

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST. MICHAEL'S C of E JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Maidstone, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118625

Headteacher: Mrs. J. Pye

Reporting inspector: Natalie Moss  
(OFSTED No: 22685)

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 November 2000

Inspection number: 224188

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior School
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St. Michael's Church of England Junior School Douglas Road Maidstone Kent
Postcode:	ME16 8ER
Telephone number:	01622 751502
E-mail address:	headteacher@tesco.net
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. Paul Gibbons
Date of previous inspection:	02/12/1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Natalie Moss (OFSTED No: 22685)	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it?
		History	How high are standards? a) The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Art and design	How well are pupils or students taught?
		Music	How well is the school led and managed?
			Key issues for action
Elizabeth Cooke (OFSTED No: 9465)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Ian Stainton-James (OFSTED No: 27061)	Team inspector	Science	
		Physical education	
		Religious education	
		The provision for pupils with special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Jacqueline Cousins (OFSTED No: 22942)	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
		Design and technology	
		Information and communication technology	
		Geography	
		Equality of opportunity	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd.  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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

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

# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7 - 10</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>11 - 13</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>13 - 14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>14 - 15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>15 - 17</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>17 - 19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>20 - 23</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>24 - 34</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St. Michael's is a smaller than average primary school, which draws its pupils from the older, Bridge, ward of Maidstone, but also has a large proportion of pupils from the Tovil area of South Ward. It is a Church of England controlled school, with 180 boys and girls on roll, from 7 to 11 years of age. The pupils' attainment on entry covers a wide range, but is well below average overall, largely because the school has 67 pupils identified as having special educational needs, a number well above the average. Five pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups and even fewer who speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with the national average, but there is substantial evidence that the school's population is less advantaged than this number would suggest. In two classes, pupils are taught in split age groups, an initiative adopted by the school to reduce the size of classes.

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

St. Michael's is an effective school. Standards are continuing to improve, despite a high number of pupils with special educational needs, and test results in English and science are now rising towards the national average, though mathematics results are still below it. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught and have very good attitudes to learning. The headteacher provides very good, clear leadership for the school and is supported well by the governors in steadily improving the standards of the school. The school provides an enjoyable place to learn, in which pupils are happy and confident, within a warm Christian atmosphere. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The quality of teaching is good overall, enabling pupils to achieve well and make good progress.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and there is a clear educational direction to the school.
- Pupils behave well and both attitudes to learning and relationships are very good.
- The provision for, and progress of, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, are good.
- The school's care and support for pupils is very good, underpinned by its Christian ethos.
- The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good, together with their moral and social development.

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

- The standards achieved in mathematics, especially for higher attaining pupils.
- The standard of pupils' writing, especially in longer pieces of work.
- The consistency of constructive comment in the marking of pupils' written work.
- Greater detail of how pupils could improve their work in the written reports to parents.
- The quality and quantity of school meals.

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

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

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in 1996. It has successfully implemented the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, which are raising pupils' standards. Standards have improved, particularly in English and science, at a rate similar to the national picture. Art and design are now reaching a good standard and design and technology is in line with national expectations. The quality of teaching has improved well; it is now good in four-fifths of lessons. New, nationally recognised schemes of work have been introduced to provide a coherent system of medium term planning for the curriculum. The roles of subject co-ordinators have been well developed, as has the programme for monitoring teaching and teachers have received much training in new initiatives. Assessment systems are now thorough and effective in helping to plan future work and to target individual pupils' progress. Much has been done to improve the buildings and site, such as the new library and special needs teaching room. Resources are being developed, in information and communication technology, as well as other areas. The level of support for pupils with special educational needs has improved well. In addition, the school has put in place many new measures to improve behaviour and support the welfare of pupils; the School Council has been a helpful development. The school is in a good position for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	E	E	D	D
Mathematics	E	E	E	D
Science	E	E	D	D

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

Standards reached by eleven-year-olds in 2000 were below the national average in English and below when compared with similar schools. In mathematics, the results were well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. In science, standards were below the national average and below that for similar schools. However, these results show a rise in all three subjects, particularly in English and science, though the percentage of higher grades achieved is still below average, largely because of the high number of pupils with special educational needs. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards in English and mathematics, but attainment in science is average. Over the last four years, the trend in the school's results has shown them to be broadly in line with the national trend. Results have risen steadily, apart from a dip in mathematics in 1998. When this year group's results are compared with standards of achievement on entry to the school and correlated with the high number of pupils with special educational needs, it is clear that the vast majority have made good progress. Boys and girls attain broadly in line with one another.

Results for the Year 2000 indicate that the school surpassed its targets in English and was close to achieving them in mathematics. Inspection evidence suggests that the school's targets will be met in 2001.

Pupils attain in line with the expected standard in information and communication technology. Attainment is above average in art and design and music and average in all other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Some more able pupils fail to make satisfactory progress in areas of English and mathematics.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils approach learning positively, with interest and enthusiasm. This contributes significantly to the quality of their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave very well in and out of class. They are courteous and friendly towards one another, staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils care for one another and show a strong sense of responsibility. Relationships between all members of the school community are very good, characterised by their harmonious nature.
Attendance	Good. Unauthorised absence is very rare. Pupils are punctual and lessons start on time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Good

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



The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. Twenty per cent of lessons seen were satisfactory, eighty per cent were good or better and twenty-two per cent were very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. These are high proportions and important factors in the progress made by pupils. Good teaching was seen in all classes and very good teaching in most. Teaching seen in special educational groups was good overall.

English and mathematics are taught well, though there are still weaknesses in writing and in areas of mathematics. Strategies for literacy and numeracy have been successfully implemented and are beginning to be included in the teaching of other subjects. In most lessons, pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and this motivates them to learn what is intended. The management of pupils is a strength, as is the effectiveness of teaching methods, ensuring good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge, give clear explanations to their pupils and have high expectations for most pupils, especially those with special educational needs, though not always in English and mathematics for the more able pupils. Teachers use questioning successfully, both to encourage pupils to work things out for themselves, as well as to check their understanding. Although teachers' feedback and advice to pupils during lessons is good, marking of written work does not always give pupils a clear understanding of ways to improve.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The breadth and balance of the curriculum gives pupils a rich school life. The literacy and numeracy strategies are working effectively. Recent improvements in curriculum planning have been beneficial in providing comprehensive coverage of subjects through the use of nationally recognised schemes of work. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school is successful in promoting the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. These pupils have detailed plans, which focus on areas for improvement and offer targets to be met. Teachers and classroom assistants provide pupils with good support that enables them to progress well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils who have English as an additional language receive very good provision and as a result make very good progress. The class teachers work very closely with the visiting specialist and the school's learning support assistants give what additional support is required.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Provision for moral and social development is very good and a strength in the school. Pupils learn right from wrong and their responsibilities to the school community. Positive and helpful attitudes and hard work are encouraged. Provision for spiritual development is good, giving pupils opportunities to develop their values and beliefs. Provision for cultural development is good and gives pupils insight into their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of educational and personal support and guidance for pupils is very good. The school's procedures for promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. Pupils feel secure in the warm and trusting environment. Staff do much to build pupils' self-esteem. Pupils' academic performance is well assessed and is starting to be used to monitor progress.
Partnership with parents and carers	School and home work well together for the benefit of the pupils, though there is room for development in the written reports to parents on pupils' progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is a clear educational direction to the school. The headteacher has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. She has succeeded in bringing about many necessary changes and in providing the impetus for the school to advance. Consequently, standards are rising. The roles of the management team and the subject co-ordinators have developed well and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is now in place. The school has good, well qualified teachers and good support staff. Accommodation is satisfactory, apart from the lack of space for a computer suite and the limited playing space.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give of their time willingly and are active in supporting the school practically. They participate fully in drawing up the school improvement plan and are becoming increasingly involved in planning and reviewing the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is becoming strongly evaluative and is looking for and initiating ways in which to raise standards further.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are of satisfactory quality and range for most subjects. Value for money is always considered before spending decisions are made.

