staff respond quickly to pupils' individual learning needs and this helps pupils to work at activities well matched to their abilities. There is a clear structure to the day and within sessions short and clearly-focused activities are planned. This helps pupils to concentrate well and make good strides in their learning.

102 At this early stage of settling pupils into their new class the very structured approach has been essential, and staff are aware that pupils will need to move towards more independent tasks as they mature.

### *Literacy*

103 Pupils are behind their peers in all aspects of English, but are achieving well and making good progress. They all take part in class discussions with encouragement and enjoyed a session in which the story of '*Little Red Riding Hood*' was the basis for the work. Four of the five pupils, for example, knew that proper nouns require capital letters and wrote the characters' names out carefully. In a handwriting session, it was evident that skills are taught carefully. Pupils used sloped boards to help them to write more comfortably, although one or two held the pencil very awkwardly.

### *Numeracy*

104 Pupils are also behind their peers in the development of their numeracy skills, but again achieve well because of the good support that they are given. They are confident with number bonds to ten, for example. In a session seen, they took turns to fill the bonds in on a grid on the whiteboard. In the same session pupils learnt about 3D shapes. They became familiar with the names of different shapes, such as cube, cylinder, cone and pyramid. They identified faces, edges and vertices. They worked well at this task because of the very clear

explanations by the teacher, but would have benefited from a more practical approach, with opportunities to touch and feel the solid shapes.

#### *Inclusion*

105 Although the unit is sited in one of the bungalows in the grounds, it is very much part of the school. Staff are committed to inclusion at Elmhurst and every opportunity is taken to ensure that the unit pupils are part of the whole school. They join the other classes for assembly, for example, and eat with the main school at lunchtimes. Playtimes are also times when pupils join with their friends. On all these occasions the unit staff are at hand to provide support.

106 The aim is to integrate pupils into main school classes. Already two pupils successfully join their peers in the main school for one or two sessions a week. They cope well at these times with the help of an LSA from the unit.

#### *Leadership and management*

107 The unit teacher has effectively established a good staff team. She gives the staff clear guidance and because of the intimacy of the room is able to monitor how the work is progressing. She liaises well with agencies outside the school and keeps the headteacher well informed about the unit's work. She has been instrumental in ordering and organising the equipment and resources for the unit and has created an attractive environment, although there is more scope for using pupils' own work in the displays. She has written a draft policy, which has been a good basis for the unit's development. The unit teacher is aware that this will need reviewing in the light of the new code of practice and to tie in more closely with the school's special educational needs policy.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	8	16	15	3	0	0
Percentage	2%	19%	37%	35%	7%	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 two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	171
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35
<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y3– Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	66
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	97
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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 2**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	23	25	48

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	15
	Girls	20	11	19
	Total	28	19	34
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (43)	40 (31)	71 (69)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	7	8	16
	Girls	19	11	19
	Total	26	19	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	54 (34)	40 (31)	73 (57)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	91
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	1
White	69
Any other minority ethnic group	6

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Average class size	21

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	187

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000 - 2001
	£
Total income	430,950
Total expenditure	434,470
Expenditure per pupil	2,349
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,213
Balance carried forward to next year	14,693

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
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	171
Number of questionnaires returned	77

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	40	1	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	60	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	40	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	14	9	1
The teaching is good.	43	44	8	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	32	14	4	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	31	6	0	8
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	40	4	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	39	47	5	0	9
The school is well led and managed.	45	38	1	0	16
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	51	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	36	8	4	14

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

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

### **ENGLISH**

108 Standards have been well below average for several years in national tests. A few pupils do well each year and reach the higher level 5, but a high proportion do not reach the expected level 4, in spite of the school's efforts to raise standards. The inspection found that standards remain well below average in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Generally pupils do better in reading than in writing. There has been steady improvement since the last inspection, with good improvement in last year's national tests. This year, because of the nature of the cohort, standards are unlikely to be as high.

109 Most pupils make sound progress from Years 3 to 6, with some doing better, but many do not move on quickly enough to close the gap between their performance and an 'average' pupil. A high proportion of pupils have special educational needs and particular difficulties with communication and language. They move forward well when they have extra support, but find it hard to transfer skills to new areas of learning. Pupils learning English as an additional language also have difficulty in understanding complex and idiomatic language and this hampers their progress.

110 The school has used several strategies in order to raise standards. These include:

- the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy;
- setting of pupils in Years 5 and 6;
- allocating support staff to work with pupils who have special educational needs and who are learning English as an additional language;
- support from the SENCO for groups of pupils, in Year 3 particularly, and for individuals;
- the introduction of extra support, such as the Additional Literacy Strategy (ALS).

111 These measures are beginning to have an impact on standards. However there are some factors that have had a detrimental effect on some pupils' progress. These include:

- variations in the quality of teaching from class to class;
- unsatisfactory teaching in the past;
- insufficient emphasis on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

#### *Speaking and listening*

112 Overall pupils' attainment in this area is well below average. There is a policy to guide work in this area, but staff rarely note opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills in their planning. In most classes teachers make good use of the introduction and conclusion to lessons, to engage pupils in question and answer sessions. In the best lessons teachers constantly check that pupils understand the meaning of words and involve as many as possible in the discussion. Most pupils appear quiet and attentive at these times, but it is not always easy for teachers to know whether they have fully understood. Most are confident in their responses and are happy to speak in front of a class group, but few use extended or complex sentences. In some lessons pupils are asked to discuss work in pairs during the activity part of the lesson. They manage this well and listen to each other carefully. There was little evidence during the inspection of pupils debating, presenting their work to a large group or being involved in any drama activities.

