



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION**

**INSPECTION REPORT**

**BRIGHTLINGSEA JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Brightlingsea, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114758

Headteacher: Mr Clive Reynolds

Reporting inspector: Mr Selwyn Ward  
9271

Dates of inspection: 25 – 28 February 2002

Inspection number: 222330

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Sycamore
Date of previous inspection:	6 – 10 March 2000

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subjects	Aspect responsibilities
Selwyn Ward	9271	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well does the school provide for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development? How good are pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Caroline Marden	9537	Lay inspector		How good is attendance? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Marianne Harris	23288	Team inspector	Science Geography History Religious education	How well is assessment information used?
Andy Howe	23870	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
Pat Kitley	23487	Team inspector		How well does the school provide for pupils with special educational needs? How well does the school provide for pupils learning English as an additional language?
Jan Martin	29844	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
John Tyler	20506	Team inspector	Art Design technology Information & communication technology	How well does the school provide equal opportunities?

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Brightlingsea is a large, community junior school for boys and girls aged 7 – 11 years. The school currently has 377 pupils. Almost all are white and of UK heritage. There is a tiny number of children from an ethnic minority background, and there is a similarly small number of refugee and traveller children. The number of pupils learning English as an additional language is small, and very few children are at an early stage of learning English. The school serves a community where there is above average social need, although the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. There are more pupils with special educational needs than is usually found. Mostly, their needs relate to learning, but several have behavioural difficulties. Overall, pupils join the school with attainment that is well below average.

### HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Brightlingsea is an effective and improving school. The headteacher and staff have worked very well as a team to tackle the issues identified in the last inspection and, as a result, areas identified previously as weaknesses are now strengths of the school. Although test results last year fell, the very good use of assessment in the school, the increased teaching time given to science, and the good use of the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies*, have contributed to a rise in standards since last year's tests, and pupils of all abilities, including the more able, are now generally making good progress. Brightlingsea Junior provides good value for money.

#### What the school does well

- ? The school is very well led and managed and this has led to very good improvement since the last inspection.
- ? The *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* have been used well to improve learning in English and mathematics, and teaching in these subjects is good.
- ? Children of all abilities generally make good progress.
- ? The school provides well for pupils' personal development and, as a result, pupils behave well in most lessons and develop a positive attitude to learning.
- ? The information from assessing how pupils are doing is used very well to plan teaching and learning, and to set children targets for improvement.
- ? The school takes good care of its pupils.

#### What could be improved

- ? Standards in English and mathematics, although rising, are still below those expected nationally.
- ? The accommodation hinders pupils' learning.
- ? The timetable could be better organised and pupils are not given enough time for physical education.

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

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

Brightlingsea Junior was last inspected in March 2000, when it was described as an underachieving school. Although test results fell last year, standards are now rising and pupils of all abilities, including the more able, are achieving well. All of the issues identified in the last inspection have been tackled very effectively, so that all of the areas previously identified as weaknesses are now strengths of the school. This represents very good improvement in the two years since the last inspection. Brightlingsea Junior is a good and effective school. It is no longer underachieving.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the results attained at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in national tests.

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>  well above average      A above average          B average                    C below average          D well below average      E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	D	C	E	E	
mathematics	D	C	E	E	
science	D	E	E	E	

*Schools are categorised as similar according to the number of children known to be eligible for free school meals.*

The table shows that results in last year's national tests at the end of Year 6 were well below average in all three core subjects both when compared with schools nationally and when compared with similar schools. Results have not shown the improving trend seen nationally. Girls have done better than boys, and by a slightly wider margin than seen nationally.

The standard of work seen in the current Year 6 however is substantially better than this. Although standards in English and mathematics are now below average, those in science are now in line with national expectations. This represents considerable recent improvement in all three core subjects which reflects better teaching, particularly in the older classes, and the rigour with which the school has tackled the key issues identified in the last inspection. Boys and girls of all abilities, including the more able, those with special educational needs and the small number learning English as an additional language, are now achieving well and making good progress. The school has set itself ambitious targets for improved test results this year in English and mathematics.

Inspectors were unable to see enough aspects of music or physical education during the inspection to make overall judgements on standards in these subjects, although the work seen in physical education was in line with national expectations while that in music was below. In all other subjects, standards are in line with national expectations, with the exception of art, where the quality of work is above the national expected standard. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils like coming to school and they learn to respond to the orderly routines expected by teachers. As a result, the children are attentive and settle to work without fuss.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in most lessons and around the school. Pupils have learnt to appreciate and respond well to the high expectations that teachers have of good behaviour and this contributes to the progress that they make. There have been four temporary exclusions over the past year.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils are good, and pupils' relationships with their teachers are very good, so that children often work hard because they are keen to please their teachers. Children generally work well together. Pupils of different abilities and from different backgrounds mix and get on well together and are all included in the full range of school activities, although girls and boys mostly choose to work in single sex groups.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils arrive at school on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 3 - 6</b>
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall but with many good features. There is a high proportion of very good teaching in Year 6 and that is helping to raise standards and to ensure that pupils achieve well. Teaching of English and mathematics throughout the school is now effective with a good emphasis on ensuring pupils learn and build on their basic skills, and the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* are making a real contribution to improving pupils' learning. Teachers plan together well within each year group. In most lessons, teachers explain clearly what it is the pupils are expected to learn. Teachers usually have good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. In the most effective lessons, questioning was used well to check pupils' understanding and to ensure that all of the children in the class were involved. Teachers managed pupils well and ensured that the children got a lot done in the time available. Teachers' relationships with their pupils were very good and they had high expectations, both of pupils' behaviour and of their academic performance. As a result, pupils put a lot of effort into their work. Work was generally well matched to pupils' different abilities, including the more able and those with special educational needs. Throughout the school, teachers set pupils individual learning targets and, as a result, children know what it is they need to do to improve and to attain the next National Curriculum level in their work. Teaching assistants are generally well used to support pupils' learning. In less effective lessons, behaviour was not well managed and in a small number of lessons the misbehaviour of a few disrupted learning. Less effective lessons moved at a slow pace and this led to pupils losing interest. In a very small number of lessons, teachers' subject knowledge was a weakness so that pupils picked up a misconception from their teacher. There were examples seen of very good marking, helping pupils to understand what they need to do to do better, and, in some of the most effective lessons, teachers assessed what pupils had understood and modified their teaching plans to best meet pupils' learning needs. This was not consistently the case, however. Satisfactory use is made of homework throughout the school, although it does not increase enough in Year 6 to fully prepare pupils for the transition to secondary school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team provide very clear educational direction for the school and there is a strong, shared commitment among the whole staff to school improvement and raising standards. Teaching and learning is generally monitored well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are supportive and satisfactorily fulfil their legal duties. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and this enables them to play an appropriate part in determining the school's priorities for development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Test results are analysed to adapt what is being taught to ensure it meets pupils' learning needs. The school is applying the principles of " <i>best value</i> " to evaluate for itself what it does well and what it needs to do to improve.
The strategic use of resources	Spending is well matched to the school's educational priorities as identified in the school development plan. Funding earmarked for specific uses, such as special educational needs, have been appropriately spent.
The school's buildings and facilities	Resources for most subjects, including library facilities, are satisfactory. There are not enough computers but further equipment is already on order. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. Classrooms are small, cramped and, despite some improvements, still suffer from their open-plan design. There is no spare teaching space and so no opportunity to extend setting and enable some teaching to be done in smaller groups. The hall is very small and cannot readily accommodate more than half the children in the school. Its limited availability restricts opportunities for indoor physical education. Displays are used well around the school to celebrate children's work and create a stimulating learning environment.

Staffing	Good. The school has benefited from a stable staff who work well as a team.
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## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is appropriate and the <i>National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies</i> are used well and are raising standards. The amount of time given to teaching science has contributed to the significant improvement in the standard of work seen, but not enough time is given to teaching physical education. The timetable is not always well organised, and some lessons are interrupted by others or by playtime. There is a very good range of activities provided for pupils outside lessons and the curriculum is enriched through good links with the local community and with other local schools.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs, traveller children and those learning English as an additional language	Good. Pupils' needs are identified carefully, appropriate targets are set and provision is well organised. Work is generally well matched to pupils' needs in lessons and they receive good support from adults. The few pupils learning English as an additional language, and pupils who are supported by the local authority's Traveller Education Service, are well catered for.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides well for pupils' personal development. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and this has had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Provision for cultural development is very good, with the school placing a particular emphasis on broadening pupils' awareness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teaching and other staff are caring and supportive. Children's welfare is looked after well. There are effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance. Pupils' academic progress and personal development are kept track of very well and the information used from teachers' assessments are used very well to plan teaching and learning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Information for parents, including school reports, is good and the school has worked hard to involve parents. Reports include individual pupil targets so that parents are given a good idea of how their children are doing.