## 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>• That their children enjoy school.</li> <li>• The progress that pupils make.</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The good standard of behaviour.</li> <li>• The staff are approachable.</li> <li>• The school has high expectations of children.</li> <li>• The help pupils receive to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework set by the school.</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with all the positive views expressed by parents and have looked closely at their concerns. They considered that the homework policy allows for some flexibility, usefully supplements class work and contributes to the development of pupils' independent study skills. Parents do not always understand from the annual school reports how well their children are achieving and how they could improve. Inspectors agree that reports could be more informative for parents. Nevertheless, the regular meetings for parents provide good and regular opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress. The school does its best to work closely with parents and encourages them to take part in all areas of school life. At the parents' meeting, doubt was expressed by a few parents as to whether higher attainers were being sufficiently stretched. Inspectors agree that there is some room for further extension of the small group of most able pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Overall, standards are rising, though the 2000 national test results for eleven year olds were below average compared with national results in English and science and well below in mathematics. Over the last four years, the trend in school results has shown a gradual improvement, apart from a slight dip in mathematics in 1998, at a similar rate to that found in schools nationally. The 2000 test results, however, show that standards have risen well in English and sharply in science in the last year. Inspection evidence is that standards are currently rising in all subjects and that the vast majority of pupils are working at the expected level for their age in all subjects other than English and mathematics. Improvements are due to several factors, such as national initiatives in literacy and numeracy, a better planned curriculum and a high proportion of good teaching.
2. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000, nearly three-quarters of the pupils reached the level expected for their age in English, over a half in mathematics and over four-fifths in science. In English and science, figures were close to the national average, though not in mathematics. The proportion reaching a higher level, however, was below the national average in English and science and well below it in mathematics. It should be borne in mind that the school has a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and that this was particularly true of the 2000 year group who sat the national tests..
3. When test results in 2000 are compared with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, English, mathematics and science are below average. Again, this is because of the low proportion of higher grades achieved. In English and mathematics girls generally reach broadly similar levels to boys, but in science girls achieve less well. The school met its targets in English in 2000 and came very close to doing so in mathematics, standards borne out by observation of pupils' work during the inspection. The grades shown in the report for comparison with similar schools differ from those suggested by OFSTED because there is substantial evidence that the socio-economic circumstances of the school's population are less advantaged than the free school meals figure would indicate. Comparisons with similar schools in Kent, with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, would also suggest that the new grades give a truer picture of standards of attainment. These grades can be, and have been, upgraded by the Registered Inspector, to give a more accurate picture of the standards achieved.
4. Pupils enter the school with a well below average level of attainment, shown by their earlier Key Stage 1 results. They achieve well as they progress through the school. The current standards of eleven-year-olds are below the national average, but inspection evidence suggests that the majority of pupils in the present Year 6 are working close to the level expected for their age or above it in reading, though they are still below average in writing and mathematics. In science, current standards reached by eleven-year-olds are higher than in the recent past and are now average.
5. The overall picture of standards in the school is that:
  - Standards in literacy have improved and achievement is now close to average in reading, though below average in writing. Pupils are given good opportunities to write in different styles and the content of work is often of a good standard. Teachers pay good attention to the basic skills of writing, such as the use of punctuation, vocabulary and grammar and they encourage phonic skills in reading well. All elements of the literacy hour are fully in place. Standards are below average, as is progress in learning, because writing is unsatisfactory and spelling is weak. Pupils have too little practice in writing at length and with pace and urgency and therefore find it difficult to express their ideas with accuracy or at speed.
  - Standards are below average in all areas of numeracy, though they have improved in the use of number. Investigative skills and data handling are areas for development. The three-part lesson is used well to stimulate pupils' interest and to move them on. Flexible approaches ensure that pupils are beginning to develop a broad and secure understanding of their work. By the time they are eleven, the majority of pupils have developed a satisfactory grasp of the main skills of literacy and numeracy.

- By the age of eleven, standards in science are average, with more pupils now working at the higher levels and practical and investigative skills are growing strongly.
  - Standards in information and communication technology are now average and teachers use information and communication technology to support other subjects.
  - Standards in religious education are in line with the locally agreed syllabus by the age of eleven.
  - Standards are above average in art and music.
  - In history, geography, physical education and design and technology standards are average.
6. The high proportion of pupils with special educational needs make good progress with their studies in all subjects. Targets are appropriate. When working directly with learning support assistants or teachers, pupils generally reach their full potential. They are keen to learn and receptive to help and these are important factors in their progress. Teachers inform assistants well and they provide very good support, which makes a valuable contribution to learning. Pupils for whom English is an additional language receive very good provision and as a result make very good progress.
  7. In literacy and numeracy particularly, pupils with higher attainment levels are not always given tasks to match their capabilities and help them to make the progress of which they are capable, so that their achievement is unsatisfactory.
  8. Pupils' achievements throughout the school are satisfactory. The curriculum map is designed to ensure that all pupils' progress throughout the school is appropriate and that all pupils receive the same high quality of education. Despite some mixed-age classes, the school's good use of the frameworks for literacy and numeracy means that pupils progress satisfactorily from class to class.
  9. Eighty-five per cent of parents who returned the questionnaire are pleased with the progress their children are making. Parents feel that the literacy hour and the new numeracy strategy have improved standards.

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

10. The previous report judged this aspect of school life to be good overall, noting very good behaviour in the playground and some problems with behaviour for only a minority of pupils. The school has successfully maintained these good standards and has improved pupils' attitudes, respect for others and relationships, which are now all very good.
11. Pupils are very keen to learn and show enthusiastic attitudes to their lessons. They concentrate well and are able to work independently or co-operatively throughout the school. Pupils respond readily to teachers' instructions and work hard throughout lessons. This was seen in a Year 6 personal and social education lesson, where pupils were very willing to share ideas about why they are special and also in a mathematics lesson, where Year 5 pupils worked quickly and with a high level of effort at mental mathematical problems. These very good attitudes have a positive effect on the quality of education provided.
12. Behaviour throughout the school is good. Parents at their meeting and through their responses in the questionnaire said that they were pleased with children's behaviour. At playtimes, pupils get on well together, despite the restricted play space and poor weather during the inspection week. Relationships are very good; all adults in school provide positive role models. The school is a harmonious community, reflecting the caring, Christian school ethos. The good behaviour has a positive impact on learning, because lessons are not disrupted by pupils' misbehaviour.
13. Pupils take good care of the school's resources, artefacts, gardens and work on display. They also show respect for the buildings, play areas and each other's property. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative, which they are keen to accept. These include a School Council, Green Team 'monitors' duties, peer mediation, 'Buddying' and competitive sports. Pupils regard their responsibilities as important and take their tasks supporting each other and helping to run the school seriously. For example, the School Council has had a great effect on the widespread adoption of the smart school uniform. Parents recognise that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.

14. Attendance at the school is good, with rates of both authorised and unauthorised absence better than national averages. There were three fixed period exclusions in the last school year, all for the same pupil. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and on time. This has a beneficial effect on learning because lessons get off to a prompt start and pupils miss few sessions.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

15. The quality of teaching is good overall. All lessons observed were satisfactory, four-fifths were good or better and one-fifth were very good. These are high proportions and much of the teaching in classes is of very good quality. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers' management of pupils is a strength of the teaching, ensuring concentration, interest and accelerating learning. Although teachers' comments and advice to pupils in class are of a similarly high standard, the marking of written work is sometimes thin in comment and fails to give pupils the information they need in order to know what they are doing well and how to improve.
16. Parents expressed their satisfaction in the questionnaire at the quality of teaching in the school and inspection findings support their positive views. The good quality of teaching contributes well to the pupils' learning and their levels of attainment. Most impressive is the very high level of commitment teachers offer to pupils and their very good relationships with pupils, which make for enthusiasm and a desire to achieve as well as possible.
17. Throughout the key stage, teaching is generally good and this leads to good learning on the part of the pupils. In terms of the individual subjects, teaching is:
- Good overall in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, geography, history, music, physical education, design and technology and religious education.
  - In art and design there was insufficient evidence to make judgements.
18. Although the direct teaching of information and control technology is limited by the lack of a computer suite and insufficient computers, there are significant strengths in this area. All teachers are being trained in the subject and use resources very skilfully. Teachers have growing confidence and personal skills in the subject and this leads to higher standards for most pupils, who gain knowledge, skills and understanding in their lessons.
19. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and teach with enthusiasm. Vocabulary of a specialist nature is carefully introduced and explained and pupils are expected to use it correctly on subsequent occasions. Reading is carefully taught, with much needed phonic skills emphasised. Pupils are introduced to a good range of types of writing, but are not always encouraged to write at length. Opportunities are missed in other subjects to extend the writing skills of the more able pupils and to ensure that the maximum written work is accomplished in the allocated time.
20. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The school has implemented all parts of the numeracy hour. The quality of the mental mathematics sessions at the start of each daily lesson challenges the learning of pupils of all abilities well, giving them confidence with numbers. Lesson introductions and ends are particularly well managed by teachers to involve all pupils in discussion of, for example, the range of strategies that could be used to find an answer and a consideration of which might be the best. However, there are too few opportunities throughout the curriculum for pupils to practise problem-solving skills and to use their knowledge of mathematics to aid investigation.
21. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain new ideas clearly and avoid misunderstandings, especially when pupils are struggling with a new concept. In a history lesson on the Viking gods, the teacher's good knowledge enabled her to explain the culture of that civilisation with clarity and interest, leading to good understanding by the pupils. Expectations of pupils' academic work are usually high, except for the more able pupils in writing and in areas of mathematics.
22. Questioning is used very effectively by all teachers. Many of the skills used in literacy and numeracy lessons are transferred effectively to the teaching of other subjects. Teachers' questions ensure that all pupils are fully involved. In lessons teachers recognise those pupils

who are not participating and target questions specifically at them. Questions also keep the pace of learning brisk. Pupils' learning skills are well promoted by teachers, through methods which encourage pupils to become interested in their work and to learn to think for themselves.