#### *Reading*

113 The school has made several recent improvements to the way in which reading is taught, because their analysis showed that many pupils who struggled with reading only used

a limited number of strategies. As well as the ALS support, teachers have started a reading games club after school, targeted at Year 3 pupils. This is becoming very popular and in the session seen pupils did well because of the high level of adult support. The inspection found that older pupils particularly tend to 'break up' or segment unfamiliar words in order to work them out, and use very few other strategies. Several pupils felt that if they did find a word difficult, they would ask an adult for help rather than trying to work it out for themselves. This dependency on adult support is one of the reasons for pupils' difficulties in national tests, where they have to work independently. Generally phonic skills are soundly taught, with good support from assistants during the activity part of the literacy hour.

114 The school has sensibly put more emphasis on reading for enjoyment in the last two years and the range of interesting and enjoyable books has been extended. In the best lessons good quality books are used as a starting point for developing both reading and writing skills. In Year 6, for example, pupils have been using *'The Snow Maze'* by Jan Mark and *'Clockwork'* by Phillip Pullman as a basis for recent work. Pupils were very enthusiastic about this and very proud of the displays of their work based on these books. In a Year 4 class, the teacher reads pupils a story several times a week. This helps pupils to appreciate good writing. It is especially valuable for the lower attaining pupils, who struggle to read simple texts for themselves. In this class pupils understand work on phonics and language structure more easily because they relate it to texts that they know. In one session, for example, pupils were getting to grips with the rule that applies when you change singular words ending in 'f' or double 'f' to plurals. One pupil was delighted to observe that the word 'cliff' was one that they had come across in Ted Hughes' *'The Iron Man'*. Reading diaries show that many parents support their children well at home. Some parents do not understand English and the school has a leaflet in Urdu to help these parents. There is some inconsistency in the way that teachers monitor these diaries and in one or two classes, the books that the pupils took home were not very well matched to their capabilities. The school is fortunate in having a library. This is well organised and older pupils are clear about how to find information from books. There is currently no guide displayed in the library to help pupils find the books that they need. There are also classroom book collections. These are tidily displayed on shelves, but there are no corners set up where pupils can browse and enjoy books, and few displays to whet their interest.

### *Writing*

115 Staff are working hard to drive up standards in writing. Positive steps that have already been introduced include:

- using good quality texts as a model for writing;
- giving pupils a real purpose for their writing;
- displaying good quality texts to show pupils that their work is valued;
- setting aside a designated lesson for writing;
- basing word and sentence level work on the pupils' class text;
- linking writing skills with work in other subjects;
- providing opportunities for teachers to observe each other.

116 These strategies are not yet consistently in place across the school, but are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' writing skills. In a Year 4 class, for example, the teacher has put together a book of pupils' own poems. This includes some good quality writing, for example:

*'Snow has gently settled/Slipping skiddy surfaces'*

and

*'Noon in Pakistan/ Hot and boiling/ Having cool baths all the time/ Suffocating heat'*

At the moment, handwriting skills are not consistently taught. Pupils tend to copy patterns or sections from books independently. Consequently many pupils join letters incorrectly. Many pupils' writing is very small. This is partly because they transfer from pencil to pen too early.

Spelling is taught satisfactorily, but many pupils struggle to spell polysyllabic words correctly.

### *Teaching*

117 In lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was variable and ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. In most lessons pupils moved forward steadily. There are some strengths in teaching. These include thorough planning of the structure of the lesson, good preparation and the good use of support assistants. Pupils with special educational needs are generally well supported. Tasks are well matched to their abilities and in many sessions they benefit from extra help from an LSA or teacher. Pupils in Year 5 do not have as much additional help as other year groups, but this is slightly balanced by the smaller group size. (Some higher attaining pupils work with Year 6). Some teachers have particular flair and this lifts the teaching and learning in a few sessions. Areas that are inconsistent from class to class include the support for pupils learning English as an additional language. Some teachers are particularly skilled in helping these pupils to develop their language skills. In a few classes the teachers are not so aware of potential confusions that could be caused by imprecise use of language. At the moment the school is understaffed for specialist support. However the quality of the existing extra help is very good and helps pupils who receive it make very good progress. Marking is another area of inconsistency. Most teachers are positive, but there are few instances of teachers marking work in relation to the objectives for the lesson. Teachers are beginning to use personal objectives to help pupils know what they need to do to improve, but this is not yet fully embedded in everyday practice.

### *The way forward*

118 The subject leader is clear about what needs to be improved in order to raise standards. She is relatively new to the management of the subject and to teaching. However in a short space of time she has accomplished a great deal and offers good support to colleagues.

### *Strengths:*

- *some particularly skilled teachers;*
- *clear vision for improvement;*
- *support for pupils with special educational needs.*

### *What could be improved:*

- *standards;*
- *pupils' understanding of and use of language;*
- *teaching of handwriting;*
- *consistent use of books as a basis for work;*
- *use of drama and role play activities.*

## **MATHEMATICS**

119 By the age of eleven and throughout the school standards of attainment are very low. Taking into account the very low standards when pupils enter the school most pupils are achieving at least satisfactorily. The school's thorough analyses of test results and comparisons between results at the age of seven and their current levels of attainment support this judgement. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. This picture is closely mirrored in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001.

120 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Continued improvements to the curriculum, teaching in ability groups in Year 6, monitoring of teaching and learning and more effective arrangements for assessment have all contributed to the school's better provision for mathematics. Although standards rose last year for the first time in recent years, there has been insufficient time for these measures to have the desired effect of raising standards significantly. Other factors that limit the rate of improvement

include the high proportions of pupils with special educational needs. In addition, the significant numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language face the particular difficulty of learning and understanding the specific subject vocabulary that is necessary in order to make more rapid progress in their learning. Nevertheless these groups of pupils benefit from good levels of support and, taking their prior attainment into account, their achievements are similar to other pupils.