## 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>? Their children like school</li> <li>? The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>? There are too many children in each class</li> <li>? The amount of homework is not right</li> <li>? They do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on at school</li> <li>? The school does not work closely with parents</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by parents. Inspectors judged information provided to parents to be good and considered that the school works hard to involve parents. Homework is satisfactory, although it does not increase enough in Year 6 to fully prepare children for the transition to secondary school. Inspectors agree that the numbers in each class in Year 3 are high and that classrooms are cramped. The school has put additional staff into the largest classes to support the children's learning, but, even when an extra teacher is made available, the limited space in the school means that pupils are having to be taught in large classes rather than smaller teaching groups.



## PART B: COMMENTARY

### HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

#### The school's results and achievements

1. Throughout this report, schools' test results are compared with the national average, as well as against "*similar schools*". Schools are grouped as similar according to the proportion of children attending who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In judging standards, inspectors analysed results attained in the national standard assessment tests (SATs) taken at the end of Year 6, both in 2001 and in previous years. Inspectors looked at work currently being done in lessons and at work done throughout the past year. They listened to children read and discussed children's work with them, as well as with their teachers. Whereas judgements on attainment relate to comparisons with nationally expected standards, *achievement* relates to the progress pupils make and compares how well children do as against their prior attainment. English, mathematics and science are referred to as *core subjects*, and a degree of priority was given in the inspection to looking at these subjects. Other curriculum subjects are sometimes referred to as *non-core* or *foundation subjects*. In the report, references to the *lower school* relate to Years 3 and 4, while references to the *upper school* relate to Years 5 and 6.
2. Although children join the school with a range of attainment, the test scores which they attained in their Year 2 tests before they joined the junior school indicate that, taken overall, pupils' attainment when they start school is well below average. The school has a smaller than average proportion of more able pupils and an above average number of lower attaining pupils. In the last inspection, two years ago, the school was categorised as "*underachieving*" because its more able pupils were judged not to be doing as well as they should have been.
3. Results in last year's national tests taken at the end of Year 6 were well below average in all three core subjects both when compared with schools nationally and when compared with similar schools. Results have not shown the improving trend seen nationally, and, relatively to other schools, few children attained the higher levels which are expected of more able pupils in English, mathematics or science. Girls have done better than boys, and by a slightly wider margin than seen nationally. The standard of work seen in the current Year 6, however, is substantially better than this. Although standards in English and mathematics are now below average, rather than well below, those in science are now in line with national expectations. This represents considerable recent improvement in all three core subjects which reflects improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in the older classes, and the rigour with which the school has tackled the key issues identified in the last inspection, which are now having a positive effect on the standards attained by the pupils. In English and mathematics, the *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies* have been well implemented and teaching, overall, in these subjects is good. The school has set itself ambitious targets for improved results in English and mathematics in the 2002 tests that pupils in the current Year 6 are due to take later this year. The school has placed an emphasis on science, and standards have improved because of the amount of science that is taught.
4. In all three core subjects, boys and girls of all abilities, including the more able, those with special educational needs and the small number learning English as an additional language, are now achieving well and making good progress. There is no longer any evidence of underachievement among any identifiable group of pupils, although girls continue generally to do better than boys, and pupils in Year 3 achieve satisfactorily rather than well. The limitations of the school accommodation is a significant factor in this. Class numbers in Year 3 are very high, and although the school has invested in putting additional teaching support into these classes, the lack of additional classroom space, has prevented the school from organising the children into smaller teaching groups in which they might make faster progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their initial attainment because of the good support they receive. There are very few pupils who are new to this country or at an early stage of learning English. The school consults with outside agencies to help plan support for those who are, and they make similar progress to other children in the school. The small number of pupils supported by the local authority's Traveller Education Service are well integrated into school and make similar progress to other children. Year 3 class numbers are also very high
5. The quality of work seen in art was better than the nationally expected standard. In most other non-core subjects, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. During the inspection, it was not possible for inspectors to see enough of the different elements of the music and physical education curriculum to make

overall judgements on standards in these subjects. In physical education, however, despite severe limitations imposed by hall space and the relatively small amount of time allocated to teaching the subject, standards seen were in line with national expectations. In music, the work seen and heard – mostly singing – was below national expectations.

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

6. Most of the children enjoy coming to school. Parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed this view, and it was generally confirmed by the children themselves. Children at Brightlingsea Junior are taught to have a positive attitude to learning. Because teachers are consistent in reinforcing the need for orderly routines in lessons, pupils of all abilities learn to follow these routines so that, for example, they usually raise their hands before answering questions. Pupils are generally attentive in lessons and they settle to individual or group activities quickly and without fuss. Even those who find sustained concentration difficult, try hard at the tasks they are given, especially where these are appropriately chosen and where children are given clear instructions so that they know exactly what is expected of them. This was particularly evident in many of the mental arithmetic sessions at the start of mathematics lessons. Where these involved quick-fire questions and answers, pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, became swept up in the excitement and were keen to take part. In other lessons, where the pace was slower, some pupils sometimes lost interest and drifted off task. The school has been successful in involving pupils in taking some responsibility for their own learning through the use of personal learning targets. These are used consistently throughout the school and, as a result, pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach the next National Curriculum level in English and mathematics. Older pupils are making increasing use of the internet, as well as the school library, to undertake research.
7. Pupils recognise the school as a safe and supportive community of which they are part. Their social development is good. Pupils relate well to the teachers and other adults in the school and generally get on well with each other, although there is some niggling between children in a few classes. Because pupils benefit from the school's good provision for their social and personal development, the school functions as a civilised harmonious community where pupils of different abilities play and work together as friends, although, more often than not, the children choose to work in single sex groups. There are very few children in the school from non-UK backgrounds, but there is no evidence of any racial tension and the pupils respond well to the school's very good provision for multi-cultural education which has broadened the experience of many of the children in the school and resulted in their growing respect for more diverse traditions. Pupils with special educational needs, and the few children from ethnic minority and traveller backgrounds, are integrated well into classes and fully participate in lessons. On several occasions, children were seen showing their appreciation of others through spontaneous applause.
8. Behaviour in the vast majority of lessons and around the school is good. Pupils understand and appreciate the school's positive behaviour rules and their moral development is good, although some pupils lack self-discipline and sometimes misbehave when their teacher does not manage the class well. In the few lessons where behaviour was unsatisfactory, it was due to weaknesses in teachers' management of the class, which allowed the poor behaviour of a few to disrupt their own and others' learning. There was no evidence of bullying seen during the inspection, and pupils told inspectors that when incidents occur they are dealt with well by the headteacher and staff. There have been four fixed-term exclusions in the past twelve months, but none during the current school year.
9. At the last inspection, pupils' behaviour and attitudes were considered to be good overall. Standards of behaviour and pupils' positive attitudes have been sustained since the last inspection as a result of the school's good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
10. Overall, pupils' attendance continues to be satisfactory and in line with the national average, as is the level of unauthorised absence. However, the school is concerned about the increase in the number of pupils going on holiday in term time and the consequent effect on those pupils' attainment. Last year, four pupils were on holiday during the time they should have been taking the national tests in English, mathematics and science.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