23. Teachers settle their classes quickly, have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour and, by their calm and efficient manner, consistently set a positive atmosphere in which good learning can take place. Through very good management of pupils in most lessons, little time is lost, pupils concentrate well and maintain interest in their work. As teachers expect good behaviour, pupils respond accordingly and produce good quality work.
24. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. Planning is detailed, thorough and relevant to the needs of each individual. Lessons are carefully structured to meet the needs of pupils, so that pupils with special educational needs make good progress with their studies in all areas of the curriculum. The special needs teacher and assistants work together well and, when necessary, with other professionals, to develop individual education plans for pupils on Stage 3 and above. Teachers and the co-ordinator for special needs work together effectively to write individual plans for pupils on Stages 1 and 2 and these outline the way the curriculum should be adapted for identified need. Through their individual education plans pupils have clear targets, but these could be more effective if targets were more specific. Teachers work with assistants well to provide support, which makes a valuable contribution to learning.
25. Resources are well used to stimulate learning. Difficult ideas are explained through real and relevant activities, increasingly making more use of information technology. The stimulating variety of interesting activities keeps pupils motivated and interested, so that they enjoy their learning. Teachers use homework appropriately to reinforce work done in lessons.
26. Although spoken advice and encouragement in lessons is of good quality, marking is not always so. In class, teachers give clear guidance to pupils. They explain carefully what pupils need to do to improve and correct misunderstandings thoroughly. When marking pupils' written work, comments are often positive, but brief and bland, giving pupils too little guidance on where improvement is needed.

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

27. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout the school. There is a clear overview of all subjects and themes to be taught in a two-year cycle. Termly planning, as the school's medium term plans, was a key issue at the time of the previous inspection, but it has now been well developed for all National Curriculum subjects. Policies for all areas have been created and are regularly reviewed. The locally agreed syllabus for religious education is used thoughtfully. Teacher's weekly planning identifies learning objectives which are well linked to the literacy and numeracy strategies and the new National Curriculum. Staff plan together to ensure that pupils from the same year group cover similar programmes of study.
28. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs well and supports those for whom English is an additional language very effectively. There are a good number of classroom assistants, who provide very good support for pupils. Setting in mathematics also helps to ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive work which is well matched to their respective levels. Teachers sensitively help pupils to develop their confidence. Individual educational programmes support pupils' learning satisfactorily, but targets are not always sufficiently specific and measurable. More able pupils are not consistently challenged to their full potential in lessons, in the amount and pace of writing undertaken and in higher order skills in mathematics. All staff have enthusiastically implemented the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies and these are having a satisfactory effect in raising standards. A strength of the school is the very good planning for personal, social and health education, including drug awareness and sex education. This provision ensures that pupils' personal development is very well supported.
29. Extra-curricular provision is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy music, recorder, choir, art and chess clubs. They participate in football and athletics activities. There are regular dramatic and musical productions, such as this year's show, 'Around the World'. Anglo-Saxon and Victorian

days enrich the curriculum. Pupils go on visits to a synagogue, to Dover and observe local features of Maidstone, such as the river, and these enrich their curriculum studies.

30. Links with the community are good. The school regularly visits the local church for services, including one where animals were invited. Harvest Festival produce was distributed by Year 6 to elderly parishioners. Pupils now contribute regularly to the Parish Magazine. They also raise money for Help the Aged and have made a collection for 'Love in a Box'. The Mayor has visited the school to hand out trophies. Pupils also enter local swimming galas and athletics competitions.
31. Close ties have been established with the neighbouring infant schools and secondary schools to which most pupils transfer at the age of eleven. There are regular interchanges with the infant school and local secondary school to ensure that transfer is smooth. Infant pupils join in junior assemblies and come into the school to help them become familiar with it.
32. Provision for spiritual development is good. There are displays in the Year 3 and Year 4 classrooms which highlight pupils' talents, such as a board headed 'Me - A Special Person'. This work includes pupils' writing about their achievements inside and outside school. Celebration assemblies every week allow pupils to share their successes with others. Circle Time and personal and social education lessons encourage pupils to explore their thoughts and feelings. Art and design, design and technology and music lessons offer pupils opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own responses to artistic stimuli. Religious education sessions about such topics as Islamic marriage arrangements allow pupils to think deeply about other people's feelings and beliefs. Collective worship, prayer and the singing of hymns all contribute well to spiritual development.
33. Provision for moral development is very good. From their earliest days in the school, pupils begin to understand the difference between right and wrong and between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. An assembly about honesty and the dilemmas people face every day clearly emphasised these messages. Pupils acted out the conflicting thoughts with which we wrestle every day. Pollution problems for the world are carefully analysed and discussed in geography lessons. At the beginning of the school year, pupils created their own classroom rules during their Circle Times. They understand and appreciate the fair systems for rewards and sanctions used by the school. Teachers are very good role models for pupils.
34. The school places a high emphasis on the development of pupils' social education and provision is very good. There are a wide variety of school initiatives to aid pupils to develop good relationships with others. The School Council discusses issues such as school uniform, equipment for the playground and the quiet, grassed area. Older pupils take their responsibilities very seriously, for example as 'Buddies' to younger pupils and as peer mentors. Computer monitors from every class, called 'Trouble Shooters', assist teachers and pupils to use the Internet and send e-mails. Extra-curricular group activities and residential trips to Wales offer most pupils a good opportunity to work with others. The school goes to great lengths to encourage external agencies to aid pupils' social development, such as the nurture sessions provided at lunchtimes and the association with a local Outreach group. Lunchtimes in the hall are pleasant and an insistence on good behaviour and manners make them valuable and social occasions.
35. Cultural education is good. In history, pupils are encouraged to understand the richness of their heritage with special 'Victorian days'. Art lessons and the art club make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development; in the form, for example, of studies of impressionist artists such as Renoir. Trips to Maidstone Art gallery allow pupils to explore the work of a wide variety of artists. The planned curriculum for art, music, geography, English and religious education all support pupils' cultural development well. However, more visits to places linked with other cultures and greater use of visitors from non-European cultures would further develop the school's multi-cultural curriculum.

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

36. The school makes very good provision to ensure the care, health, safety and welfare of all pupils and this area is a strength of the school. The previous report noted that the school placed 'a high priority' on this aspect of its work. This has been maintained and extensively

built upon. Parents recognise the school's caring attitude and, in particular, the strong support for the many pupils with special educational needs.