121 Teachers work hard to ensure that mathematics lessons are fully inclusive and that all groups of pupils are involved in all mathematical activities. As a result most pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is well organised and teaching assistants are well briefed to develop pupils' confidence and understanding. They provide strong support for teachers and pupils. In all lessons seen where they were available, this ensured that pupils sustained their concentration well when engaged in small group tasks and during whole class sessions. At the same time the sensitive nature of the support raises their self-esteem and engenders positive attitudes towards learning.

122 By the age of eleven most pupils have a sound understanding of place value to 1,000 and are beginning to use decimal notation, fractions and percentages. They develop their measuring skills, find the perimeters and areas of simple shapes and construct and interpret bar charts and line graphs. Fewer than half of the pupils reaches expected levels by this age in number, space, shape and measures, and data handling. These pupils use written methods of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and check the reasonableness of their results with a calculator. When describing data they understand mode and range. Throughout the school pupils lack confidence in applying their mathematical knowledge to problems. This is partly as a result of the considerable language difficulties facing many pupils and partly because the setting of work involving real-life problem solving is not a regular feature of many lessons.

123 Although the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, they could be better, as demonstrated in a quarter of the lessons seen which were very good. Occasionally teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. The pace of learning is good in Year 6 where pupils are taught in sets of similar prior attainment. In a very good lesson the lower attaining set made good progress in their understanding of the properties of 3D shapes because of the very good teamwork of the teacher and the special educational needs co-ordinator. This was particularly effective during the mental introductory session and ensured that all pupils were fully and actively involved in their learning. As a result, pupils were keen to take part, secure in the knowledge that their contributions were valued. Another strong feature of this lesson was the number of opportunities provided for pupils to talk about their calculations, both to their teachers and to their discussion partners. This is particularly helpful to those who speak English as an additional language, although it is not applied consistently in all classes. In another very successful lesson, lower attaining pupils in Year 4 were well supported by classroom assistants. Coupled with tasks well matched to pupils' needs and abilities, the brisk pace set by the teacher led to sustained levels of interest and concentration while plotting points on a grid. Teaching throughout the school helps to promote the very good relationships seen during the inspection.

124 In the least successful lessons teachers' subject knowledge is insecure. This was evident in the imprecise use of mathematical vocabulary seen in Year 5 lessons on co-ordinates and weighing. It was also evident in the lack of clarity in the teachers' explanations and instructions, so pupils were unclear about exactly what was expected of them. In about one third of the lessons seen, higher attaining pupils could have made more progress. Sometimes this was because the work was too easy. On another occasion, during the activity session in a Year 3 lesson, the teacher, while providing strong support for the less



confident pupils, did not maintain a clear awareness of the progress of other groups. As a result, the higher attaining group took a long time to settle and their pace of learning was too slow.

125 Teachers' planning is generally good. It is based firmly on the National Numeracy Strategy and the three-part lesson is soundly established. Identifying precisely what pupils are going to learn is defined in teachers' plans and almost always shared with pupils when the lesson begins. The use of clear questions at the end of lessons to assess what pupils have learned is not so well established. As a result, the school's adoption of the traffic light strategy (red, amber and green), designed to involve pupils more fully in the assessment of their own learning, is not as effective as it might be. Other shortcomings include missed opportunities to develop and talk about a variety of mental strategies and to build constructively on pupils' errors to help all of them improve. In Year 5 these inconsistencies are most noticeable because although the temporary teachers are well supported by the school they have not received the additional training that was available to the permanent members of staff when the strategy was first introduced.

126 Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology, and the classroom-based computers in particular, to develop their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding. Neither do they have enough opportunities to use and apply these to help their learning in other lessons such as science, design and technology and geography.

127 The co-ordinator provides strong leadership and support for colleagues. Through her monitoring of teaching and learning and her efficient management of assessment procedures she has a clear view of standards across the school. Pupils are tested annually and the results of tests are carefully analysed. This information is shared with teachers who use it to group pupils and to set individual targets for improvement. However, the targets are too broad to provide a sharp focus for teaching and do not give pupils a clear idea of what they have to do to improve. In addition, the quality of feedback provided for pupils, including the marking of their work, is inconsistent and does not always identify the next steps in learning.

*Strengths include:*

- *strong leadership and management;*
- *good assessment procedures;*
- *good teaching in Year 6 and Year 4 based on good teamwork;*
- *setting in Year 6 to provide a better match of work to the needs of the different ability groups;*
- *teachers' planning.*

*Areas for development include:*

- *improving the quality of feedback to pupils, including marking, to help them improve;*
- *sharing the successful teaching and ensuring more consistent use of the numeracy strategy;*
- *improving the opportunities to use, apply and extend mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in other subjects and especially in information and communication technology;*
- *matching work more closely to the needs of the pupils, particularly higher attainers.*

## **SCIENCE**

128 Standards by Year 6 are still well below average, but there has been a steady trend of improvement since the last inspection. This is as a result of the improvements in the quality

of teaching, particularly in Year 6. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, whereas at the last inspection there was a significant proportion. Pupils are now being given more opportunities to experiment and investigate, and so learn through practical experience. However, activities are still very prescribed by the teacher, and pupils, with the exception of Year 6, have few opportunities to plan their own investigations. Pupils have difficulty understanding and using technical language. Although teachers work hard to address this through clear explanations and repetition, poor language skills still cause pupils problems when confronted with a written test. As at the last inspection, units of work are often isolated and dealt with in a superficial way, so that there is insufficient time to ensure thorough understanding. All pupils work hard, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, and their achievement is satisfactory.