11. Part of the focus of the inspection was on literacy and numeracy, so priority was given to observing the teaching of English and mathematics. All classes were seen being taught these subjects. A good sample of lessons was also seen in the other core subject of science. In most cases, inspectors were able to observe full lessons and, in judging teaching, inspectors sought evidence that pupils were learning and making progress.
12. The teaching seen ranged from poor to very good. Half of the teaching seen was good or better. Teaching was satisfactory or better in nineteen out of twenty lessons, but in one in twenty it was unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching was particularly good in Year 6, where four out of five lessons were good or better, and close to a third were very good, and this is making a major contribution to raising standards. The teaching of both English and mathematics is good overall, with effective use being made of the *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies*. This is now making a real contribution to improving pupils' learning due to the appropriate focus on teaching and building on pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills. This was identified as a key issue in the last inspection, and there has been very good improvement in this in the two years since that inspection. Setting in ability groups is used in all four year groups in English and mathematics. In Years 4, 5 and 6, it is having a positive effect on raising standards among pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and the more able. In Year 3, however, setting is less effective because pupils are not as socially developed and have not yet learnt to follow the school's orderly routines. As a result, they can be slow to settle when organised into sets. Year 3 class numbers are also very high, and although the school has invested in putting additional teaching support into these classes, the limitations of the school buildings, with no additional classroom space, has prevented the school from organising the children into smaller sets in which they might make faster progress.
13. Within each year group, teachers plan together well, so that there are equal opportunities within each of the three classes in each year, but without prescribing exactly how each lesson should be taught. As a result, teachers are able to adapt their style and approach to meet the learning needs of their pupils. In this, very good use is made of information from assessment, with teachers evaluating what pupils have learnt and whether there are areas of learning on which some of the children need more reinforcement before moving on. In some of the most effective lessons, teachers made opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, although sometimes opportunities for speaking and listening were missed.
14. In most but not all lessons, teachers explain clearly what it is the pupils are expected to learn so that when set individual tasks, pupils know why they are carrying them out. In a particularly effective mathematics lesson in Year 6, the teacher deliberately left some of the learning objectives blank so that, in discussion, the children could work out for themselves why they were learning to use protractors accurately and measure the angles of a triangle.
15. In the most effective lessons, questioning was used well to check pupils' understanding and to ensure that all of the children in the class were involved. Where the pace of this questioning was brisk, pupils got caught up in the excitement and were all very keen to join in, as was often the case in mathematics lessons. Teachers generally took care to ensure that all were involved in question and answer sessions even when only a few children were putting up their hands to answer questions. For example, in a science lesson in Year 5, the teacher identified those pupils who were not volunteering answers and so directed questions specifically to them. As a result, pupils whose attention was waning were brought back into the lesson and all pupils made appropriate progress.
16. In almost all lessons, teachers managed pupils well and ensured that the children got a lot done in the time available. In a religious education lesson in Year 4, for example, although the lesson had been interrupted because it straddled morning playtime, the teacher's very effective management of the class meant that all settled quickly back to work after break and all produced a good amount of written work in what was only a 20 minute time slot. Teachers' relationships with their pupils are very good, and they have high expectations of both pupils' behaviour and academic progress. As a result, pupils are generally keen to please their teachers and so put a lot of effort into their work.
17. In the last inspection, more able pupils were judged to be underachieving. This is no longer the case because, in most lessons, work is well matched to pupils' different abilities, including the more able as well as those with special educational needs and the handful of pupils learning English as an additional language. This is the case even within ability sets in English and mathematics, so that work offers

appropriate challenge to each pupil. This again represents very good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have good knowledge of how well they are doing, and, in English and mathematics, most know what National Curriculum level they are working at and what they need to do to move on to the next level. This is the result of the very good use now being made of assessment information in the school to set personal learning targets for every child.

18. Although teachers mostly have good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching, in a small number of lessons this was not the case, so that pupils picked up a misconception from their teacher, as, for example, when children were confused over the accurate use of Venn diagrams to organise sets of data in mathematics. In other less effective lessons, pupils' behaviour was not well managed, so that, in a couple of lessons in Year 3, the misbehaviour of a few children disrupted learning. Pupils learnt less when lessons had a slow pace which led to children's attention drifting and their losing interest. There were examples seen of very good marking, helping pupils to understand what they need to do to do better. Marking is not consistently good, however, with some offering mere encouragement and little practical guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.
19. The overall quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs, and for those learning English as an additional language, is good. Teachers' lesson plans usually indicate precisely how pupils with special educational needs will be helped. Work in literacy and numeracy lessons is carefully matched to pupils' needs even within the ability sets. Care is also taken in many other lessons to ensure that the work set offers an appropriate level of challenge and is structured to build confidence. Teachers and assistants work together very well to support the needs of all groups of pupils within the school. Learning support staff are very effective at keeping pupils focused and their questions help probe pupils' understanding of new work. Planning between teachers and teachers' assistants used for general support is less effective because it is not focused on specific needs outlined in individual educational plans. Effective strategies to support the needs of more able pupils have been in place since September and teachers identify pupils in their planning.
20. Of the parents who returned the questionnaire, 86 per cent indicated that they considered that the school had high expectations of the pupils. Inspectors agree. 26 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of homework. Satisfactory use is made of homework throughout the school, although it does not increase enough in Year 6 to fully prepare pupils for the transition to secondary school.

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

21. The school offers a curriculum that is broad, relevant and meets statutory requirements. An appropriate amount of time has been allocated to each curriculum area except for physical education. Planning is appropriately based on the *National Numeracy* and *Literacy Strategies* and nationally recognised schemes of work, with religious education planned from the locally agreed syllabus.
22. There is a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy that is addressing the weak basic skills that many pupils have when they join the school. There are good opportunities for pupils to strengthen their literacy skills in all curriculum areas, for example through extended writing in geography and history and by learning spellings linked to science topics. This indicates good progress since the last inspection when there was felt to be insufficient emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. Opportunities are also taken to apply numeracy skills in other subjects, including science and design technology. The "booster classes" of additional mathematics lessons currently offered to some pupils in Year 6 have helped to improve children's basic skills. Use of information and communications technology is largely limited to lessons held in the computer suite, and the lack of access to computers elsewhere, for example in classrooms, restricts opportunities to use information and communication technology in other subjects.
23. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and lessons are planned into the weekly timetable. Appropriate time is given in the upper school to sex education and a good drugs awareness programme. Teachers keep very good records of pupils' progress in developing their personal and social skills. Some pupils individual education plans include targets for their personal and social skills. Speaking and listening is now given planned curriculum time, but in some classes insufficient use is made of opportunities in all lessons to promote high standards in speaking. At present little reference is made to

promoting other key skills such as “thinking skills”. Since the last inspection, increased time has been allocated to science and this has resulted in a significant improvement in standards.

24. The school is successful in ensuring that all pupils have full access to the whole curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and the school is implementing the new requirements of the *Code of Practice*. Individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs are drawn up by the special needs co-ordinator in collaboration with teachers and learning support assistants. These detailed plans set precise, measurable targets and also identify pupils’ strengths. Most of the support for pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language takes place in lessons. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons, for example for additional literacy support, the support sessions are designed to help pupils to return to their ordinary lessons. More able pupils generally also make good progress as the school now has a register which identifies their abilities and as a result planning is more effective in meeting their learning needs.
25. Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in a wide variety of clubs, and these cater well for pupils different interests and abilities, including those of children identified as being gifted or talented. Currently a range of sporting, musical and creative arts clubs are offered and these enrich the school curriculum. Pupils visit places of interest to support their work, such as the British Museum. They go to the theatre and visit art galleries. Good use is also made of the local area and community. Visitors to the school also help to enrich the curriculum. Governors are involved, both directly, in taking part in and running some clubs and visits, and in monitoring the provision through a curriculum committee.
26. Brightlingsea Junior has developed good links with other schools. Almost all of the children join the school from the neighbouring infant school, and the staff from the two schools have worked together on curriculum development issues and some shared in-service training. Pupils have good opportunities to get to know their teacher and their classroom before they join Year 3 and this, and the liaison between staff from the two schools helps to ensure that pupils transfer smoothly. Virtually all the pupils go on to Colne Community School in Year 7. Links with Colne Community School are also good, and the sports status of Colne has enabled some particularly strong sporting links to develop. For example, a teacher from Colne regularly teaches physical education lessons at Brightlingsea Junior. During the week of the inspection, students from Colne Community School were on work experience and Year 6 pupils found it helpful to speak with them about their planned visit to Colne later in that week. A local consortium of schools is also effective in extending curriculum opportunities and providing a network for staff development.
27. Provision for pupils’ spiritual development is good. The school is successful in instilling pupils with a growing sense of self-esteem and respect for others, both in lessons and in school assemblies. For example, in a religious education lesson in Year 6, pupils who had discussed the parable of *The Good Samaritan* were well motivated to produce some thoughtful work on posters that distilled the key morals to be drawn from the story, not merely about helping others but about helping those who no-one wants to help. The discussion pupils had had with their class teacher drew some very relevant parallels with disadvantaged groups in society, which had prompted children to challenge negative attitudes to refugees and the homeless. In their writing, both on topics in, for example, history, and in English, pupils are given opportunities to write with empathy.
28. There is good provision for pupils’ moral development and, as a result, pupils’ behaviour in most lessons is good. Brightlingsea Junior’s *Golden Rules* for expected standards of behaviour are prominently displayed in every classroom. They, and the school’s system of rewards and sanctions, are understood by pupils and accepted as fair and reasonable. In some classes, pupils are involved in drawing up their own rules, for example, of sensible behaviour when using the computer suite. Both teaching and non-teaching staff offer good role models. They treat pupils with respect and emphasise the importance of honesty, sympathy and fairness in dealing with others. Pupils also learn to appreciate the needs of others by helping to raise funds for charities, including charities chosen by the children themselves. Older pupils are also introduced to broader moral issues. For example, in an assembly that was linked to work being done by Year 6 pupils on banana plantations in St. Lucia, upper school pupils listened with rapt attention to a visitor who spoke with feeling about unfair trading arrangements with the Third World, both historically and in the present.
29. The good relationships that teachers have with their pupils contribute to children’s social development, which is well provided for. A school council meets periodically to involve pupils in decisions about the school, for example over equipment for the playground. Pupils who serve on the council take their representative role seriously and raise matters of real concern, as well as making practical suggestions for

