

INSPECTION REPORT

ST.JAMES' C.OF E. (V.A.) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115131

Headteacher: Mrs. E. Taylor

Reporting inspector: Mrs. R.J.Andrew
OFSTED No: 21460

Dates of inspection: 30 October - 3 November 2000

Inspection number: 224211

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	4-11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Guildford Road Colchester Essex
Postcode:	CO1 2RA
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Fr. Peter Walker
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Rachael Andrew (OFSTED No: 21460)	Registered inspector	Design and technology	What sort of school is it?
		Information and communication technology	How high are standards? a)The school's results and achievements
		Music	How well are pupils taught?
		English as an additional language	What should the school do to improve further?
		Equal opportunities	
Geza Hanniker (OFSTED No: 9184)	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development.
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Derek Pattinson (OFSTED No: 19120)	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well is the school led and managed?
		Geography	
		History	
Howard Probert (OFSTED No: 8056)	Team inspector	The Foundation Stage	
		Science	
		Physical education	
		Special educational needs	
Patricia Walker (Ofsted No: 15372)	Team inspector	English Art and design	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
			Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 10
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 previous 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	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11 - 13
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13 - 15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15 - 17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17 - 19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20 - 21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23 - 26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27 - 39

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. James' Church of England School is a voluntary-aided primary school. It was founded in 1860 to provide education according to the principles and practices of the Church of England. There are currently 336 boys and girls on roll. The school serves the local area and draws other pupils from further afield as a result of parental choice. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, including a small number of ethnic minority origins. Of these, five pupils are at an early stage of English language development. A few pupils join the school late in their primary school years and many of these have special educational needs. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is currently 16 per cent. This is about average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, 20 per cent, is also broadly average. Most of these pupils have moderate learning or communication difficulties and a few have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although children have experienced a wide range of pre-school provision, attainment on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is judged to be effective and to give satisfactory value for money. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. Standards in writing are lower than in reading and require improvement. Most pupils' achievements are sound, except in writing where many could achieve more. Higher-attaining pupils could also achieve more in mathematics. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and relationships are constructive. The quality of teaching is consistently good for pupils aged four to seven and satisfactory overall for older pupils. There are weaknesses in leadership and management that hinder improvements to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved.

What the school does well

- Pupils in the Foundation Stage have a good start to school life.
- The teaching of pupils aged four to seven is consistently good.
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school, behave well and form constructive relationships.
- The school choir and orchestra achieve high standards.

What could be improved

- The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, senior team and governing body.
- Further improvements to the quality of teaching and subject standards through the monitoring process.
- Standards in writing and information and communication technology (ICT), especially at Key Stage 2.
- The achievement of higher-attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics and writing.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996. Since that time improvements overall have been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved at eleven years of age, although this masks considerable fluctuations from year to year. Pupils' achievements in writing are still not high enough and standards in ICT, at eleven years of age, remain well below average. The provision for pupils with special educational needs has improved and these pupils now make good progress towards the targets set for them. Improvements in relation to some of the key issues identified in the previous inspection report have been good, for example, teachers' lesson planning has improved. This has resulted in more effective learning. Curriculum planning has improved to include detailed schemes for all subjects so that the work builds more logically from year to year. The most recent improvements in planning, for example in information and communication technology, have yet to produce benefits in terms of rising standards. Opportunities for assessment are still not routinely identified. There has been some improvement in the opportunities provided for investigation and challenging tasks, for example in science, but not to the same extent in mathematics. The development of creative thinking especially in terms of pupils' personal writing is still a weakness. Improvement on the other key issues relating to leadership and management has been unsatisfactory. These issues include school

development planning, judging effectiveness and monitoring teaching and learning. There is an improved sense of teamwork in the school and its capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	All schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	B	C	D	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	A	C	D	C	
Science	B	D	D	C	