37. The school has very effective Child Protection procedures in place with a good awareness among staff of children in need. A class teacher is responsible for child protection matters, with the Headteacher supporting her where necessary. The Governors have improved school security since the last inspection and oversee health and safety matters effectively through a sub-committee. The school is clean and safe, with the exception of the unfenced pond in the front garden, which constitutes a hazard. The school has comprehensive systems in place to support the personal development of all pupils. The social language development programme, mentoring groups, nurture groups, personal and social education programme and peer mediation initiative all contribute to provide a very effective mechanism for support. Pupils are included in the support groups according to individual need and are assessed continuously to ensure that the support offered is appropriate. Class teachers work closely with group leaders and the co-ordinator for special educational needs to ensure that individual education plans are fulfilled and that families are kept closely involved in the support process. The Governors have ensured the success of this provision by providing sufficient, well trained staff.
38. The school has forged good links with the local secondary school and feeder infant schools. Relationships between the schools are strong and the good links offer opportunities for staff and pupils to visit and learn about each other before pupils move on, as well as making transition as smooth as possible.
39. There are excellent procedures in place to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying, underpinned by regularly reviewed policies. All adults in the school follow the assertive discipline behaviour management procedures consistently and the whole school has a very positive atmosphere. Staff take care to reward desirable behaviour and effort. Classrooms have charts recording pupils' successes, pupils wear stickers celebrating their achievements and whole school celebration assemblies are held regularly to recognise how well pupils are progressing.
40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. They are effectively carried out by the school secretary and registers are correctly marked and totalled. The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly to check the registers and to follow up any concerns that arise. Attendance rates are good and few pupils arrive late.
41. Lunchtimes at the school are a pleasant social experience for pupils. Lunch is taken in the hall in two sittings, with pupils eating hot and packed lunches together. However, school meals, brought in from outside, are not satisfactory; frequently insufficient quantities of food are provided.
42. Pupils' learning benefits significantly from the very good care given by the school and they feel secure and happy. This enables them to settle down and learn well and is especially important for the many pupils with special educational needs, as it fosters integration and a calm learning environment for all.
43. The school has recently established new procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, which are a good improvement on those reported at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' academic and personal development is closely tracked throughout their time in school. This information is used well for the purpose of analysing whole school results and setting termly targets for pupils to focus on for improvement. It is also used effectively to give pupils relevant help and guidance to enable them to make progress. Initial assessments of ability are made on entry to the school, as well as use being made of information from pupils' achievement levels prior to entry. The results of these are used to plan work for the pupils and there is currently much development of this area. Assessment in English and mathematics is linked to the literacy and numeracy strategies. Classroom teachers keep assessment records for each pupil, which help them to plan future lessons. In English and mathematics, schemes of work have clear curricular objectives linked to effective tracking and targets for each pupil. Assessment in other subjects is less well advanced, but is now generally structured so as to make planning for future work more effective, as well as to ensure that teachers meet the needs of all pupils.
44. Lesson plans identify opportunities for assessment and teachers use questions well to gain understanding of what the pupils know and can do. The regular use of assessment to inform



planning is satisfactory. Its practice is becoming integrated into the work of the school, so that pupils' knowledge and skills are built on systematically. There is much evidence of teachers using what they know about pupils to set them individual targets for improving their work.

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

45. The school was previously reported as making good provision for this aspect of school life; this has been maintained successfully.
46. Parents and carers are generally satisfied with the work the school does and with their relationships with, and access to, staff. Parents feel confident that their children are well cared for, are treated with respect and are learning suitable attitudes and values. Parents say that their children enjoy school, that they are encouraged to do their best and that the school is well organised and managed. The inspection team agrees with parents on these points.
47. Parents are less pleased with the school's provision for homework, with information they receive about their children's progress and with how closely the school works with them. The inspection team judges that the provision of homework is satisfactory, suitable for the age groups within the school and that appropriate amounts of work are regularly set and marked. Reports to parents on pupils' progress are broadly satisfactory but do lack targets for future work and clear judgements on how pupils are progressing. The inspection team judges that the school makes good provision to form effective links with parents and that information offered about the school's work is good. There are good opportunities for carers to come into school to see for themselves how children learn, for example, drop-in sessions and celebration assemblies.
48. The school provides a useful prospectus, regular newsletters, a Governors' annual report and good curriculum information. There are three opportunities each year for parents to visit the school formally and reports on pupils' progress are written in the summer term. In addition, parents are able to speak to class teachers informally on a daily basis. Parents and carers of children with special educational needs are invited to review meetings and are well involved in planning for their children's learning. Parents are involved at all stages and are kept closely informed about pupils' progress and needs, as are those with children for whom English is an additional language.
49. Parents are interested in their children's progress and attend the open and consultation evenings held at the school. The school takes account of parents' wishes. For example, a survey on homework was carried out through the medium of the school newsletter. Most parents help their children at home with reading and homework. There is a supportive and active Parent Teacher Association, which helps out in school with administrative work such as photocopying and organises fundraising events. Many parents come into school to work in classrooms with groups of pupils. The good involvement of parents in school life has a positive effect on pupils' learning and their good opinion of the school encourages children to enjoy school life. The great majority of parents send their children to school ready to learn each day and are supportive of the school's work.

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

50. The very good and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has set a clear educational direction for the school, focused on raising standards and improving the quality of education provided. The headteacher, staff, governors and parents share a common commitment to offering pupils a caring environment in which they can feel secure. The headteacher, appointed since the previous inspection, has responded positively to the inspection report and over the last eighteen months has made good progress in improving the areas of the school that had weaknesses. Management of the school now shows clear understanding of the responsibilities of various roles and to whom teachers should be accountable for aspects of their work. This is also the case for subject co-ordinators over the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of subjects. The school has successfully implemented national initiatives, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, and has improved the level of work in information and control technology, all of which have been of benefit to the pupils. This steady development in the school's work has led to a trend of improving standards. The school is becoming far more

evaluative and using data analysis well, to the benefit of pupils' education. For instance, it has been recognised that, in some years, literacy and numeracy are more effectively taught in a larger number of groups, rather than mixed-age class groups and booster classes have been introduced to raise the level of under-attaining pupils. Plans for the present academic year are continuing to address these issues.

51. A strength in the school's management is in the clarity of vision of the headteacher, which is proving to be inspirational in bringing about improvements in the school. The division and delegation of responsibilities between the head teacher and the deputy head teacher are clear and are being used efficiently to complement each other's roles. The senior management team is strongly supportive of the headteacher and carry out the specific areas of responsibility set out in their job descriptions well, although the team is small. Members of the management team, subject co-ordinators and the co-ordinator for special educational needs all have some non-contact time in which to develop their areas of responsibility.
52. Subject co-ordinators are now sufficiently involved in monitoring and raising standards. Monitoring of teaching is taking place, both formal and informal. Co-ordinators are generally very knowledgeable about their subjects and have the opportunity to influence teaching and learning effectively. They regularly see teachers' planning in their subjects, to make suggestions for improvement or check that the necessary work is covered across classes. They are beginning to look closely at the quality of pupils' learning and to observe teaching. Expertise is shared well, for instance, in music. The school has deliberately planned the development of this systematic and thorough approach.
53. The governors show a high level of interest in, and support for, the school. An effective committee structure deals efficiently with a wide range of management issues. Governors are supplied with much up-to-date information by the headteacher and this enables them to make well informed decisions. They are actively involved in formulating the school improvement plan. Governors are appropriately involved in budget and planning processes and are active in contributing to the development of teaching and learning. All statutory requirements are met.
54. Progress has been made in the monitoring of teaching and the development of good teaching methods, although it is difficult to allocate time to subject co-ordinators for the monitoring of teaching and the development of good teaching practice.
55. The school achieves a good match between its stated aims and values and its everyday work. The school administration is efficient and makes good use of technology. Priorities for development are good and are clearly stated in the development plan.
56. Management has worked well and taken appropriate action to meet the school's targets. There is satisfactory provision for the induction of new staff.
57. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. Co-ordination is good and reviews and assessment are diligently undertaken. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is well organised and has very good relationships with outside agencies and fellow teachers. Close working with form teachers at all times ensures that pupils' individual needs are well met and they make good progress. Funds allocated for special educational needs are very well used for that purpose. Planning is detailed and teachers know the pupils very well. The recently refurbished area within school provides a pleasant environment in which small groups may be taught. All pupils are very well integrated into the full life of the school although the site is not suitable for pupils in wheelchairs.
58. Accommodation in the school is generally adequate, though the limitations in size of the playground and the lack of sports fields make it difficult for teaching and learning in physical education and limit the range and variety of physical activities in which pupils can be involved in their playtime. Although the school has reorganised space within the buildings well and made many improvements since the last inspection, such as the new library and the special needs teaching room, there is no room for a computer suite, a factor that inhibits the teaching of information and communication technology. Resources are generally of good quality, though not always sufficient in number, especially in reference books for the new library.
59. The quality of financial planning is very good and the funds, especially the specific grant for special educational needs, received by the school are used very effectively to promote good learning and a good quality of education overall. The school thinks carefully about how to

diminish class sizes and provide well for the wide spread of ability of its pupils. It is, at present, through good management, well and appropriately staffed with teachers and a good number of very effective support staff, in order to ensure good delivery of the curriculum. The headteacher and governors monitor the school's expenditure closely against the planned budget. The school secretary provides excellent support in the area of financial administration and ensures that the school is careful in purchasing goods and services at competitive rates and applying the principles of best value.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

60. In order to raise standards further, the governors and headteacher should:

- (1) Improve the standard of mathematics by:
  - strengthening the planning and teaching of investigative and problem-solving areas of the subject; (paragraphs 5, 20, 28, 68 and 71)
  - developing the use of personal targets for individual pupils; (paragraph 72)
  - making provision for the full development of higher attainers. (paragraphs 7, 68 and 69)
  