initiatives in which children can take part. For example, at a recent meeting, pupils from Year 6 asked permission to start a school newspaper. School trips, including a popular “adventure day”, also contribute to pupils’ social development. A notable strength in the school’s provision for pupils’ personal development is the very good record-keeping, where teachers maintain short notes to keep track of how each pupil has settled in and developed while in the class. Although pupils throughout the school are able to take on classroom responsibilities as monitors, a weakness is that there are relatively few opportunities for pupils to further develop their independence and initiative by taking on broader responsibilities within the school as they get older.

30. The school’s provision for pupils’ cultural development is very good. Because there are very few children in the school whose families do not originate from the United Kingdom, the school is very conscious of the need to broaden pupils’ knowledge and experience of other cultures to prepare children for the wider, multi-cultural world. Pupils have the opportunity to look at art and listen to music not just from Western, but also from African and Asian traditions, and good use is made of visitors to help to broaden pupils’ horizons. For example, a visitor regaled pupils with Caribbean stories, including some told in Patois. The school’s very good provision for pupils’ cultural development contributes to the generally harmonious relationships within the school, where the small number of pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds are treated with friendship and respect.

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

31. The school cares well for pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and have very good procedures to monitor and record pupils personal development. This, together with the caring attitudes of the teachers, contributes to the very good support for pupils’ personal development. Provision for monitoring and promoting attendance is generally good. Staff follow up any unnotified absences on the first morning of the absence by telephone and refer any ongoing problems to the education welfare officer. The school works hard at persuading parents of the importance of regular attendance and tries to discourage them from taking holidays in term time. In spite of this, the school reports that there are an increasing number of parents taking holidays in term time. Registrations are efficient and the registers clearly show whether the school has authorised the absence. What is not shown clearly in the registers is the reason for authorised absence as, with the exception of holidays, all authorised absences are just marked with an *N* for “*notified*”. This does not give the school enough information in its records to keep the most effective check on pupils’ absences. There are effective procedures in school to promote and monitor good behaviour and the headteacher records any serious incidents, along with the action taken. Year 6 pupils report that there is very little bullying but when an incident does occur, staff take swift effective action.
32. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place, and teachers new to the school are made aware of these as part of their induction process. In addition, there are occasional training sessions for all staff to ensure their understanding of the procedures is up to date. The headteacher is the person with responsibility for child protection in the school. The school effectively ensures the health and safety of the pupils. The headteacher regularly reports health and safety concerns to governors and an annual internal audit of risk is also carried out.
33. Since the last inspection, the school has developed very good assessment systems in response to the issues identified. Assessment is now a strength of the school with strong systems in place to track the progress made by each pupil. The school uses national and non-statutory tests to find out exactly what level each child has achieved in the core subjects. This information is used to set targets, and these targets are shared with the pupils. In discussion, pupils in Year 6 knew exactly what level they had attained and what they needed to do to reach the next level.
34. National tests are analysed by staff and weaknesses in pupil knowledge are identified. This information is then used to review and adapt the curriculum so that identified gaps in knowledge are tackled. This has led to standards in work seen being notably higher than those in last year’s national tests. Each pupil has a profile containing levelled work and this is also used effectively to track the progress that each child makes. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the assessment process and in the effective use made of assessment.
35. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is detailed. In addition to information in individual education plans, staff regularly record other information relating to achievement or needs of

individual pupils in their class, and this information is used to plan the children's learning. A particular strength is the work done by learning support assistants working with pupils who have statements. They provide good individual support that enables these pupils to play an active role in the school. Assessment and record-keeping for pupils with statements are of good quality. The school usually ensures that annual reviews take place at the appropriate time, although the illness of the special needs co-ordinator earlier this academic year meant that some reviews had been delayed. Care is taken to provide appropriate support for pupils who are new to the country or who are learning English as an additional language. Members of staff have undertaken training to help support pupils' who are at an early stage of learning English.

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

36. Parents are broadly satisfied with the education the school provides, but, in their questionnaire responses, around a quarter of those replying indicated that they felt the school did not work closely with parents and that they are not kept well informed about how well their children are doing. Inspectors disagree. The school has successfully worked hard to forge effective links with parents. The quality of the annual pupil progress reports to parents has improved since the last inspection and they are now good. In all subjects, there are clear statements of what the pupils can do and what they understand. In all reports, teachers state what the pupils need to concentrate on next to improve their work in English, mathematics and science, and, in the very best reports, this is extended into the other subjects. In some reports, however, there is little comment on the progress pupils have made over the year in subjects other than English, mathematics and science.
37. At the beginning of each term, the school provides good information about topics and aspects of subjects that pupils will be studying that term. This enables parents to support pupils' learning at home. The school encourages parents to take an active role in the life of the school and informs them of events through regular newsletters. Teachers invite parents to class assemblies and ask them to help in lessons. About ten parents regularly help in classrooms, and, during the inspection, parents provided valuable support in lessons.
38. The school values parents' opinions and consults them on specific issues – most recently about school uniform and whether the school should provide sandwich options at lunchtime. As a result of this, pupils having school dinners will have the choice of a "packed lunch" type menu as well as the traditional school lunch. There is an active Parent Teachers' Association that raises money to provide additional resources for the school. Recently they have bought small play equipment for lunchtime, stage blocks and sportswear for the sports teams.
39. When necessary, support is given to parents whose children are learning English as an additional language. Translators are available for consultations and home visits. This support contributes well to the school's inclusive approach to all pupils and their families. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs are kept well informed of their children's progress and are appropriately involved in reviews of individual educational plans and statements. The special needs co-ordinator attends parents' consultation evenings. In comments to inspectors, some parents expressed concern that the school did not recognise or sufficiently understand dyslexia. Inspectors do not share this view. Several staff have undertaken training in this speciality and pupils benefit from appropriate provision.

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

40. The headteacher's determined and energetic leadership of the school since the last inspection has led to significant improvement. His focus on raising standards in the core subjects has been ably implemented through a strong partnership with the deputy headteacher and senior staff. The staff share a commitment to improving the quality of education and raising the standards attained by the pupils. The headteacher leads by example in undertaking a good deal of teaching as well as managing his other responsibilities very well.
41. The aims of the school are well reflected in its work. Teachers, for instance, assess each pupil's progress very thoroughly and use this information to promote higher standards. Staff know each child very well,

both academically and socially. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all children are included and involved in all aspects of school life and to raising pupils' awareness of other cultures. For example, a multi-cultural week was held in 2000 and visitors from other cultures come to the school quite often to improve pupils' understanding of other ways of life. A commitment to good relationships is evident both in the positive way pupils are dealt with and in generally good behaviour. The governing body has improved its understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school since the last inspection. There are useful mechanisms in place by which governors can monitor standards and school development planning. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities through a well-organised committee system and are supportive of the headteacher and staff. The governing body receives regular reports from the co-ordinator and the governor for special educational needs to enable it to monitor the school's special needs provision effectively.