The standards shown in the table above indicate a steady fall over two years from a high point in 1997. Results for the year 2000 show a substantial improvement on 1999 results and inspection evidence indicates that all three subjects are now average overall although there are variations within English. Standards in writing are much lower than in reading and are not high enough. Many pupils could achieve more. The achievements of most pupils are sound in reading, mathematics and science, although higher-attaining pupils could achieve more in mathematics. In the most recent national tests, girls did better than boys in English. The school exceeded by a wide margin the targets it set in 2000 for eleven-year-olds in English and mathematics. These targets were not high enough. Targets set for the Year 2001 are more challenging and are based on more secure knowledge of what pupils know and can do. Standards in design and technology are below average and those in information and communication technology are well below average. In all other subjects, where there was sufficient evidence to make judgements, standards are broadly average. Standards of singing and instrumental playing are high.

The standards achieved by pupils aged seven in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average although writing is a relative weakness. Standards in art and design are above average. In all other subjects where there was sufficient evidence to make judgements, standards are broadly average. The achievements of most pupils, based on their prior learning, are sound. Higher-attaining pupils, however, could do better, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Progress in Key Stage 2 is not as consistent as in Key Stage 1. There are considerable variations from year to year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Most pupils are keen to learn, concentrate well and work hard even when the teachers' attention is on other pupils.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers and move about the school sensibly. A few pupils find it hard to concentrate. Older pupils are trusted to work without close supervision and do so responsibly.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils form constructive relationships. Older pupils take care of younger pupils, enjoy the responsibility given to them to do this and contribute well to the family atmosphere the school achieves. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory, although rates of unauthorised absence are above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 6 years	aged 6-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good	satisfactory

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

During the inspection, all the teaching observed was satisfactory or better and 11 per cent was very good. There have been satisfactory improvements in the overall quality since the previous inspection. This has increased the rate of pupils' learning. Teachers' planning now indicates more clearly the skills to be taught and how these are to be practised. Improvements in pupils' learning have also come about through the setting of pupils in the booster classes in Year 6 and the increase in classroom support time. In the Foundation Stage, teaching is good overall and often very good. The teachers set targets to match individual needs and regularly check the children's progress towards these. There are particular strengths in the teaching of personal, social and emotional development and in literacy, language and communication. Overall, the teaching of English, mathematics and science is good at Key Stage 1 and satisfactory at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching is inconsistent from class to class. This results in variations in the quality of pupils' learning and rates of progress. Where teaching is at its best, pupils know what they are expected to learn and work at a good pace. They acquire new skills well through direct teaching and secure them through carefully planned activities. Where weaknesses occur, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, the pace of lessons is too slow to ensure good progress, higher-attaining pupils spend too long practising skills that are already secure and homework is not always used to advantage. Marking is not always helpful in identifying areas for improvement. Overall, the teaching of numeracy and literacy skills is sound and enables pupils to gain information by reading a range of texts, to record their learning and to interpret data, for example, in science. Pupils experience difficulties in measuring and calculating in real-life situations, such as cooking. In many lessons, classroom support assistants make an effective contribution that improves pupils' progress. In information and communication technology teachers do not routinely teach the skills pupils need or provide opportunities for them to practise and use them to support other subjects. Instrumental tuition and the teaching of singing are good. Pupils with special educational needs and pupils for whom English is as an additional language receive good support that enables them to meet their targets. Higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged sufficiently and as a result their achievements, particularly in mathematics and writing, could be better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to pupils' interests. Recent substantial improvements to planning have not yet had a significant impact on the raising of standards, especially in ICT. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and this impedes progress in extended and personal writing.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils have well-prepared individual education plans. Teachers and classroom support assistants provide effective help that enables pupils to make good progress towards their targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is effective support for pupils at an early stage of English language development. The school draws on the skilled advice of a specialist teacher from the local education authority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good provision has been maintained since the previous inspection. There are valuable opportunities in music and art and design for reflection and appreciation and also in history and geography to develop an understanding of cultural heritage. The opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on important issues contribute well to personal growth.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care the school provides, including child protection, is satisfactory overall although the absence of written policies impedes the communication of what the school expects of staff. There are effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and personal development.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents. The provision for extra-curricular activities is poor overall, although the orchestra is a particular strength. Pupils who attend choir and receive instrumental tuition, regularly miss parts of lessons.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has established a positive, caring ethos and successfully fulfils a supportive role. However, the leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff require substantial further improvement. Planning for school development lacks clarity and long-term vision. The function of the senior management team is unclear and this reduces its capacity to move the school forward.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide good support for the headteacher and staff but are not yet sufficiently involved in making decisions about the school's educational direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does not do enough to evaluate how well it is doing in the areas it identifies for improvement. It is beginning to make effective use of its analysis of results in target setting for individual pupils and groups.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes satisfactory use of the resources available to it, including specific grants.