- (2) Improve the standard of writing by:
  - ensuring that a greater quantity of work is accomplished in the allocated time in lessons; (paragraphs 5, 19, 28, 61, 64, 65 and 66)
  - Increasing the amount of writing of longer pieces of work in subjects throughout the curriculum; (paragraphs 5, 19, 28, 61, 64, 65 and 67)
  - Making provision for the full development of higher attainers. (paragraphs 7 and 65)

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- the use of teachers' marking in a consistent manner to inform pupils how to improved their work. (paragraphs 15, 26, 64 and 66)
- providing more detailed reports to parents on how pupils are progressing and how they could improve. (paragraph 47)
- seeking to improve the standard of school meals by ensuring that appropriate quantities of food are served. (paragraph 41)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	22	58	20	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	180
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	67

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.68
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	24	19	43

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	19
	Girls	15	9	16
	Total	30	24	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (63)	56 (50)	81 (79)
	National	75 (71)	72 (68)	85 (77)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	17	22
	Girls	15	14	17
	Total	33	31	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (64)	72 (65)	91 (87)
	National	70 (71)	72 (71)	79 (76)

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

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	4
Indian	1
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	173
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0

Number of pupils per FTE adult	0
--------------------------------	---

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999 - 2000
----------------	-------------

	£
Total income	334054
Total expenditure	329754
Expenditure per pupil	1863
Balance brought forward from previous year	14176
Balance carried forward to next year	18476

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	180
Number of questionnaires returned	46

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	41	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	54	13	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	43	11	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	37	20	7	2
The teaching is good.	61	28	2	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	43	15	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	28	7	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	41	35	17	0	7
The school is well led and managed.	59	26	2	0	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	50	7	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	43	4	2	13

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

### **ENGLISH**

61. The majority of pupils enter the school with well below average levels of ability in all areas of language and literacy, particularly the high proportion with special educational needs. They achieve at below national average standards in English by the time they are eleven. This is reflected in the 2000 standard curriculum tests, where English results were below average when compared with schools nationally and with similar schools. There were, however, a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs in this cohort. Over the last four years, standards have risen steadily, in line with the national trend. Standards in English for pupils aged eleven, as reflected in the 2000 national test results, were below average in terms of national averages and below average in comparison with similar schools. One of the reasons for this is the small proportion of pupils who attain the higher grades. Standards in English at the age of eleven over the last four years show that reading has been close to the national average, but writing below it. Standards in writing are unsatisfactory, particularly in the quantity of written work done and the lack of longer pieces of work. Inspection evidence suggests that standards are rising and that this year's results are likely to show a significant improvement. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
62. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. Teachers use good, open-ended questions to promote oral skills and provide regular opportunities for pupils to engage in class discussions about their work, as observed in a Year 4 poetry lesson, where pupils shared their ideas on descriptions of autumn. Pupils are good listeners, with many pupils responding to teachers' questions enthusiastically, though not always in clear, well constructed sentences. Good discipline in lessons ensures that pupils listen politely to what their teachers are saying and are keen to respond to their questions. Pupils listen to and respect the opinions of others, and often try hard to articulate their ideas and opinions. Educational drama and role-play are sometimes used and are areas for development.
63. In reading, teachers spend a high proportion of time on key words and the promotion of phonic skills, though this is a recently developed emphasis. Those pupils with identified reading problems receive good support from teachers and make good progress. Time set aside for guided reading is well used by teachers, with the majority of pupils developing their technical reading skills and levels of understanding. By the time pupils are eleven, two-thirds of pupils have a reading age in line with their chronological age and some above it. The quality of reading is also being influenced by the good support given by parents through the home-school reading scheme. The large majority of pupils are now making satisfactory progress in their reading skills as they move through the key stage. This is much influenced by the good range of challenging tasks introduced with the National Literacy Strategy. Not only do pupils read a range of fiction books, but they are also introduced to some interesting factual and newspaper and magazine material, as in a Year 6 lesson on an article about the Bermuda Triangle. Pupils read poetry and literature from other countries and cultures. Many pupils display good reading habits and regularly read at home. Pupils have some library skills, and some are now able to retrieve information from the Internet and other resources. A few older pupils display some sophisticated reading skills, and can discuss the characters and issues in the books they read with confidence. Teachers continue to use guided reading activities in an effective manner and provide many opportunities for silent reading.
64. The previous inspection report judged that standards in English were below the national average at the end of the key stage, with some slow progress in the upper part of the school. Standards are still below average, because attainment in writing is unsatisfactory, though reading has improved in recent years. Pupils have too little practice in writing at length and at a good pace and too little expertise in some technical skills, particularly spelling. Consequently, they lack the ability to express their ideas with accuracy. Teaching is now good overall, though marking is still inconsistently used by teachers to help pupils to improve their work and to aid in future planning. There has, however, been much improvement in the teaching of the subject since the last inspection and the inspection team judged that standards are now beginning to rise.



65. Standards of writing in relation to technical skills are below average. Pupils write freely, but not often at length, most with an evident desire to communicate their ideas and with sensible or imaginative content. Above all, pupils often work too slowly and with little sense of urgency or desire to finish a piece of writing in the allocated time. Apart from that of a few higher ability pupils, writing is often inaccurate in spelling and punctuation. These factors prevent pupils from being well prepared for the written component of the national tests, as they have not acquired the ability to express their ideas with precision and speed. Handwriting and general presentation vary greatly. Some pupils communicate coherently in writing, as seen in a Year 6 class where pupils wrote articles based on notes made during an interview with a famous person, but often concentration is focused on content alone. By the age of eleven, writing covers an appropriate range of styles, but too few pupils write at length and with sustained account or description. Spelling is often random. Pupils' use of a wide range of vocabulary is often inhibited by the difficulties they experience in spelling correctly. Pupils write in a suitable variety of genres, including letters, diaries and playscripts, often using well-chosen literary stimuli from poetry and prose. The school has identified the weakness in writing and has initiated extra time for the teaching of English skills and additional literacy lessons for under-achieving pupils, as well as extension work for higher ability pupils. Progress is good for pupils with special educational needs, through the good work of support staff and the carefully graded work provided by classroom teachers.
66. The quality of teaching is good. All teaching is satisfactory or better and in three-quarters of the lessons observed it was good or very good. At its best, it is characterised by grasp and understanding of the subject, interest, enthusiasm and sound lesson planning which employs an appropriate variety of activities in the classroom. A strength of some of the teaching is the consistent, skilful and challenging use of question and answer, which assesses the degree of understanding of pupils and allows teacher to reinforce previous teaching. This was clearly to be seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were enthusiastically grasping the language used in a story on 'The Missing Garden Gnome' with the help of the teacher's probing questions. Literature is frequently used in lessons and teachers stress the power of words to convey emotion and pleasure. There is now a high degree of emphasis on reading and skills of understanding through the successful use of the National Literacy Strategy. This is being productively used by teachers to aid work on reading and to study the structures of stories. The pace with which teachers conduct lessons is often good, ensuring that pupils learn at an appropriate rate. Too often, however, teaching is rendered less effective than it should be by too low an expectation of the amount of written work which more able pupils are capable of producing in the time allocated. The planning of lessons is uniformly satisfactory. Work graded in difficulty is used to suit the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. Good support and attention is given to pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language and this results in good progress. Most teachers possess good subject knowledge and focus well on all aspects of English, other than some writing skills. Although teachers give good verbal comment and encouragement to pupils, marking of written work is often thin in comment and direction to pupils as to how they could improve. Homework is effectively used to reinforce work done in class.
67. The subject is well managed. The co-ordinator regularly monitors other teachers' planning. The new scheme of work is good and the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has been well managed and implemented throughout the school. The National Literacy Strategy documents are used successfully to form the basis of the scheme of work. Teachers' short-term planning is effective. The raising of standards in writing has been identified as a priority. Good systems for tracking the progress of individual pupils have recently been put in place. Clear assessment procedures have been introduced, which allow each pupil's progress to be carefully tracked. The high quality support staff are well used in literacy lessons. The use of literacy within other subjects varies. There is a good focus on language in most subjects, but not enough attention is given to more extended writing skills in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. Resources are good in quality, apart from the fact that there are too few computers for pupils to practise the skills of drafting and re-drafting regularly. The new library is attractive and welcoming, encouraging pupils to promote regular habits of reading for pleasure.