129 Pupils are given opportunities to learn through practical science, but opportunities for them to make choices are limited, so learning is superficial. However, in Year 6 pupils are given tasks that ensure that their previous knowledge and understanding are developed when they plan their own investigations. For example, pupils use their knowledge of circuits to investigate what influences the brightness of a bulb and the speed of a motor. They investigate the interdependence of living things through food chains. They understand that living things are interdependent, but their understanding of terms such as producer and consumer is very muddled. Explanations of what is happening, for example when light travels through a periscope, are not based on scientific understanding. For instance, one pupil's explanation was that *'you can see the candle because light travels through it and the candle is burning'*. This highlights the difficulties that pupils experience when asked to describe processes, and their lack of thorough understanding. Pupils in Year 5 learn the names of the skeleton and investigate the growth of bones into adulthood. They make electrical circuits, and predict whether objects are conductors or insulators. Pupils seem to intuitively know whether the bulb will light, but are unable to explain why. For example, one pupil explained *'this doesn't work because it doesn't'*, while another said *'it won't light because there are two bulbs'*. When considering the insulating properties of layers of paper one child said that the use of layers of paper to wrap fish and chips in was to keep them clean. Pupils in Year 4 investigate temperature differences around the classroom and present their findings using a line graph. However, there were missed opportunities here for pupils to find out for themselves what is the clearest way of presenting this information. Pupils in Year 3 investigate magnets and discover that magnetic objects are made of metal, but that not all metals are magnetic. Pupils are generally unable to explain that the presence of iron is required for an object to be magnetic.

130 The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory, with some very good features, particularly in Year 6. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and set appropriate activities for the pupils, giving them opportunities to learn through practical experience. However, these activities give few opportunities for the pupils to make personal choices and plan their own investigations based on their previous knowledge and understanding. Scientific skills such as predicting are encouraged, but little attention is paid to the notion of fair testing.

131 The exception is in Year 6, where pupils are given a range of apparatus and then asked to investigate for themselves. They investigated how to make bulbs dimmer and motors slower, for example. Pupils in Year 6 are taught in setted groups with a few able pupils from Year 5 joining the higher attaining set. In this way teachers plan a closer match of work to ability. The teacher in the top set is the co-ordinator and has very good subject expertise. She is very enthusiastic and poses searching questions continuously to make the pupils think about what they are doing. This results in very good learning for these pupils, who progress at their own rate, with opportunities for the most able to be sufficiently challenged because of the open-ended nature of the task. The written learning objectives were the same for both groups, which was inappropriate, as the least able were not at the required stage of learning

to investigate the brightness of bulbs. However the teacher adjusted the work to meet the pupils' needs, thus ensuring that learning did take place. In these sessions the pupils concentrate well and have very good attitudes to their work. The sessions are very long, but they sustain interest until the end. The teachers ensure that interest is sustained by setting an appropriate pace, and by continuously checking understanding as the pupils carry out their investigations. Very good emphasis is placed on language in these lessons to ensure that all pupils understand what they are learning. In another lesson that was not so successful pupils were all given the same task and the quickest had to wait for the slowest. This meant that the most able were not sufficiently challenged, and their learning was not as good as it could have been. The pupils, however, were very well behaved while they waited, but not gainfully occupied.

132 Teachers give clear explanations reinforcing specific language, but sometimes insufficient awareness of pupils' limited understanding leads to confusion, as it did when pupils were asked to use ticks and crosses, and yes and no, to record their findings. A simpler recording sheet would have been more appropriate. Marking of work is generally unsatisfactory, with much work not marked and incorrect science not corrected. This results in pupils' written work not extending or reinforcing their learning. Work is often incomplete and no efforts have been made to complete unfinished work. Recording is often limited to copied sentences from the board with all pupils doing the same thing. This ensures that pupils are given information, but does not ensure that they understand the scientific concepts being taught. There is no agreed format for presentation, which is often scruffy, so that what the pupils record is not a valuable source for revision. As the standard of written work is so varied, teachers cannot use this as a means of assessing pupils' progress.

133 The subject is managed by a very enthusiastic and able co-ordinator, who has a clear overview of the subject. She is committed to raising standards, and the inclusion of more able Year 5 pupils in the Year 6 setting arrangements is an effective new strategy for challenging the higher attainers. These pupils are already working at the required level so standards should rise next year. Pupils are regularly tested to ensure that appropriate progress is being made towards projected attainment levels, but assessment of the investigative strand of the subject is underdeveloped. The co-ordinator analyses the test results at the end of Year 6 to identify strengths and weaknesses, and planning is then adjusted to address the weaknesses. A major weakness identified is the understanding of technical language, and the limited ability of pupils to explain processes. The co-ordinator has devised a 'word mat' to heighten teachers' awareness of the language needed, and to help pupils become familiar with specific scientific language. This is new, and there has not been sufficient time for it to have any impact on standards. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning to ensure that the curriculum is covered, and she looks at samples of pupils' work to check standards, but has not yet monitored the quality of teaching by direct observation. She has a very heavy workload and there has not been time for her to do this, but it is planned for next term. There is insufficient use of ICT to support the subject, but the grounds are well used for environmental study.

#### *Strengths:*

- *a strong commitment to raise standards;*
- *an able co-ordinator who has a clear overview of the subject;*
- *increased opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations;*
- *a trend of rising standards.*

#### *Areas for development:*

- *opportunities for pupils to plan their own investigations;*
- *assessment procedures for the investigative element of the subject.*
- *the quality of marking to ensure that it aids learning;*

- *an agreed format for presentation;*
- *pupils' understanding and use of specific scientific language.*
- *Long term planning and the timing of lessons, to ensure that topics are thoroughly taught, and that knowledge and understanding are progressively developed.*
- *challenge for higher attaining pupils in all year groups;*
- *Links with ICT.*

## **ART AND DESIGN**

134 Provision for and standards in art and design are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. No lessons were observed during the inspection, but examination of work on display shows that standards by Year 6 are average, although there is a lack of coverage of all the aspects of the art curriculum. Art shares curriculum time with design and technology, and all classes were doing design and technology during the inspection. Examination of teachers' planning shows that the national guidance used is not taught in a sequential way to ensure that skills are progressively developed. The planning shows that there are large periods of time when art is not taught. For example, there is no art planned for the summer term in Year 5. The consequence is that although the work seen is of the required standard, there is insufficient time to cover all aspects of the curriculum to ensure that pupils have well-developed skills.