Subject co-ordinators fulfil their responsibilities well but these do not include regular monitoring of teaching and learning or the evaluation of standards. The current staffing complement, accommodation and learning resources are generally sufficient to provide for the full curriculum. The organisation of the library inhibits its use for reference purposes. Resources for outdoor-play provision for the youngest children are inadequate. The school receives good advice about how to employ the principles of best value but some aspects are not yet in place.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • The teaching is good. • Children make good progress. • The school expects children to work hard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more consistent approach to homework. • Better information about how pupils are getting on. • Working more closely with parents. • More activities outside lesson time.

The inspection team agrees, in general, with parents' positive views, although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Inspection findings confirm that there is an inconsistent approach to the setting of homework. Pupils' annual reports do not give adequate information about separate subjects or how pupils could improve. The inspection team agrees that the provision for activities outside lesson time is poor.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results of the National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds in 1999 indicate that standards were:-
 - below the national average in English, mathematics and science;
 - average in comparison with other similar schools
2. The trend in the school's performance over the four years to 1999 is broadly similar to the national trend although there are considerable fluctuations from year to year. Results for the Year 2000 show a significant improvement in all three subjects on the results achieved in 1999. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 increased only slightly over the last few years and has fallen in mathematics. Girls did better than boys in English. It is not possible to compare the Year 2000 results with the national average and with similar schools, as national comparisons are not yet available. It seems likely that improved teaching of basic skills through the introduction of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, the setting of pupils for English and mathematics in Year 6 and target setting for groups and individuals have contributed to higher standards this year.
3. The findings of the inspection indicate that the standards achieved by the oldest pupils are now broadly average for pupils of this age. There are, however, variations within subjects. Pupils' standards in writing are much lower than in reading. This was identified in the previous inspection report and insufficient improvement has taken place. Standards in writing are not high enough. Low standards result from too few opportunities being made for pupils to put their writing skills into practice in personal and extended writing. Standards in applying mathematics to solve problems are relatively weak. Since the previous inspection, better planning for investigations and the regular assessment of pupils' skills have improved standards in the investigative aspects of science and these are now satisfactory.
4. The school's targets for 2000 were insufficiently challenging and were exceeded by a significant margin. The school's targets for the year 2001 for the proportion of pupils to achieve the nationally expected standard in English and mathematics are set at 71%. These presented a significant challenge when they were set. In the light of the improvements in performance in 2000 and the school's growing use of the analysis of performance and knowledge of pupils' potential, targets need to be reviewed. No targets have been published for science or for higher-attaining pupils.
5. Standards in art and design, history and physical education are broadly average. As a result of timetabling arrangements, there was insufficient evidence available during the week of the inspection to make judgements about standards in music overall or in geography. Standards of singing and instrumental performance are high. Pupils achieve high standards in swimming. Standards in design and technology are below average and in information and communication technology they are well below, as at the time of the previous inspection. Improvements in planning are not yet having an impact on standards and there are still too few opportunities provided for pupils to use computers.
6. The results of the National Curriculum tests for 7 year olds in 1999 indicate that standards were:-
 - in line with the national average in reading, well below the national average in writing and below the national average in mathematics.
 - in comparison with similar schools, above average in reading, below average in writing and average in mathematics.
7. Results have fallen slightly over the three years to 1999 in reading and writing and risen slightly in mathematics. In writing and mathematics, results for the Year 2000 show an eight per cent increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 2. In reading, results rose by 12 per cent. There was only a slight increase in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3

in any subject. The improving quality of teachers' planning, the support for pupils with special educational needs and the increase in classroom support time are likely factors in improving standards, especially the standards achieved by lower attaining pupils.

8. Inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are now broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics, although writing is a relative weakness, especially the achievements of higher-attaining pupils. Although pupils structure sentences correctly, use punctuation appropriately and spell with reasonable accuracy for their age, there is little evidence of any pupil becoming confident in writing at length; for example most pupils only managed to write two or three sentences during individual work observed in the literacy hour. Pupils read with good expression for their age, especially when reading together and this is a strength.
9. Standards in science, history, design and technology, and physical education are broadly average. Standards in art and design are above average as a result of good teaching. There is insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards in information and communication technology, music and geography. Planning indicates adequate coverage of these subjects but timetable arrangements meant that it was not possible to observe sufficient lessons to make reliable judgements.
10. Standards in literacy and numeracy are sound in both key stages. They enable pupils to access printed material to support work in other subjects, to record their findings, and to interpret data, for example in their work in science and geography. There are some weaknesses evident in pupils' ability to measure accurately and to read different scales on weighing equipment in food technology and to calculate in science. The use of information and communication technology is poor. Pupils do not have the skills they need to benefit from the new technology now available to them.
11. The attainment of children on entry to the school at four years of age is below average especially in social and personal development and language skills. Pupils make good progress and by the end of the Foundation Stage attainment is broadly average. Good progress continues in Key Stage 1 in English, mathematics and science. Progress through Key Stage 2, although satisfactory overall, is inconsistent from class to class.
12. Although the achievements of the majority of pupils in terms of their prior learning in reading, mathematics and science are satisfactory, higher-attaining pupils could achieve more in both key stages, especially in mathematics and writing. Many other pupils could also achieve more in writing, especially at Key Stage 2.
13. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs are good. The quality of the support they receive, realistic, well-targeted individual education plans and regular checking of progress are contributory factors. The achievements of pupils for whom English is an additional language match those of their peers in subjects other than English. They often make better progress in reading than in writing because of the difficulties they experience in assimilating and using large amounts of new vocabulary. This is a pattern that is repeated in many schools.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The attitudes of the pupils to the school are good. They come to the school with cheerful anticipation and play happily in the playground until it is time to come to lessons. From an early age they know what is expected of them and most follow established routines sensibly. They retain this spirit as they get older. Most have positive attitudes towards their learning and many make the most of the opportunities provided, for example by improving their swimming in school time and joining the extra-curricular orchestra practices. Almost all the parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated that their children like the school.
15. The pupils behave well in and around the school in response to teachers' high expectations. They listen well to their teachers and follow instructions carefully. The pupils volunteer to answer the teachers' questions and generally wait until asked to answer these. They know when to gather for their turn for their lunch and queue patiently. The waiting in the narrow corridor is a noisy but orderly social occasion. The pupils are relaxed, polite and confident when speaking and talking to the adults they know and to visitors. They are open and friendly and answer questions readily, for example when demonstrating their reading skills. They behave well when they are outside the school whether their own teachers or others instruct them, for example in the swimming pool or when walking from school to church for the Eucharist. The school is proud of the good reports it receives about its pupils' behaviour on educational visits from the staff of other schools and activity centres and accompanying parents. Exclusions are few. They are used appropriately for aggressive behaviour towards other pupils.