## MATHEMATICS

68. Standards are below average in all areas of mathematics, in number, algebra, space and measures, and data handling, both nationally and when compared with similar schools. The 2000 national test results were well below average, because there was a very high percentage of special educational needs pupils in the cohort. The percentage of pupils who achieved the higher grades was well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, results are also below average. Inspection evidence confirms these standards. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and progress well, as do pupils for whom English is an additional language, because of the comprehensive provision made for them. However, standards for a small number of more able pupils are not sufficiently high in areas of mathematics which involve problem –solving and data handling. There has been a small rise in the results over the last four years, apart from a dip in 1998. Girls are under-achieving compared with boys. The school is aware of this and is monitoring it carefully.
69. By the age of 11 years, pupils' mathematical skills are below average. They can work out simple calculations in their heads and understand that simple fractions can be converted to decimals. They can show the number of lines of symmetry of regular shapes, including octagons and heptagons and estimate whether angles are obtuse, acute or right angles, as well as estimate the number of degrees of each angle. Pupils collect data in frequency tables and construct bar graphs, but they are unable to cope with investigations and complex problem-solving tasks and too few opportunities are made to introduce them to this area. More able pupils are not consistently challenged at higher levels in lessons. An analysis of pupils' work shows that most pupils make consistently good progress from a very low baseline.
70. The quality of teaching is good overall. In all the lessons observed, teaching was good or very good, with a number of strengths that account for pupils' progress:
- teachers use the mental warm up at the beginnings of lessons well to develop speed in numeracy skills;
  - teaching is based on good subject knowledge that enables teachers to ask probing questions to help pupils think deeply;
  - teachers employ effective learning methods, both teacher-based and when, for example, they use pupils to demonstrate on the board what they have learned in a lesson;
  - resources are used well by teachers to make sessions interesting. Pupils use calculators effectively to check their calculations. Classroom assistants are carefully briefed about their role and challenge pupils thoughtfully. This was seen in a numeracy lesson, when a classroom assistant supported a group of pupils in Year 4 who were accurately dividing up shapes into two equal halves.
  - Teachers' behaviour management is very good and enables pupils to concentrate carefully on their work and behave well in lessons.
71. Teachers are familiar and secure with the National Numeracy Strategy, which is gradually improving standards. The three-part lesson structure is soundly established and planning is good. Identifying what is to be learnt is clearly written in the planning and these objectives are shared with the pupils at the beginnings of lessons. Teachers use a good range of mathematical vocabulary, which results in pupils being able to explain what they have done, using the correct terminology. The main teaching activities involve pupils practising their skills and these are satisfactorily monitored by teachers. There are, however, occasions where the pace of the lesson slows and this can result in too little work being produced by pupils. Teachers do not use data handling activities sufficiently with pupils. Pupils enjoy mathematics lessons, sustain interest in their work and are keen to improve their speed of working. This was evident in a Year 5 and 6 lesson when pupils quickly completed addition sums, using rounding skills to speed the process.
72. Pupils use information and communication technology to develop number skills and use LOGO to promote estimation of length, angles and logical thought. Pupils use mathematics to help learning in other subjects, for instance, when measuring in a design and technology lesson to draw up Christmas card designs on squared paper. Teachers use informal observations, assessment activities and regular mental tests to assess pupils' attainment. However, this information is not used consistently to create individual attainment targets for pupils. The school uses non-statutory test material for assessment purposes, but does not always make full use of it to plan for pupils' individual progress.

73. The leadership and management of mathematics is good. An appropriate action plan has been drawn up which will continue to develop this subject well. Monitoring of the quality of teaching has been carried out and this has had an impact on the quality of teaching as well as developing standards of attainment.
74. The school has made a clear improvement since the last inspection. The National Numeracy Strategy is now in place, pupils' standards are rising and the quality of teaching has improved overall. The long and medium term planning have been developed and the role of the co-ordinator has been strengthened. Resources have improved and standards are rising. Numeracy in the teaching of other subjects is not yet used as fully as it might be.

## SCIENCE

75. In the 2000 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 4 or above was close to the national average, but the percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 or above was below the national average. Overall, standards are below average nationally and when compared with similar schools. In the last four years the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above has increased dramatically. This improvement coincides with the introduction and implementation of a new scheme of work, which is having a positive impact on the performance of pupils in science. This improvement in results, observations of lessons and analysis of pupils' work indicate that the attainment of pupils at the age of eleven is now firmly in line with that expected nationally and that the percentage of those achieving the higher grade is increasing. However, when these results are compared with similar schools, performance still remains below, but this comparison does not fully take into consideration the fact that the school has 62% of pupils who have special educational needs. Attainment in science shows a great improvement since the last inspection.
76. In all classes, pupils have opportunities to be actively and meaningfully involved in practical investigations. The majority of pupils understand the basic principles of experimentation. Pupils make careful observations and develop the ability to evaluate scientific evidence and made predictions. Pupils record their findings, but these written records are of a lower standard than their oral presentation and insufficient care is taken with presentation. This lower standard in written records acts as a constraint on progress and attainment, as does the limited vocabulary range of some of the pupils. In Years 3 and 4, practical investigative science is undertaken with great enthusiasm. This is particularly beneficial to the many pupils with special educational needs, who receive good quality support from learning support assistants. Pupils are making predictions where appropriate and understand the importance of collecting and recording data to answer questions. All understand what is meant by a fair test. In a filtering and magnetic experiment, Year 4 pupils were expressing their own ideas as how best to separate the sand from the metal. By the time pupils are in Years 5 and 6 they show good knowledge of life processes and living things. They group and classify materials and recognize the difference between solids, liquids and gases. They record the results of practical activities as graphs and charts. Pupils are beginning to use computers in their learning of the subject and to use CD Roms for research, as observed in a lesson on skeletons and muscles. By the end of the key stage most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of life processes and living things and are able to identify such organs, as petals, stamen and stigma in various plants. Higher attaining pupils are able to describe the similarities in the main stages of human and flowering plant life cycles.
77. The analysis of work shows that pupils throughout the school make consistently good progress and achieve well from, initially, a low level of understanding. All teachers place an increasing emphasis on pupils understanding their own experiments and investigating for themselves. This is leading to an improvement in pupils' skills of enquiry but it also highlights a weakness that several pupils have in their ability to record efficiently what they find because of their weaknesses in writing skills.
78. In all classes the quality of learning is good and pupils are making good gains in their knowledge. Science is often successfully linked to other subjects such as physical education in the investigation into the effect of exercise on pulse rate or in literacy in a non-fiction text about the development of the silk worm. Most pupils draw well on previous knowledge and experience to develop skills and understanding in new situations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and those who have English as an additional language make very good progress.

79. Pupils are well motivated, well behaved, show curiosity, listen attentively and are interested in their work. Throughout the school pupils cooperate well with each other and contribute confidently to class discussions. They use apparatus safely and are aware of health and safety issues. Pupils show a natural and productive curiosity for science.
80. The quality of teaching is good overall. No lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is at its best, the teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they link to careful detailed planning and good classroom organization to provide a brisk pace to the lessons. Teachers also challenge pupils' thinking by skilled use of questions and answers to draw sensible conclusions and apply and develop their knowledge. The use of quizzes within the class provides continual assessment whilst the 'Plants and Humans Quiz' open to all pupils, with big prizes, maintains pupils' interest in science! Good management of pupils, achieved without fuss and with good humour, is a strong feature of these lessons. The teachers make satisfactory use of assessment to measure pupils' attainment and the proposed new system will enable them to use the data available to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses in even greater detail.
81. The subject has an adequate range of resources and these are continually being upgraded. The two-year cycle scheme of work is very effective for St. Michael's and the scheme builds progressively upon pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Links are being developed with information and communication technology whilst the use of measuring and graphs to record information makes a satisfactory combination to mathematics. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and through her links with the Qualification and Curriculum Authority and her involvement with the scheme of work for Key Stage 2 is able to keep colleagues up to date with innovations in the subject. The subject is consistently being reviewed and the action plan is clear in its objectives. The problems identified in the previous inspection have been tackled and within the school there is a strong commitment to raising attainment and to good behaviour. This, together with the enthusiastic attitudes of the pupils to the subject and the good teaching, provides a busy working atmosphere in the classroom, which is reflected in the pupils' recent good progress.