42. Performance management has been successfully implemented in the school, with the headteacher sharing this responsibility with the deputy headteacher. The monitoring of teaching and learning is good. A regular programme of lesson observations enables the headteacher to support teachers in developing effective teaching techniques and to target areas for improvement, as well as contributing to performance management. For instance, monitoring of teaching has led to training for staff on matching work to pupils' needs and meeting the learning styles of different pupils. Co-ordinators monitor planning and have also monitored pupils' work. There has been rigorous analysis of test results and some co-ordinators have observed lessons. Co-ordinators are given some release time from their classroom teaching commitments so that they can address their subject management responsibilities. The analysis of test results has resulted in the setting of curriculum priorities which are incorporated into teachers' planning. The very good assessment procedures in the core subjects play a major part in school improvement. The school is far from complacent and has developed very good procedures for evaluating its work. In some instances, there is evidence that the following up of issues to do with teaching has not been as rigorous as it could be. For example, some weaknesses identified by the headteacher in observations of lessons recur in subsequent observations, but there has nonetheless been clear improvement in the quality of monitoring and the identification of action to remedy weaknesses, since the last inspection.
43. The school's development plan and the action plans produced as a result of the last inspection have been effective in promoting higher standards. Planning features clear objectives, specific criteria for measuring success, costings, and procedures for evaluating progress in implementing the plans. There is good involvement of staff and governors in producing these plans and their focus is, very appropriately, on raising standards. The action plans and the development plan are carefully tied in with the school's budgeting process. Priorities for development are identified and funding is used to support these. Thus in recent times there has been an increase in the number of teaching assistants in order to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs and reduce the adult-child ratio in large classes. The school spends well above what it receives for supporting pupils with special educational needs, but this money is spent effectively as these pupils achieve well as a result of the support they are given.
44. Arrangements for day-to-day financial management are successfully organised so as to free the headteacher to focus on educational priorities. Brightlingsea Junior belongs to a local consortium for the purposes of financial management. This is effective in ensuring value for money in obtaining supplies and services, such as cheaper insurance, the employment of a computer technician between the schools and cost effective training for staff. Although the school carried forward a relatively large sum at the end of the last financial year, this was mainly earmarked for specific purposes, such as the purchase of a number of computers to improve the school's information and communication technology provision. Monies have been used effectively, for instance in improving the playground and in creating some divisions between open-plan classrooms. Staff are appropriately involved in the budgeting process, with, for example, all co-ordinators making annual bids for funding to both maintain and develop their subjects.
45. Resources for learning in most subjects are satisfactory overall. There is a lack of computers, but money has been set aside to meet this priority. While the school building is well maintained and features many attractive displays that support teaching and promote high expectations of pupils' work, there is a lack of space. Many classrooms are cramped. The open-plan design, although improved since the last inspection, still inhibits work in subjects such as music, where noise intrudes between neighbouring classroom areas. There is no spare teaching space and so no opportunity to extend setting or enable some teaching to be done in smaller groups, and this has affected learning in the lower school. The hall is very small and cannot accommodate more than half the children in the school. This prevents the school from meeting together regularly as a community. The hall's limited availability restricts opportunities for indoor physical education. The library provision and organisation has improved since the last inspection. It is quite well stocked, although it remains a small area. Compared to many other schools, Brightlingsea Junior benefits



from a relatively stable group of staff who work well as a team, including effective teaching assistants, efficient office staff and a capable caretaker. Good procedures exist for the support of newly qualified teachers.

46. The school is working hard to apply the principles of “*best value*” to gauge how well it is doing. It sets challenging targets for pupils’ attainment, comparing itself both to schools nationally and to those in similar circumstances. The consortium arrangement for financial management is effective in obtaining services such as grounds maintenance at reduced costs. Overall the school provides good value for money. Pupils achieve well. There is very good leadership and management and standards are improving.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

47. Inspectors have identified the following interrelated and overlapping key issues for action. In order to improve the standard of education provided to pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards of attainment, particularly in English and mathematics, by
  - (i) identifying means of reducing the size of some of the larger teaching groups, particularly in Year 3
  - (ii) providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, for example, through drama and role-play
  - (iii) improving handwriting and pupils' attention to the presentation of their work
  - (iv) ensuring that teachers benefit from training where there are gaps in their subject knowledge
  - (v) continuing to provide opportunities for extended writing in other subjects
  - (vi) ensuring that marking gives pupils clear guidance on what it is they need to do to improve their work
  - (vii) extending homework in Year 6  
(*paras 3, 12, 13, 18, 20, 23, 49, 51, 52, 54, 58, 75*)
- (2) In conjunction with the local education authority, continue to work to adapt and improve the school's buildings and accommodation to
  - (i) provide more teaching space to enable pupils to be taught in smaller groups
  - (ii) improve access to computers
  - (iii) provide more space for indoor physical education and activities such as drama
  - (iv) further improve partitioning and sound insulation between the open-plan classrooms  
(*paras 5, 12, 22, 45, 49, 60, 61, 65, 70, 79, 80, 83, 87*)
- (3) Improve the curriculum offered to pupils by
  - (i) allocating more time to teaching physical education
  - (ii) reviewing timetables to ensure that all lessons are of an appropriate length and that lessons do not straddle playtimes or other activities
  - (iii) opportunities for pupils to use their computer skills in other subjects  
(*paras 5, 22, 61, 65, 79, 80, 86, 87*)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan. (*Paragraph references are in brackets*)

- A. Consider extending opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibility in the school (*para 29*)
- B. Consider ways of improving the quality of singing in the school, for example by establishing a school choir (*para 81*)
- C. Continue to discourage parents from taking their children out of school for holidays in term time (*para 10, 31*)
- D. Improve the recording of attendance data (*para 31*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	12	25	34	3	1	0
Percentage	0	16	33	45	4	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point. Figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	377
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	44

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	111

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils learning English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for 2001, which is the most recent year for which national comparative data is available.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of <i>Key Stage 2</i> for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	40	40	80

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	18	34
	Girls	30	26	34
	Total	51	44	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (76)	55 (72)	85 (70)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	19	31
	Girls	32	28	33
	Total	50	47	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (70)	59 (72)	80 (77)
	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	4
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	368
Any other minority ethnic group	3

*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	4	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)	14
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.9
Average class size	31.4

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

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	287

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
	£
Total income	671,774
Total expenditure	674,461
Expenditure per pupil	1,961
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,470
Balance carried forward to next year	48,783

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
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

377

Number of questionnaires returned

95

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	60	9	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	18	61	9	2	9
Behaviour in the school is good.	17	63	15	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	55	26	0	1
The teaching is good.	22	58	13	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	15	58	23	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	43	11	6	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	43	8	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	14	56	19	4	6
The school is well led and managed.	17	60	6	6	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	17	60	15	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	55	11	3	2

*(figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding)*

**The proportion of returned questionnaires was 25 per cent, and each questionnaire represents approximately one percentage point.**