135 By Year 6 pupils use charcoal and chalk to draw people in a variety of body postures to show how people feel, linked with their work on relationships. The drawings have realistic body proportions, and pupils used shading and smudging to achieve a three-dimensional effect. These pupils experiment with textiles, and use a variety of methods to colour cloth, including tie-dyeing, sponging, and the use of fabric paints. Pupils in Year 5 study the work of the artist Paul Klee, and have created a pleasing, large, class collage in the same style. During this work the class had to collaborate in groups, with each pupil making a tile using cool or warm colours. Pupils in Year 4 have examined the work of Salvador Dali and created dream scenes using a variety of pastel and paint. Pupils in Year 3 linked their art work with their study of the Tudors, and used collage to make realistic timbered Tudor houses. Pupils used clay to make tiles and masks, but generally there is a lack of large, collaborative three-dimensional work. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, do the same tasks and make similar satisfactory progress in the areas of art that they study.

136 There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching throughout the school, but the small amount of evidence suggests that teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan appropriate activities for the pupils based on national guidelines, but there is no systematic development of skills, as topics seem to be based on personal teacher choice rather than the stage of development of the pupils. This does not ensure that pupils progressively build on their previous work. The co-ordinator has only been in post for a few weeks, but already has devised an action plan for improvement in the subject. She has taken over the display in the public areas of the school to encourage teachers to celebrate pupils' work through colourful display. There is, as yet, little use of ICT to support the subject. There are currently no procedures for assessment, and no portfolio of work to help teachers agree levels of attainment.

### *Strengths:*

- *work of subject co-ordinator.*

### *Areas for development:*

- *long term planning to ensure that it meets the needs of the pupils, and that skills are*

- *progressively developed;*
- *assessment procedures alongside a portfolio of work, to ensure that teachers are aware of the standard of work that pupils achieve;;*
- *sufficient time to cover all aspects of the subject in sufficient depth.*

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

137 Standards by Year 6 are average in terms of making, as they were at the time of the last inspection, but below in other aspects. Pupils use a variety of skills to make products that have a pleasing finish, but their limited language skills hinder their abilities to design and produce clear, step-by-step instructions. However, teachers do help those pupils with poor literacy skills by ensuring that they know the sequence of activities required, and sheets are provided to help pupils plan and evaluate their work. In spite of this guidance, pupils are still at the early stages of evaluating their work. They identify what they like about the finished article, but do not yet think deeply enough about the purpose of their work. Discussions with pupils in Year 6 show that they use a variety of materials and tools, but they have a limited breadth of experience and do not use mechanical and electrical means to make moving models, although this is planned for next term. Curriculum time is shared with art and design, so pupils have a limited breadth of experience.

138 Pupils in Year 6 have used wooden frameworks to make photograph frames, and attached a stand using a hinged mechanism to make it free standing. They chose their own decorations to ensure that the frames were pleasing to look at. They used a variety of joining methods, but were unsure why they used triangular corners. They have difficulty using specific language such as *axles* and *drill* to describe their work. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 have used electrical circuits to make a torch light, which is a good link with their work in science. Pupils in Year 3 have made shelters and experimented with different methods of ensuring that the roof stays up. These pupils also used syringes and a balloon to cause movement. Skills are taught through a succession of focused tasks, so that pupils' achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils with English as an additional language receive extra help with their understanding of instructions so that they are fully included in the lessons. Pupils with special educational needs do the same tasks as their peers and make the same satisfactory progress.

139 Only one lesson was observed during the inspection, but this, and examination of pupils' work, shows that teaching is at least satisfactory. Teachers have sound subject knowledge and ensure that new skills are taught through focused tasks before they are used in the pupils' projects. For example, in Year 3 pupils thoroughly explore how movement can be created using a syringe, balloon and ruler before making a moving monster. This is very necessary as the pupils have limited prior experience, but is time-consuming so that time is then limited for pupils to design and make their monsters. Pupils enjoy their lessons and talk enthusiastically about the subject. Their good attitudes have a positive impact on their learning. Teachers plan exciting activities for their pupils, but lessons are very prescribed, with few opportunities for pupils to make personal choices. For example, in Year 6 all pupils made identical wooden frames, and had a limited choice of materials for decoration. This formal lesson framework ensures that skills are learnt and pupils complete the task, but does not allow pupils to develop their own ideas. A greater emphasis on whether the finished article is fit for the purpose would help pupils with their evaluations.

140 The subject is managed by a very able co-ordinator who is well aware of the shortcomings in the subject and the language difficulties experienced by many pupils. She has developed a 'word mat' to help pupils understand the specific technical language

required for the subject. However, this is new and not used throughout the school, so as yet there has been insufficient time for this to have an effect. She has a heavy workload and has not as yet formally monitored the teaching and learning in the subject, although teachers' planning is examined to ensure that the curriculum is covered. Teachers use national guidance to help them with their planning, but the units of work are not always done in the suggested order to ensure that skills are progressively developed. For example, a Year 6 topic is done in Year 3, and a Year 3 topic is covered in Year 6. Although these are adjusted for the age of the pupils, used in this way the units are not as effective at ensuring the progressive development of skills as they would be if done in the suggested sequence. Assessment is only informal at present, and there is no list of skills to be taught, so that teachers can check what their pupils have learned. The use of ICT to support the subject is unsatisfactory. There is good liaison with the local secondary school, and good use is made of visitors to the school to enhance the pupils' practical experience of design and technology in the real world. For example, during the inspection a visitor to the school conducted a session with Year 6 pupils, when they constructed towers and a roof to make the 'Millennium Dome'. This session gave pupils excellent opportunities to collaborate and emphasised links between science, mathematics and design and technology.