## **ART**

82. It was not possible to see any art lessons during the week of the inspection, because of curriculum arrangements. On the basis of the evidence gathered from examination of teachers' planning and scrutiny of pupils' work and displays, it is judged that by the age of eleven pupils will achieve standards that are above those expected for their age. At the time of the previous inspection, standards in art were judged to be unsatisfactory, with the work of older pupils judged to be lacking in skill, pupils' observational drawing weak and the subject lacking in breadth. All these areas are now above average.
83. The many and varied displays of pupils' work and the work in their sketch books show the good progress pupils make as they develop their skills through the school. It is evident that pupils have experience of a wide range of materials in their art lessons. These activities make links with other subjects and include drawing, painting and collage work. Lower school classes use a variety of materials and textures. Year 3 pupils design and make colour wheels, using primary colours and also work with clay. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, when three dimensional work was judged to be under- emphasised. Year 4 produced close observational studies of buildings, while Years 5 and 6 created paintings in the style of David Hockney. .
84. Teachers achieve a good balance between developing pupils' creative, imaginative and practical skills and increasing their knowledge and understanding of the work of a range of artists. They make effective links with other areas of the curriculum, especially science, history and design and technology. Discussion with pupils showed that they were able to review self portraits produced by themselves at an earlier period. They were able to evaluate in their peers' works and suggest ways of improving their own work. Pupils were able to use drawing and painting techniques to communicate ideas and to mix a variety of colours, including skin tones. They could confidently demonstrate an impressive use of materials including crayons, paint, pastels and pencils. A Year 3 display showed pupils developing an understanding of the work of Monet. Teachers' enthusiasm inspires pupils to work at a good pace and be creative in their approach. They use their imaginations to experiment with a series of bold brush strokes in

creating paintings in the style of the Impressionists. Planning is good, with good use of resources, direct teaching of skills and a good understanding of the subject. Activities are well matched to different groups, with a good level of challenge. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is an additional language are well supported by their teachers and progress well.

85. Pupils are confident in trying out new ideas. Judging from the pupils' previous work, it is clear that they respond with pleasure and interest and are able to use their skills creatively. They can record with confidence what they observe, experience and imagine. They can work productively with a range of materials, tools and techniques.
86. The curriculum is further enriched by a flourishing art club, run by the co-ordinator, during which pupils were observed creating giant tins in the style of Andy Warhol, to 'make a sculpture for the foyer'. Their enthusiasm and knowledge of modern art are impressive.
87. The subject coordinator provides good leadership and management of the subject. She has worked successfully to raise the standards of attainment throughout the school. There is a policy and scheme of work in place, which offer helpful guidance to teachers and show the skills and progression needed across the four years. The coordinator monitors the curriculum well to ensure the development of pupils' skills over time. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the use of assessment to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. There is a good range of resources to support teaching and these are well organised and readily accessible.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

88. Standards are average overall. At the time of the last inspection standards were below average. There has been an improvement in standards due to the development of yearly and termly planning to guide teachers. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
89. By the age of 11 years pupils' standards are average. Pupils work with a variety of materials, showing that they are aware of the problems of using fine fabric for sewing their own designs. They reflect on these designs as they develop and evaluate their final products carefully.
90. The standards in Key Stage 2 are the result of good quality teaching. Teachers use focused practical activities to develop skills effectively. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils had practised their cross-stitch skills on a variety of materials before planning their sewn Christmas card panel. Resources were well used by teachers when they gave pupils squared paper to draw out their Christmas card motif prior to creating it on fabric. Opportunities were missed to challenge more able pupils to draw step by step plans with diagrams. The quality of teaching means that all pupils make good progress in their learning. The strengths that account for this are as follows:
  - Very good behaviour management by teachers ensures that pupils are well behaved and interested in their work.
  - Well planned lessons with an introduction, main activity and plenary. These plenary sessions are used to discuss the various choices pupils face and access attainment informally.
  - Teachers use open-ended questioning skills thoughtfully when they ask pupils how to compare their plans and final product and also when they challenge them to explain how they could improve the products they have made.
  - Evaluation sheets written by teachers guide pupils' thinking and learning so that pupils analyse their own work carefully. This was seen in a Year 3 and 4 class where pupils were evaluating their pieces of weaving.
91. Pupils' planning and evaluations are not held in a folder or book dedicated to the subject and are not fully used when planning future work. Teachers miss opportunities to use information and communication technology in design and technology projects.
92. Pupils enjoy the subject, work co-operatively and sensibly together in response to high teacher expectations of behaviour. Although pupils make products for others, they do not think deeply

about the preferences of users. Pupils are proud of their achievements and explain how they made models of Viking long boats out of card and plastic straws.

93. The leadership and management of this subject is good, although the co-ordinator has only recently taken over. An effective action plan has been drawn up for the future development of this area of the curriculum. An audit of the subject and resources has been carried out which informed the action plan. Resources are satisfactory. Tools for use with wood and food, however, are old and could be up dated. There have been considerable improvements made since the last inspection, which include the development of the role of the co-ordinator. The creation of yearly and termly planning, development of resources and the drawing up of an action plan have all assisted in improving this subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

94. At the time of the last inspection standards were average and they have been maintained at this level. Subject planning has been developed in the light of the new National Curriculum.
95. It was not possible to observe any lessons during the course of the inspection, but from analysis of pupils' work, displays and discussions with teachers and pupils, inspectors judged that by the age of 11 years pupils reach average attainment in their work. They have a sound knowledge of the local area, the United Kingdom and the world. Pupils can describe various features of major rivers. They use the local area of Maidstone and also Dover as areas of local study and to look at environmental issues. Pupils in Year 5 explain their own views about the pollution of water and its causes. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress.
96. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables pupils to find out about a wide range of geographical topics. Good links are made with literacy, as when pupils read about settlements and share their information. Basic skills are very well taught, as observed when pupils used their powers of deduction to assess how water affects landscapes and people and their reading skills to research further facts.
97. This subject is well led. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection. The role of the co-ordinator is now well established; there are new written schemes of work and yearly sets of plans which provide a structure on which to develop pupils' skills. A resources audit and monitoring of pupils' books have enabled the co-ordinator to draw up a well focused action plan for the subject, to develop this curriculum area carefully in the future. Plans include the development of resources into project collections and improved use of information and communication technology in the subject.

## **HISTORY**

98. Standards in history are average by the age of eleven and have been maintained since the time of the previous inspection. Planning is generally good and uses a good variety of methods and strategies to encourage the skills of thought and deduction through direct learning and practical activities. The purpose of learning is made very clear to pupils and planning is beginning to ensure a steady progression of skills as pupils move through the school.
99. Pupils successfully develop a sense of chronology. They identify and date features in the past, evaluate evidence and begin to examine source material effectively. They study the Victorians, the Vikings and the Tudors with interest and enthusiasm, as observed in displays and accounts of a recent 'Victorian Day' in school, as well as pupils' lively accounts of the experience. Throughout the school, pupils are able to absorb facts well and express an enthusiastic response both to the period under study and people associated with it. This was shown in topic books written by Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, where pupils had used research techniques to examine Victorian times and compare them with their own experiences. There is evidence of independent research skills being developed and acquired, using a range of sources and practice in writing skills.
100. The curriculum is good and reflects the new curriculum for the Year 2000. It ensures a good and wide coverage of topics and learning goals and provides a stimulating variety of activities

to support the teaching. Emphasis is firmly laid on helping pupils to think for themselves and on the use of first hand and secondary source material to aid this process. Work is often planned to ensure that more able pupils can extend their skills and knowledge by undertaking personal research and that pupils with special educational needs are always involved and progress at a satisfactory rate.

101. Teaching observed was good overall. Teachers explain the purpose of lessons well and revise what pupils have learnt in a lively manner. Question and answer methods are used very effectively, both to stretch pupils to their full potential and to help them to understand people and period with ease and interest. Management of pupils is very good, having a significant impact on the quality of learning in the way in which pupils learn to concentrate on the work in hand. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject. Cross-curricular skills are also well developed and planned, to link with literacy and art. There is, however, a tendency during long afternoon lessons, to allow the pace of work to slow and to restrict the scope of new learning, rather than ensuring that pupils work to their full potential.
102. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator takes every opportunity to monitor and evaluate teaching in the subject. The impact of the subject is well reviewed and planning changed in the light of this evaluation. Pupils' personal development is well extended, as they study the ways of life of other cultures and learn to understand how the past has affected the present. Visits to sites of historical interest help to enhance the curriculum. Resources in the form of historical artefacts are few, but are well used and well supplemented by visits to sites of historical interest and by visitors to the school.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

103. Standards in information and communication technology are average overall. Teachers sometimes use information and communication technology to support other subjects and most teachers timetable a session per week for whole class teaching. This maintains the standards seen at the time of the previous inspection.
104. By the age of 11 years pupils can use the Internet to research animals from tropical rain forests for their geography topics and send e-mails to pupils in other schools, thus enhancing their literacy skills. Pupils record their work in a computer book, to demonstrate that they have used CD ROMs to find out about human muscles for science and have printed out text with graphics. They use word processing effectively when writing about holiday destinations. Their drawing skills are satisfactory; in Year 4 they know how to use the 'stamp' facility on a program called 'Colour Magic'. In Year 3 they draw symmetrical butterflies using a variety of brush strokes. They can use control devices satisfactorily; Year 4 pupils can programme a remote control vehicle, using a programme called 'LOGO', to move around the screen and turn. However pupils have little experience of entering information into data bases and using the information to create graphs. They cannot recall having used simulation programmes linked to history or geography topics.
105. The quality of teaching overall is good. The co-ordinator sets a very good example by the high standards of her teaching. She uses white screen projections from the computer very well. This was particularly effective in Year 6 in demonstrating to pupils what the different screens look like when text is inserted, adding a picture and saving work onto disk. The strengths of teaching that account for pupils' good progress are: the good use of open-ended questioning which challenges pupils' thinking; the thoughtful teacher organisation with lists of pupils on the wall, showing who has completed a given task so that teachers can monitor pupils' access to the computers effectively; the strong behaviour management which ensures that pupils help each other to overcome problems and work sensibly with their partners. Appropriate use of subject specific vocabulary enables pupils to develop knowledge of key terminology. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils were learning about 'floppy disks' and 'drop down menus'.
106. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to use spread sheets and data handling is underdeveloped. The school has a planned programme for next year to develop teachers' competence by training.