**Parents expressed particular concerns over class sizes which they thought were too large, particularly in Year 3.**

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

### **ENGLISH**

48. Results of the 2001 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well below both the national average and that of similar schools. Girls' results are better than the boys, but the difference is narrower than in previous years so that it is now close to that which is seen nationally. The standard of work seen in the present Year 6 is better than last year's results. Standards are now below, rather than well below, average. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average but the pupils currently in year 6 are attaining below the national expectations. Although there is a wide range of ability in the school, all pupils, including the more able, are making good progress and achieving well. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection, when able pupils were identified as underachieving.
49. Pupils generally listen attentively in lessons both to their teacher and to each other. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils listened to each other reading aloud and made suggestions about how they could improve their reading. Teachers generally provide good role models, reinforce listening skills and encourage pupils to speak clearly. More able pupils express their opinions with clarity and confidence and are able to link ideas from different areas of the curriculum. However pupils' speaking skills are generally weak. Some opportunities are provided in a range of subjects for speaking as a class, in pairs or in groups. For example, in a history lesson, pupils had to explain to each other why the Romans had built roads. There are some opportunities for role-play, enabling pupils to talk freely. In Year 3, for example, some pupils created and acted out short sketches about their favourite fable. Nevertheless, such opportunities for role-play and for drama are rare, in part inhibited by the limitations of space in classrooms and the unavailability of the school hall.
50. Pupils enjoy reading and they are making good progress, although standards are below average. Older, more able pupils are confident expressive readers who talk about different authors and justify their choice of book quite confidently. Lower attaining pupils are less fluent but most have learnt the basic skills to enable them to work out unfamiliar words. Other pupils correct themselves from the meaning of the sentence if they have read a word wrongly. Pupils use non-fiction books, CD-Roms and the internet for research purposes. For example, in Year 4, pupils had used the British Museum website to find out about Ancient Egypt. Pupils enjoy group reading during literacy lessons and, with adult support, discuss authors' style, use of language and intended meanings. Pupils experience a wide range of stimulating literature and some of the texts used, such as the witches' song from *Macbeth*, are quite challenging. Although classes do not have a distinct book area, there is a good range of reading books available and classes enjoy the books that their teachers read to them. All children are encouraged to take reading books home, and home support with reading is having a positive impact on standards. In one class, children had chosen their favourite poems for their homework and some had commented on whether their parents liked the poems as well. Throughout the school, displays are well used to celebrate a wide range of literacy work and to provide support for learning with useful prompts and reminders of pupils' literacy targets. There is good emphasis on the development of technical vocabulary in all subjects, and lists of useful words are often displayed in classrooms, such as the problem-solving language for mathematics in Year 4.
51. The standard of writing has improved but is still below average by the end of Year 6. A wide range of writing is undertaken through the school, across all areas of the curriculum. For instance, in history, some pupils in Year 6 wrote recipes using appropriate Tudor language, and, in another class, children had produced travel brochures for St. Lucia. In Year 3, lessons on the features of fables had resulted in some good independent writing on how animals got their special features like fins and long necks. Pupils in Year 5 had created a prayer wall using their own prayers and, in Year 4, there were diary extracts written by pupils as part of their work in history and geography on Egypt. In all year groups, pupils have opportunities to write for different purposes and in different styles. In Year 4, pupils had produced some good descriptive writing, well set out in paragraphs.
52. The *National Literacy Strategy* has been well implemented and is ensuring that pupils learn all aspects of literacy in a systematic way. Many older pupils use a neat joined style of handwriting, but there is still evidence of poorly presented work. Many younger pupils still do not produce joined handwriting. The

teaching of spelling is very systematic through the school and all pupils are used to the spelling practice routines. Information and communication technology is used appropriately for word processing,

53. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall with some that was very good and none that was unsatisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when teaching in English was satisfactory overall. Planning for literacy is good, with suitable work identified for pupils of all abilities. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and encourage all pupils to participate fully. In the best lessons, the pace was lively and previous learning was well reinforced which helped pupils build on what they had previously learnt. A variety of activities ensured pupils remained interested and involved, and high quality questioning challenged and extended pupils' thinking. Pupils in Year 6, for example, were encouraged to use the text to reference and justify their answers when responding to a poem. Some teaching, although generally satisfactory, lacked sufficient pace and too long was spent on the carpet listening to the teacher, with limited opportunities for pupils to talk about their work. In some cases, this resulted in insufficient time for independent writing, and activities were rushed. On some occasions, the plenary session at the end of the lesson functioned as a "show and tell" demonstration of the work that the children had completed rather than for reinforcing the most important learning points from the lesson. Sometimes, teachers accepted low quality verbal responses to questions which did not promote high expectations for good speaking and listening.
54. Learning support assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs ensuring that they understand the work being undertaken and encouraging their participation. All pupils, of all abilities, are set individual learning targets for reading and writing. The most effective are those which are in the pupils' own words and relate to specific aspects of their work. The quality of teachers' marking is variable. Much offers encouragement but little guidance on how work could be improved. Although some examples were seen of very good marking, giving pupils helpful detailed indication of what they needed to do to improve, very few examples were seen of pupils actually making changes to their work in response to marking.
55. There is a good supply of books in classroom and the library, although small, is quite well stocked and well used. All classes have timetabled sessions when library skills are taught. Very detailed assessments are made and records kept of pupils' progress in reading and writing, and, to some extent, of their development in speaking and listening. The subject is very well led by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. Planning is carefully monitored and lessons are observed by the co-ordinator and the deputy headteacher who work very effectively together to promote high standards in the subject. They have analysed samples of pupils' work to ensure consistency of teachers' assessments of standards and to draw out areas for improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

56. The results of the 2001 standard assessment tests in mathematics were well below the national average and that of similar schools, with few children attaining the higher levels expected of the more able. However, during the inspection, evidence from lessons and scrutiny of work showed that the current Year 6 pupils are working at higher levels, although still below national expectations. This holds true in all aspects of mathematics, and pupils of all abilities now achieve well. For instance, pupils in Year 6 booster classes find simple percentages of numbers. Pupils in the Year 6 middle set classify and measure angles with protractors. In the lower set, pupils do not attain in line with national expectations, although they nevertheless make good progress. In the top set, a greater number of pupils are working towards the higher National Curriculum level than has been the case in previous years. For instance, they calculate the area of both rectangles and triangles using the appropriate formula. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.
57. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below national expectations. Over half of the pupils in the Year 3 lower set have special educational needs and a large group of these are still working at levels that are well below the standard expected at the end of the infants. However, pupils go on to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. For instance, in the Year 4 lower set, nearly half the pupils completed a multiplication square, either knowing the facts by heart or working the answers out. In Year 5, pupils in the lower set are achieving well in measuring capacity, although their work is still well below that expected for pupils of their age. This sort of progress is due in part to the effective learning support from teaching assistants that is given in the lower sets for pupils with special educational needs.



58. Teaching in mathematics is good. In this subject, pupils generally get very good feedback through informative marking which helps them identify what they need to do to improve. Teachers are nearly always very clear about the objectives for lessons. Each lesson builds on previous learning and the content of lessons is adapted when pupils have difficulties. Pupils are encouraged to explain their methods and find alternative strategies. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and generally explain methods clearly and confidently. Good questioning skills help pupils understand how to work out answers for themselves. Lessons have good pace and this ensures that pupils stay involved and have few opportunities to go off task. In the great majority of lessons, pupils work hard, enjoy mathematics and are absorbed in their work. There is an appropriate mental mathematics starter to each lesson, and this is clearly leading to improved skills, for instance in multiplication. In one lesson observed, good questioning helped pupils work out  $36 \times 2$ , by doubling 30 then doubling 6 and then adding the two answers together. Regular homework helps pupils consolidate their learning, although inspectors saw little evidence that homework increased for pupils in Year 6. In the small minority of lessons where teaching is weaker, teachers' subject knowledge is uncertain. Poor behaviour, insufficiently controlled, also undermined learning on two occasions observed during the inspection. Where pupils make slower progress, lessons do not proceed at a satisfactory pace. Explanations and activities are lengthy or over-complicated and pupils lose concentration and become restless.
59. Procedures for assessment are very good. Teachers set challenging targets for pupils. They assess how well pupils understand, and adapt their lesson planning accordingly. For example, the results of the national test in 2001 showed that pupils had difficulties in answering written mathematical problems. Around the school, teachers have adapted their methods for teaching ways of approaching such problems. The use of computer software helps teachers monitor pupils' progress as well as enabling teachers to set ambitious but realistic targets in all year groups. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is constantly assessed. For instance, at the end of one lesson, the individual education plans of several pupils were annotated in view of their progress in multiplying by two. This continuous assessment contributes to pupils' good progress and achievement.
60. Pupils learn to use and apply mathematics. They learn a range of measuring skills, work with money and collect real data. The *National Numeracy Strategy* has been successfully implemented. It is taught in ability sets in all four year groups, with work differentiated to take account of different pupils' abilities and understanding. In most year groups, the effective use of setting has contributed to the recent rise in standards. Setting, however, is less successful in Year 3, where, as a result of limitations imposed by the lack of space, sets are large and teachers sometimes struggle to maintain good behaviour among pupils who have not yet all learnt the school's orderly social and learning routines.
61. The co-ordinator, although relatively recent in post, has made a good contribution to the development of the subject. She is well supported by another teacher in the upper school who has monitored the teaching of all the Year 5 and 6 teachers, which has helped improve teaching and learning. Planning, test results and work are also monitored. No lessons were observed in mathematics where information and communication technology was being used, other than calculators. There is evidence that mathematical software is in use, but this is limited. While resources are generally adequate, the absence of computers in each classroom impedes learning in that respect. The implementation of *booster classes* before school and *Springboard* materials for Year 5 has contributed to progress in mathematics. This is indicative of the hard work that is going on to raise standards in the subject.