*Strengths:*

- *standards in making are as expected for the age of the pupils;*
- *a strong enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has a good overview of the subject;*
- *skills are taught through focused tasks;*
- *a variety of activities to ensure that the curriculum is covered.*

*Areas for development:*

- *assessment;*
- *pupils' understanding of specific technical language;*
- *long term planning to ensure that skills are progressively developed;*
- *the use of ICT to support the subject.*

## **GEOGRAPHY**

141 Standards in geography remain well below levels expected for their age by the time pupils leave the school. Unsatisfactory learning in the past means that pupils in Year 6 have insufficient knowledge of places, limited understanding of key geographical ideas related to human and physical geography and their mapping, reasoning and enquiry skills are weak.

142 In the two lessons observed during the inspection, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, were mainly achieving well. Most pupils in Year 3 were able to succeed, with appropriate support, in matching photographs to plan drawings of the school. This made use of their prior understanding of compass direction and use of secondary source materials. In Year 6, pupils learnt more about the permeability of the school grounds, relating their understanding to differing soils.

143 There have been sound improvements in geography since the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes to their work are now good. Year 6 pupils showed interest and enjoyment in talking about geography and wanted to learn more. The subject is now well managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has put in place an effective policy and planning framework, started the monitoring of the curriculum and identified standards in the subject through the results of assessments. An action plan with clear direction now drives the subject forward.

144 Teaching is at least satisfactory or better. Good planning, to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, and a variety of teaching and learning activities, generate good pace to lessons

and good levels of interest. Behaviour is always well managed. The targeting and constant reinforcement of geographical language is a significant factor in successful lessons.

145 Planning has improved, but still needs more breadth and balance. Fieldwork is still minimal, for example. This prevents the pupils from benefiting from the stimulation and reality of first hand experiences. ICT software needs supplementing.

*Strengths:*

- *the co-ordinator 's expertise;*

*Areas for development:*

- *standards;*
- *the use of assessment as a basis for planning;*
- *increased ICT software for recording and investigative work.*

## **HISTORY**

146 Standards of pupils aged eleven remain well below those expected. Pupils know that history is about the past and that they can use books, people, artefacts and the Internet as source materials for finding out more about the past. They name and talk about life in different periods of history, such as the Ancient Greeks, the Tudors, Vikings and the Indus Valley civilisation, although their ability to place them chronologically is uncertain. They have limited ability to distinguish between first and second hand evidence, ask historical questions about that evidence and to understand the significance of different interpretations of historical events.

147 Since the last inspection teaching in the subject has improved, and is at least satisfactory or better. Behaviour and attitudes to the subject are now consistently good. The co-ordinator manages the subject well, and there are good monitoring and assessment procedures in place.

148 Most pupils achieve well, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. In a Year 3 lesson, for example, pupils gained knowledge and understanding of the differences in lifestyle between rich and poor in Tudor times. The most able explained, for example, how beds had changed in style over time.

149 Good progress in some lessons is directly related to good, enthusiastic teaching, which focuses on historical skills, as well as knowledge, and motivates pupils to learn. In particular, the ability to focus on the historical language of a lesson is essential for all pupils to succeed. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on the Indus civilisation, new vocabulary such as *archaeologist*, *etched* and *hieroglyphics*, was clearly explained and reinforced during the lesson, as was the process of discovering artefacts in archaeology.

150 The co-ordinator brings expertise to the subject and understands how to improve pupils' achievement at a time when history is not a school priority.

*Strengths:*

- *the leadership of the co-ordinator.*

*Areas for development:*

- *the use of assessment in directing planning, curriculum review and the raising of standards;*
- *the use of ICT in historical investigation.*

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

151 Standards are well below the level expected nationally by Year 6. This appears to be worse than at the time of the last inspection. National expectations, however, are now far more demanding for pupils of this age. Changes in staff, a lack of teachers' expertise, knowledge and understanding, and insufficient computers in the past have meant that pupils have not had enough opportunities to develop the necessary skills. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls or of other groups of pupils.

152 Action taken since the last inspection to deal with the weaknesses identified at the time has been good. Teachers' and classroom assistants' expertise and confidence have improved considerably and further training is planned as part of the ongoing process of staff development. Teachers' planning is much improved. The computer room has been re-located and the quality and quantity of resources is much better. The timetable for the use of the computer room has been reviewed to ensure that classes make the most of this very good resource. It is also used after school hours by the local adult education centre, and members of the local community, including governors, parents and staff, benefit in this way. However, the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress remains a weakness. With improved resources, rapidly improving staff knowledge and clear curriculum guidance, there is now the potential to raise standards further.

153 Standards seen in Year 6 are well below average in the skills of data handling, multi-media presentation, control and monitoring, use of the Internet and sending and receiving e-mails. This is because pupils have not had the breadth of experience in the past in these areas. Since the computer room opened in January this year, units of study have focused on graphics and word-processing, in line with the school's curriculum framework. In these aspects of ICT pupils are making rapid gains in knowledge, skills and understanding and are achieving well. Consistent implementation of the school's curriculum guidance will ensure that the school is well placed to develop pupils' skills in all aspects of the subject. Although still below average, standards seen in Year 3 and Year 4 are closer to the levels expected for pupils of similar ages, as teachers plan suitably challenging activities.