## **MUSIC**

107. At the time of the previous inspection standards were average. The school has improved this standard of attainment in music and it is now above average by the age of eleven, largely because of the improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the school.
108. Pupils are acquiring good listening skills through songs and listening activities, where they demonstrate an understanding of rhythm, pitch and they can read and use musical notation. Pupils have a very good musical vocabulary and are able to describe sounds that their instruments make and recognise different groups of instruments by their main features. They enjoy their music making and respond enthusiastically, both when playing and when composing their own music in groups.
109. Pupils sing with enthusiasm, particularly when they join together in the hall for assembly. They learn to pitch their voices accurately and sing tunefully and with expression, accompanied or unaccompanied. They sing rounds and part-songs harmoniously and with great pleasure. Inspectors were impressed by the speed and accuracy with which the whole school learned a new song, introduced to them by a visiting group at an assembly. They approach singing with a high level of effort and are well supported by the teachers. Pupils listen carefully and attentively to music played on entry and exit in assemblies, answer questions on its character and mood and discuss the use of instruments or vocal sound knowledgeably. During the week of the inspection, they were able to examine an African mass, the music of the week, with response, interest and perceptive comment.
110. Teaching in the subject is good overall and sometimes very good or excellent. Teachers ensure that pupils are involved in the activities, that they enjoy music-making and that they learn secure skills. Management is very good, so that concentrated work is done in all lessons. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a brisk pace, which ensures good learning. Behaviour is good. Most pupils are motivated by their teachers to learn and respond and are given the opportunity to develop musical talent, understanding and a good spirit of co-operation.
111. The school uses a commercial scheme of work to support staff and to ensure that pupils have a suitable breadth of experience across the school. Teachers make effective use of this and the supporting resources.
112. There is a successful recorder club, as well as recorder lessons for the whole of the lower school, and a popular choir. Some older pupils benefit from extra-curricular tuition, such as the violin. The school takes part in community activities such as singing at the local church and in local festivals and charity collection. Visits are also made by music staff from the local education authority, such as brass and string groups. Pupils add to their performance skills while taking part in school concerts and productions.
113. The new music co-ordinator is committed and enthusiastic and inspires a love of and an understanding of music in pupils, which gives them a very good basis on which to begin their secondary curriculum in the subject. She has done a great deal to develop pupils' skills in composing and appraising. This was clearly seen in the Year 4, 5 and 6 lesson observed, where pupils were eagerly and purposefully developing their own compositions in groups. The new national guidelines and the scheme of work should provide even firmer foundations for developing all pupils' musical abilities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

114. At the age of eleven, pupils' attainment is average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily as they move through the school. When moving around the small, narrow hall pupils make good use of the space available and pay due care and attention to other pupils. They are developing good spatial awareness. From an early age pupils demonstrate good co-ordination and show satisfactory skills when putting together a sequence of movements in gymnastics lessons. In lessons pupils are keen to improve and work hard to refine their sequences. Pupils work well together and the majority are always keen to show to the rest of the class what they can do – often to a round of spontaneous applause. In their games lessons pupils' basic skills in various sports are developed successfully despite, for example, the problems of learning rugby skills on



a tarmac playground. In a Year 5 games lesson observed pupils progressed well and, despite the inclement weather in the playground, worked hard to improve their skills. All pupils are aware of health and safety in physical education and understand the effect of exercise on their bodies as when they feel their heart beat faster after a vigorous warm up. Pupils behave very well and are appropriately dressed for physical education. They use warm up and cool down exercises to good effect. Pupils concentrate to improve the quality of their skills and show enjoyment in being physically active. They co-operate in pairs or small groups, for example when working on gymnastics. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and make good progress.

115. 115. The overall teaching and learning of physical education is good. Lessons begin with effective warm ups. Pupils understand the importance of preparing different muscles for different forms of physical exercise and they work quietly and with concentration. Good links are made with science in the way in which pupils are helped to understand how muscles work. Calm and, in most cases quiet management, coupled with very good relationships, promote pupils' self-confidence. Demonstrations by individual pupils to the rest of the class are used effectively to draw attention to good technique and key elements in the activities. A strength of the teaching in many lessons is the teachers' careful attention to ensuring that pupils are well drilled in working safely, whether through finding enough space to work in individually, handling apparatus or in warming up and cooling down at the beginnings and ends of lessons.
116. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum relevant to the pupils' physical needs. All pupils are taught the full range of activities within the National Curriculum. In addition to the teaching of dance, games and athletics, pupils also swim on a regular basis. Evidence from the schools' records indicates that by the age of eleven over seventy five percent of pupils are safely swimming 25 metres unaided. Athletics is taught in the summer, using a local secondary school's playing field, whilst a regular adventure holiday to the Kent Mountain Centre in Llanberis and trips to Buckmore Park provide pupils with good social experiences and develop their knowledge and understanding of the range of leisure pursuits they may follow in later life. Extra curricular activities and competitive sport against local schools help to develop pupils' personal development.
117. The subject is well managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator and the school is involved in the 'Top Sports Scheme'. An in-service day on this scheme for all staff has now been confirmed for January 2001. The co-ordinator has completed the suitable training but the school felt that it was necessary that all staff should have first-hand experience of the scheme. This lack of expertise of all staff was a point raised in the previous inspection but it has now been fully tackled. The policy in place provides useful guidance for teachers and has improved the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are constantly being upgraded and good use is made of the hall despite its difficult shape. The absence of a grass area affects the development of some games but a local secondary school lends a grass area in the summer term to enable games such as athletics, cricket and rounders to be taught. This has proved successful and at a recent athletics meeting St. Michael's emerged victorious against several other junior schools.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

118. By the age of eleven, standards in religious education meet the expectations of the local authority's agreed syllabus for religious education. The satisfactory standards noted in the previous report have been maintained.
119. Pupils learn about the importance of religions in some people's lives. They appreciate the different ceremonies and celebrations of Christians and other world faiths. They learn about the Christian celebrations of Harvest and Christmas, the sadness of the crucifixion and the later joy of Easter. These are reinforced well in regular school assemblies. Pupils become familiar with the different books in the Christian Bible and know some of the stories they contain. Pupils use homework to follow up class lessons as seen in a Year 3 class, where, following the lesson on Jesus as a teacher, pupils read up various parables from their Bibles and wrote them in their own words, picking out the message that was being taught by Jesus in their chosen parable. Pupils understand that some of the different world faiths have rules that their people are required to follow. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have become familiar with the Islamic faith and have compared Christian customs with those of Islam.

120. Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject. They share their ideas with each other, concentrate on tasks and are careful when handling artefacts.
121. Teaching and pupils' learning is good overall and teachers make good use of questions to discover what pupils know and understand. Lessons are effectively planned and make good use of artefacts as well as the close links that exist between the local church and the community. In samples of pupils' work there is evidence that good use is made of graded work sheets to reinforce some aspects of religious education and homework is also well used to this end. In all classes religious education makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils have the opportunity to show their knowledge and empathetic feelings. There are opportunities to work together and listen and respect the views of others.
122. Since the previous inspection, the Local Education Authority has published a new Agreed Syllabus, which is being satisfactorily implemented by the school. The time allocated to religious education is sufficient to teach the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. The introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has meant there has been little recent professional development in religious education. The co-ordination of the subject is good and teachers' planning is monitored by the co-ordinator, who also looks at samples of pupils' work and gives help and support to colleagues. The school has an adequate range of artefacts to support the teaching of religious education but the introduction of the new syllabus means that new artefacts and resources may well be required. Visits to places of worship such as a synagogue enhance the curriculum.