## SCIENCE

62. In the 2001 national tests, pupils at the end of Year 6 attained standards that were well below expectations when compared to schools nationally and those considered similar. Although the number of pupils who attained the expected level had risen last year, the number who attained the higher level in the tests was very low. However, in the work seen, and in lessons, pupils of all abilities, including the more able, are now achieving very well, and, taken overall, pupils are attaining standards that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. By the end of Year 6, pupils set up their own investigations and carry out fair tests. They use their previously acquired knowledge and predict what the results will be. When they have finished the investigations, they record the results in many forms, using numeracy skills learnt in mathematics lessons. In turn, these results are interpreted and pupils are confident when talking about

their findings. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, where the lack of pupils' investigative skills was identified as an issue.

63. The time allocated to teaching science has been significantly increased, so that, throughout the school, pupils experience a wide range of scientific activities and this contributes to the higher standards that are now being achieved. All pupils, across the school, use correct scientific vocabulary and this is a particularly good feature of their learning. For example, during a Year 5 science lesson, pupils learnt the difference between a controlled and a measured variable, and the majority of the class could explain clearly what these terms meant.
64. In all lessons seen, the teaching was at least satisfactory with many good features. Teachers plan well together and this ensures that all pupils in each year group benefit from similar experience, that knowledge is systematically taught and that pupils use the correct vocabulary during lessons. More challenging work is provided for the more able pupils so that all make good progress during their four years in school. Work is generally well marked with encouraging comments and ideas on how pupils could improve their work further. A particularly good feature of teaching is when new topics are introduced with a "brainstorm" of what the pupils already know. This is matched with a list of questions indicating what they will find out. The topic is then assessed at the end to ensure that pupils have made good progress. This leads to pupils knowing exactly what they are learning and their response is positive. However, this is not consistent practice across the school, and some teachers rely too heavily on printed worksheets.
65. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement and class management is usually good. During lessons, pupils behave well and are keen to work together in small groups. Learning support staff are used well in classes to ensure that pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively so that they make good progress. A particularly good feature of the teaching of science is that teachers expect pupils to explain clearly the investigations that they are carrying out and this contributes to the speaking and listening skills of the class. Literacy skills are encouraged well as teachers expect pupils to write clearly and concisely using knowledge they have learnt during literacy sessions. Mathematical skills are used effectively to record investigation results. For example, in Year 3, pupils have recorded how far a car will go on a variety of surfaces. Accurate measurements have been taken and pupils could easily interpret the results. Computer skills are sometimes used in science lessons, but most of the computers are in the information and communication technology suite and there are few in classrooms to enable pupils to use them effectively during lessons. However, when given the opportunity to use the computer suite during science lessons, pupils in Year 3 were able to use an appropriate programme to draw flowers.
66. Science in the school is well led and managed. The co-ordinator is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has worked hard to effectively address the issues identified during the last inspection. For example, the time allocated to science has been increased and the co-ordinator has monitored the subject well. He identified marking as a weakness and has encouraged staff to mark more effectively. This has led to most work being well marked so that pupils know how to improve. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Although test results have not risen sufficiently, more pupils are now on track to reach the expected level and the school has worked hard to ensure that science is taught systematically across the school.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

67. Only one art lesson was observed and judgements about standards are based mainly upon scrutiny of previously completed work. Effective leadership of the subject has helped to raise standards well since the last inspection. Standards in the work seen during this inspection were above national expectations for the pupils' ages and this represents very good achievement. A few pupils produce work that is of a very high quality and this is suitably recognised and encouraged. Work from pupils of all abilities is valued and this has a very positive effect upon pupils' confidence. The general level of display of pupils' work from across the curriculum is good, with attention paid to its aesthetic appeal as well as subject content.
68. The art curriculum is broad, offering good opportunities to learn about a range of cultural traditions and artistic movements and to work in a variety of media. The range and adequacy of resources to support the curriculum is good. The scheme of work is effective in helping teachers to plan how to develop pupils' skills systematically, and links made with planning for other subjects ensure that artistic skills are practiced frequently. The emphasis on teaching skills results in pupils being able to create finished pieces of which they are justifiably proud, and this encourages them to experiment further without fear of failure. In the one lesson seen, for instance, pupils were given a clear initial demonstration how to make a coil pot. Further guidance, as they made a first attempt to manipulate the clay, helped them to overcome difficulties

and to refine their approach. Their confidence and speed of working increased rapidly as they applied their new-found skills. By the end of the lesson, all had created a simple pot and some had gone on to adapt the design, adding handles or decorative features.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

69. No design technology lessons were observed and judgements about standards are based mainly on the scrutiny of previously completed work. Attainment in the work seen was in line with expectations for pupils' ages. Pupils have good making skills and the finish of their products is often very good. They plan their work well but do too little evaluation, especially when completing a project. Older pupils, for example, designed and made abaci using a range of materials and joints suitable for the purpose. Their designs were detailed and they explained their process well, but did not evaluate the quality of the finished product or suggest how improvements could have been made.
70. Sound planning ensures that pupils develop their design and construction skills systematically from year to year and achieve well. Links with other subjects help to make projects relevant and interesting. For example, the designing and making of model bridges was linked to science and geography, and used an educational visit as a starting point, while pupils studying the Ancient Egyptians designed and made model *shadufs* (a mechanical means of irrigation). Pupils are strongly encouraged to use mathematical skills such as measuring. Links with art are especially valuable because they deepen pupils' understanding of design and emphasise the importance of aesthetics in making products. The last inspection reported that standards of design were below national expectations. Positive leadership has ensured that standards in this aspect have risen well in a relatively short time. The school's accommodation makes it awkward to create appropriate spaces in which to carry out some aspects of projects. However, the school copes with the situation well.

## GEOGRAPHY

71. Pupils are achieving well. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards in geography that are in line with those expected nationally. When they reach Year 6 pupils know about the water cycle and the many features of a river. They have studied a variety of maps and they are learning about St. Lucia, comparing it with Great Britain. They learn many geographical terms. For example, pupils in Year 6 can explain the difference between weather and climate.
72. There were very few geography lessons seen during the inspection because the timetable is organised so that history and geography are taught during different terms. In the lessons seen, the teaching was good. Teachers' knowledge was good and high expectations were set for pupils' achievement. Pupils carry out research into the climate of St. Lucia using relevant information from the internet and by listening to a taped interview with a farmer on a banana plantation. During these lessons pupils were very involved in their learning and many took notes of the interview to use during the rest of the lesson. Computers were used effectively to assist in producing a brochure on St. Lucia when pupils downloaded pictures to make their work attractive and informative. Work in books is usually neat, and pupils take great pride in their illustrations and written work. They use their mathematical skills well when recording temperature.
73. Geography is well co-ordinated throughout the school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the standards that were identified then have been maintained.

## HISTORY

74. Pupils achieve well in history. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils in Year 6 know about the Roman invasion, Ancient Egypt, Tudor Times and Ancient Greeks. They are able to use and draw information and conclusions from a variety of sources. For example, pupils in Year 4 use books as a reference and make Egyptian pots. In Year 5, pupils use books to learn about Tudor life and can compare the lifestyles and food of rich and poor Tudors. They also learn about the life of Henry VIII, with pupils producing detailed miniature pictures of his wives.

75. During the inspection, several history lessons were seen and, overall, teaching is satisfactory with many good features. Teachers plan together well and make history interesting for the pupils. Activities are based on pupils' abilities and on previously gained knowledge. Much, but not all of the work in books is well marked with some comments for further improvement. There are opportunities given to pupils to use their literacy skills and books contain some extended written accounts of historical life. Pupils of all abilities are usually very involved in their learning, as clear objectives for each lesson are shared with the class and extra support given to pupils with special educational needs. Pupils work together well in groups or pairs and confidently share their findings with the rest of the class.
76. History is effectively co-ordinated within the school. There are a sufficient number of interesting resources, including new CD-Roms, so that pupils have a variety of sources from which to enhance their historical knowledge. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The standards that were identified then have been maintained.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