154 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In half of the lessons seen it was good. Teachers generally have appropriate expectations and have worked hard to improve their own expertise. This enables them to promote the use of the correct vocabulary and teach basic skills effectively. Their lesson plans, based on national guidance, provide a sound structure to lessons. In most of the lessons teachers made good use of the available resources, including the SMART board, to model the correct approach. In successful lessons in Year 4, teachers established good links with art and design as pupils skilfully produced abstract pictures of musical instruments in the style of Picasso. They confidently accessed the software and used a range of relevant tools to draw freehand. They listened carefully to instructions and drew with reasonable accuracy, using the paintbrush and adjusting the thickness and colour. More able pupils used variable shading to enhance the appearance. Pupils in Year 3, a much larger class, worked agreeably in pairs. They used the equipment carefully, taking turns and supporting each other well to locate and retrieve text from a floppy disk. As a result of the teacher's systematic and structured teaching of basic skills they progressed quickly to insert a graphic into their text.

155 Where teaching is less effective, the pace of the introduction is sometimes too slow and this means pupils become restless because they are keen to get to work. Most lessons are too teacher directed and this does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to think for themselves, develop independence or use their initiative.



156 The recently appointed co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of the subject. He supports teachers with their planning and gives guidance on how activities might be developed. He has begun to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to share the good ideas of other teachers. The school is well equipped in the computer room with sixteen modern computers, printers, Internet access and a SMART board. The designated governor has been very supportive during the installation of the room and resources and the school has welcomed his expertise and advice. Other ICT resources, such as calculators, tape recorders, and television and video recorders, are adequate. Their use, however, is not linked to improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of the use and benefits of ICT. There is very little use of the subject to support learning across the curriculum, particularly using the classroom based computers. This is an area identified by the school for development. The school has no formal arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress.

*Strengths include:*

- *teachers' commitment to improving their own expertise and raising pupils' standards;*
- *the rapid gains being made in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding;*
- *the very well equipped computer room;*
- *pupils' enthusiasm for learning;*
- *local community and governor involvement;*
- *the potential for further improvement.*

*Areas for development include:*

- *developing an accurate assessment system to identify what pupils already know, understand and can do and to inform both teaching and subject development;*
- *implementing curriculum guidance to ensure that key skills are developed progressively from one year to the next;*
- *providing opportunities for pupils to develop skills in all aspects of ICT;*
- *using ICT, including classroom computers, to consolidate and extend learning in all subjects.*

## **MUSIC**

157 The school's provision for the development of pupils' musical skills has improved since the last inspection. The new co-ordinator is a music specialist and has brought enthusiasm and skill to her leadership of this area. Only two lessons were seen during the inspection, both in Year 4, and a small group of Year 6 pupils talked to an inspector about their work. Based on this limited evidence and discussions with staff it is apparent that standards are improving, but are still below average overall.

158 Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their singing skills. In assemblies pupils sing tunefully and manage this well because of the leadership from the music co-ordinator. Opportunities for pupils to listen to music by famous composers are also provided in assemblies and Year 6 pupils recalled hearing work by Mozart, Haydn and Handel. However there are no charts in the hall to indicate what music is being played and no reference was made to the music in the assemblies seen. Some pupils are members of an after-school choir, which meets once a week. It has performed in a local music festival and visited a local residential home last Christmas to sing carols. Recently the school put on a production of 'Hosanna Rock'. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about this experience and clearly enjoyed performing.

159 In the lessons seen, pupils in Year 4 were exploring ways of making sounds expressively. They listened carefully to a recording of 'The Trout' by Schubert before thinking of the pattern of sound made by a river. They used their bodies to create the pattern of sound

and in one session seen the pupils worked well in groups to make up a sequence of sounds. The sessions went well because they were carefully planned. It was evident that the staff had worked very closely on planning and preparation for these sessions. All lesson planning is based on a published scheme linked to national guidance and is monitored by the co-ordinator. Overall, the pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, achieved well in these lessons, but could have done better if the lessons had not been so long. The school has recently adjusted the timing to increase lessons from thirty minutes, which was not long enough to accomplish very much. The present sixty-minute slot is a little too long and as a consequence the pace slows.

160 Alongside normal class lessons, a few pupils receive instrumental tuition. At the present time seven pupils learn the violin and two work with percussion instruments. In the percussion session seen, two Year 5 boys achieved very well because of the clear and supportive instruction from the teacher. They understood terms such as '*forte*' and read the notes G, A and B in order to play a piece on the xylophone. A recorder club has been started at lunchtimes and a keyboard club is due to begin soon, which will enhance the musical provision for pupils.

161 Occasionally the school makes use of visits to develop pupils' experiences. Recently, for example, pupils visited the Civic Centre for a 'Mega Jazz Day'. They had good opportunity to experiment with a range of instruments and enjoyed the experience tremendously.

162 The school is in a good position to improve music further. The co-ordinator is clear about what needs to be done to improve, there is a sound planning framework and the school has the benefit of a dedicated music room.

*Strengths:*

- *expertise of co-ordinator;*
- *activities outside lessons;*
- *instrumental teaching;*
- *designated music room.*

*Areas for development:*

- *reviewing length of music lessons.*

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

163 Standards by Year 6 in the work seen are below the levels expected for pupils of this age. This is similar to the position reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are fully integrated into lessons and mostly attain standards that are similar to their peers. There is no difference in performance between boys and girls or other groups as a result of teachers' careful strategies to engage all pupils in their learning.

164 The physical education programme includes athletics, dance, games and gymnastics. However, the school makes no provision for the teaching of swimming and therefore is not meeting the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. During the inspection, lessons were seen in games and gymnastics.

165 In Year 6, most pupils demonstrate satisfactory levels of control and co-ordination when performing basic skills in gymnastics. However, their limited repertoire of skills when travelling over, under and through the apparatus shows a lack of previous opportunities to

explore the equipment as younger pupils in order to produce a more thoughtful and creative response. Their ability to link basic skills and techniques fluently to create sequences of movements is a weakness. They work enthusiastically and behave well because of the very good relationships promoted by the teacher. In this particular lesson, pupils had little more than twenty minutes of activity. The teacher's careful planning and clear explanations were offset by the lack of time to extend pupils' learning further through discussion. This also led to brief warm-up and cooling-down sessions with insufficient time to talk about the need to prepare adequately for physical activity.

166 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers' planning is based on the national guidelines for physical education and is often supported by a commercially produced scheme of work. It provides very clear guidance for teachers and in Year 4 resulted in a well-structured games lesson. Pupils showed improving control and co-ordination in the skills of catching as the teacher introduced increased challenges to motivate pupils. They were very enthusiastic and although noise levels tended to increase the teacher channelled most of this natural exuberance into satisfactory learning. However, teachers often do not have the necessary expertise to do more than encourage and support pupils. As a result, a common shortcoming is that pupils are often not sure what they have to do in order to improve their skills and techniques. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to talk about their work and to form opinions about their own and others' performance to help move the work forward.

167 Understandably, physical education has not been seen as a priority subject for some time and the time constraints identified in the last inspection remain a weakness in some lessons. As part of the school's planned programme, monitoring of teaching and learning to identify what works well and what does not is due to take place in 2003. Although there have been no whole school discussions about standards, teachers have made a start on assessment by allocating National Curriculum levels to pupils at the end of each year. The school's facilities for physical education are good, including a spacious, well equipped hall and a large and level playground and playing field. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities supports the curriculum and provides opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their interests and skills. The school has enjoyed considerable success in local competitions.

*Strengths include:*

- *planning and the adoption of national guidelines;*
- *the school's facilities and potential for improvement;*
- *very good relationships, pupils' enthusiasm and good behaviour.*

*Areas for development include:*

- *ensuring that swimming instruction is provided in accordance with the National Curriculum;*
- *improving the quality of skills teaching as pupils move through the school;*
- *ensuring that there is sufficient time allocated to lessons to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding more fully.*

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

168 Sound overall provision has been maintained since the last inspection, with some improvements in planning. Standards of pupils at age eleven are well below the expectations set by the local agreed syllabus in terms of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the four religions they are required to learn about. Pupils' ability to learn from religions (to reflect, question and empathise with religious believers) is better.

169 The oldest pupils know religious people can believe different things, but many are confused about the differences between some of the faiths' statements, symbols and practices, and are not always clear as to how religious belief affects behaviour. For example, pupils could not make connections between teaching about creation and how this would affect believers' attitudes and behaviour in relation to looking after the environment. Most pupils cannot explain basic religious concepts, such as 'the sacred' or 'pilgrimage'. They find it hard to compare and contrast the celebrations of differing religions. They do understand what founders and prophets are and give examples from Christianity and Islam. They express their own beliefs clearly, have respect for God and willingly learn about the ideas and beliefs of others.

170 Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those speaking English as an additional language, make sound progress within lessons in building knowledge and understanding of religious people, places and traditions. However, their retention of such knowledge over time is dependent on constant reinforcement and reminders by the teachers. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils understanding of the importance of the Qur'an to Muslims increased. Some pupils could explain the ritual and significance of its high position, above that of any other book, and the beliefs it contained, and the necessity for Muslims to learn verses from it by heart. In this lesson, Muslim pupils shared their own understanding readily with others of differing beliefs. When trying to compare this with what had been learnt about with the Christian holy book in the past, many pupils became confused.

171 Teaching and learning in the subject ranged from good to unsatisfactory in lessons seen. In the better lessons pupils learn and achieve well. In these sessions teachers ensure there is a range of resources to enable all pupils to succeed in their directed tasks, make good use of recap to consolidate prior learning and constantly enthuse and support pupils, particularly in relation to the language and vocabulary of new work. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was due to a lack of subject knowledge. All teaching observed was characterised by good relationships and good behaviour management.

172 Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. This reflects the school's inclusive character, where everyone is valued, regardless of ability, religion, ethnic background or sex. Pupils are ready to talk about their beliefs, respect those of others and are willing to explore the variety of faiths required.

173 The 2001 Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus is now in place. This has excellent support material for teachers and clearly identifies standards and assessment procedures. The new co-ordinator is managing the subject well, and her enthusiasm has won the ready support of colleagues. She has written a clear action plan to move the subject forward and raise standards. Assessment procedures are in place, but not yet fully implemented, to enable a clear picture of pupils' progress and standards. Evaluation and monitoring of the curriculum has begun, but is yet to identify weaknesses. In particular, the decision to explore more than the required number of religions needs reviewing in the light of current standards and progress. The constraints of the timetable, splitting the teaching of religious education into two half hour sessions a week, limits the range of learning activities for pupils. Discussion predominates at the expense of expressive and investigative work, where pupils have opportunity to show initiative. The co-ordinator is aware of the need for more artefacts, media resources and ICT resources to stimulate learning.

174 The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development, and with the emphasis on discussion provides opportunity to develop pupils' oracy skills.

*Strengths:*

- *pupils' positive attitudes;*
- *respect for each other's religious beliefs.*

*Areas for development:*

- *use of assessment to raise standards;*
- *widening the range of resources to include ICT in particular;*
- *further evaluating the curriculum to ensure progression in skills, knowledge and understanding.*