77. Standards in information and communication technology are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6. Pupils make good progress over time and achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The well-planned use of the computer suite and systematic curriculum planning contribute significantly to this. These positive features ensure that pupils learn the necessary skills to enable them to use computers for practical purposes such as research, word processing and handling data. By Year 6, pupils are confident and quick in their use of keyboard and mouse, and icons and menus. They have good breadth of knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology.
78. In the lessons seen, the quality of teaching was satisfactory overall, but it varied between good and unsatisfactory. Lessons were generally well planned and pupils understood what was expected of them, which helped them to concentrate and focus on what was required. Teachers were positive in their relationships with pupils, encouraged them to try out new ideas and praised them for their effort as well as success. Some Year 3 pupils explored the function of unfamiliar icons and discovered shortcuts that saved them time and effort. They received praise for being sensibly inquisitive and this encouraged others to explore more confidently. In a Year 6 geography lesson in the computer suite, pupils briefly revised the use of *hyperlinks* and other relevant knowledge and skills before carrying out research on the internet. Throughout the lesson, the teacher asked effective questions that helped pupils to learn computer skills at the same time as gaining geographical knowledge. Two pupils, who were over-hasty and clicked on the first possible *hyperlink*, were reminded to think before acting and learned to plan their research more carefully. This was in contrast to a lesson in which pupils had little direct guidance from their teacher. When trying to find information about British monarchs they used laborious methods and were not sufficiently questioned or instructed about the use of suitable shortcuts. The result was that they learned less than they should about both information and communication technology and history.
79. The accommodation for information and communication technology is poor. The suite is an awkward shape that necessitates an inconvenient layout. Stations face outwards and so pupils have to turn round or move completely in order to see demonstrations or hold class discussions. The chairs are not suitable for the intended purpose. They are too low for smaller pupils and have to be lifted to be turned, which is difficult because the room is so crowded. The computers are very close together and pupils have insufficient room to work. Demonstrations are reduced in effectiveness because there is no screen large enough. However, these constraints have not prevented the school from making good use of the suite. The computers themselves are suitable and the available software is good. The rest of the school has insufficient space for desktop computers and so pupils cannot use them through the course of the day. The lack of classroom computers is a significant factor in limiting the opportunities which pupils have to use information and communication technology in other subjects.
80. The subject is well led and managed, and this has led to good improvement since the last inspection, despite the limitations imposed by the accommodation and the lack of classroom computers. Plans for further improvement are appropriate to the needs of the school, and include a substantial amount of training for staff. The school has advanced plans to improve resources by purchasing a set of laptops that will use wireless technology to network, which is a good way to deal with the lack of space. The scheme of work, which is due to be reviewed later this year, provides good support for teachers when planning lessons. Procedures for assessment are presently satisfactory, and the planned improvements are a positive way forward.

## MUSIC

81. During the inspection only two music lessons were observed. Because inspectors did not have an opportunity to see the full range of the music curriculum, it was not possible to make an overall judgement on standards in music or on pupils' overall achievement in this subject. During lessons seen, pupils show an ability to compose a rhythmic piece of music and record it using simplified notation. They produce a basic range of sounds to accompany a spoken text appropriately. However, the quality of singing observed in lessons and assemblies is unsatisfactory, lacking tunefulness and expression. At the time of the last inspection standards of singing in Year 6 were also judged to be unsatisfactory. This represents little progress since then. No work involving two-part singing or playing was observed in lessons. There is no school choir to set an example or give a lead to singing in assembly, and singing has therefore to be led by teachers. Although teachers are often enthusiastic and tuneful, their pitch makes it difficult for pupils to follow.
82. Strengths in teaching include enthusiastic, positive pupil management. In one lesson seen good subject knowledge was effective in helping pupils acquire an understanding of rhythmic notation. Where teaching skills and evident passion for music are high the interest of pupils is maintained. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate their own and others' work so that they can improve their performance. Where lessons have good pace they engage pupils well and reduce interruptions. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by weak use of time and a lack of direction which means that pupils cannot develop playing or composing skills.
83. Pupils are offered a good range of opportunities to listen to live music and music from other cultures, such as the West Indies. Extracurricular music plays an important role in the life of the school, with groups playing guitar and recorders. Children also benefit from instrumental lessons in clarinet, piano, violin and guitar. These pupils, including some who are gifted and talented musicians, are given opportunities to perform in assemblies, which promotes the standing of music in the school. The co-ordinator works hard, with good support, to offer a range of musical experience. She has monitored a few lessons but this has yet to have an impact on teacher expertise and standards. Resources for the subject are good, but the open-plan nature of the building is unhelpful for music making because there is such poor sound insulation between teaching areas.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

84. During the inspection it was not possible to see all aspects of physical education. For example, no dance was taught during the week. Five games lessons, all focusing on basketball skills, and two gymnastic lessons were observed. In these lessons, pupils' attainment was in line with the standards expected for their ages. Pupils catch and pass the ball with increasing control and shoot and bounce-dribble with developing co-ordination. They protect the ball from an opponent and travel in a variety of ways while moving with the ball. In gymnastic lessons, pupils practise and develop sequences of movements with care and precision and balance on different parts of their body, linking two balances together. Although pupils of different abilities and from different backgrounds perform confidently in physical education and achieve well, some girls are relatively tentative participants in games lessons.
85. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Three lessons seen were good. Teachers ensure lessons start with proper warm up activities so that pupils understand the effects of exercise on the body. Teachers demonstrate and explain skills clearly and with confidence, which ensures pupils know what is expected of them. There is a good emphasis on the evaluation of performance and teachers provide frequent feedback to pupils. For example, in one lesson, the teacher assessed pupils as the lesson went on, recording the stage of skill development each pupil had achieved. Teachers show good awareness of safety. In the better lessons, good use is made of the very limited time. However, not all lessons had appropriate pace. Unsatisfactory use of time, and weak behaviour management both impeded learning on occasion. Teachers encourage co-operation and the development of team spirit. Where the pace of lessons is good, pupils work hard and sustain concentration.

86. Very good extracurricular provision supplements the physical education curriculum. Activities on offer to pupils include football, netball, rugby, cross country running, cricket and rounders. The six-week swimming programme in Years 5 and 6 is effective in enabling roughly four out five of pupils to attain the expected standard for their age. However, inadequate time is allocated to teaching physical education. Two 25 minute lessons do not provide enough teaching for pupils to develop skills across all areas of the physical education curriculum, or ensure sufficient physical exercise for pupils of this age.
87. The co-ordinator is energetic and keen to develop the subject. She has a clear view of priorities. For instance, she is well on the way to implementing an assessment scheme. She has not yet had a chance to monitor lessons, but does evaluate and feedback to teachers with regard to their planning. She has developed a good system for involving those pupils who are unable to take part in lessons because of illness or forgotten kit, by issuing them with a sheet on which they can evaluate other children's activities. In none of the lessons seen, however, was this imaginative system in operation! Good links with Colne Community School (the local secondary school) have been fostered which provide additional opportunities for pupils both in timetabled lessons and in extracurricular activities. The school hall is too small, but resources are otherwise satisfactory. The pressure on hall time exacerbates the problem of finding enough time for the subject.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

88. Pupils achieve well in religious education. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. They learn about Christianity, Judaism and the Hindu religion. They talk about the various gods worshipped by the Hindus, understand about holy books, such as the Torah, and retell stories from the Christian tradition. Pupils learn about stories from the Old Testament, such as the creation story, and about stories that Jesus told. They also learn about religious people, for example, Krishna, and know simple facts about the Jewish way of life. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils know about the importance of a rosary in prayer and have discussed the rituals associated with funerals.
89. Half of the classes were seen being taught religious education. Overall, teaching in these lessons was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and enable the pupils to talk about their ideas and beliefs. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils had to think about their "wow!" moments: times they felt really good. This led to much discussion and a good spiritual response from the pupils. Classes are usually well managed and planning ensures that all pupils benefit from similar experiences. Past lessons are reviewed effectively so that pupils can make good progress during the lessons. A good example of this was in a Year 5 lesson, when the teacher reviewed what the pupils already knew about the Torah and then moved the pupils on to thinking about how this impacted on their lives, and the importance of rules. Pupils responded positively to opportunities such as these. Work and activities are effectively planned using informal assessments so that it is well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported so that they are able to fully participate in lessons.
90. Teachers encourage the pupils to use their literacy skills in religious education. Many pupils write accounts in their books and much of this work is well presented. Spelling is usually correct and pupils take pride in the finished product. There are many opportunities for religious education to contribute positively to the spiritual development of the pupils - as, for example, with the "wow!" moments - and pupils are beginning to understand about other faiths and beliefs.
91. Religious education is well co-ordinated within the school, with many resources available for teachers to use. This make a significant contribution to the learning of the pupils as they see relevant artefacts from different faiths. The co-ordinator monitors religious education in the school and has ensured that there are good displays that celebrate the achievements of the pupils. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The standards that were identified then have been maintained and the subject receives an appropriate time allocation.