16. The personal development of pupils is good and the relationships are very good between pupils and between pupils and adults. Teachers use class time well to foster these relationships. Teachers are good role models and the pupils learn from the constructive atmosphere. The pupils involve themselves in the daily routines of the school by being helpful to each other and to staff. They feel privileged when they help the teachers to arrange the classrooms and when asked to put away equipment. As they get older they have many opportunities to take responsibilities for themselves and for others. They work independently and sensibly when left alone while the teachers supervise other groups. They can be trusted to use equipment carefully, for example computers. They like to be prefects and take on the role of 'table leaders' sensitively. This is also a time when pupils of different ages socialise and the younger ones learn from the example set by older ones. Nine out of ten parents who responded to the questionnaire, indicated that the school helps their children to become more mature and responsible.
17. The pupils listen and speak well and they are often confident performers. They enjoy singing and sing well in large groups. They stand up in front of the whole school in assemblies individually and in groups and demonstrate their skills enthusiastically. These include playing an instrumental solo, participating in the orchestra or reading out poems they have composed. The audience of staff and other pupils enjoy these occasions and reward the performers by applauding them warmly. Pupils co-operate well. They use their initiative and imagination well, for example in physical education lesson when they make up their own sequence of 'mirror movements' in pairs.
18. Teachers ask pupils to consider the effect of their actions on others by consistently asking the offender, "How would you feel if ...?". As a result most pupils show regret for their thoughtless action and are genuinely remorseful. They usually apologise with good grace. The pupils' empathy for the suffering and deprivation of others is reflected in their charity work. This is exemplified by the preparation of 'shoe box' Christmas presents. These are for "poor children in war torn places who do not get presents" as a pupil explained. The pupils know about other cultures through music and art. Their study of geography includes a visit to Aklowa, a nearby 'African village' study centre. The artefacts they see leave a significant impression on them. They include the few pupils of ethnic minority backgrounds in their play and conversation and respect their faith as they respect their own. There was no sign of harassment or bullying of any kind during the inspection. The pupils and the majority of parents say that when unacceptable aggressive behaviour is brought to the notice of teachers, they put a stop to it quickly and effectively.
19. The attendance rate of the pupils is satisfactory. It is similar to attendance rates in other primary schools nationally. It has remained consistently at the same level for the last four years. Unauthorised attendance is a little higher than the national average.
20. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the pupils continue to be strengths of the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

21. Overall, during the course of the inspection, teaching was good. It was very good in 11 per cent of the lessons observed, good in a further 51 per cent and satisfactory in 38 per cent.
22. The learning of children in the Foundation Stage (from the time of their entry into school until the beginning of Year 1) is good as a result of the good quality teaching they enjoy. In almost half the lessons observed the teaching was very good. This is at its best in the areas of communication, language and literacy, personal and social and emotional development, the areas shown to be weakest when children start school. Teachers use every opportunity to engage children in conversation, to encourage careful listening and to develop vocabulary. A high priority is given to establishing social skills, for example taking turns and developing self-control and independence. Teachers' continuous assessments of children's needs enable them to set appropriate targets and to check progress towards these. This contributes to good progress through the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals, the recognised curriculum for children of this age.
23. In Key Stage 1, the quality of teaching observed was consistently good. This leads to good levels of concentration, the development of understanding and productive learning. Pupils are interested and work hard. In terms of particular subjects, teaching is good in English, mathematics, and science, including the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils respond well to teachers' questions and show a growing ability to think through more complex questions. They put a lot of effort into

independent work. The evidence gained from lessons and from the small amount of pupils' completed work indicates good teaching in art and design. Design and technology is taught well at the end of the key stage. There was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements about music, physical education, history and geography. No information and communication technology was taught during the week of the inspection and there was no evidence of its use to support other subjects except a small amount of work on graphs in mathematics.

24. In Key Stage 2, teaching is satisfactory overall but this masks considerable variations from year to year and as a result the rate at which pupils learn also varies. In Key Stage 2 as a whole the teaching is:-
- satisfactory in English, mathematics and science, including the further development of literacy and numeracy skills ;
 - satisfactory in geography, history and art and design.
 - singing is taught very well in choir practices. Instrumental tuition, including recorders, is good.
 - swimming is taught very well.
 - there was insufficient evidence to make reliable judgements in design and technology, physical education, music and information and communication technology.
25. There are significant problems in information and communication technology. Pupils' learning is poor. Teachers, many of whom lack confidence and expertise in the full range of skills, do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their own skills. This leads to low standards for all but a few pupils who have their own computers and gain appropriate knowledge and skills at home.
26. Where the teaching is good, teachers:-
- have high expectations of behaviour and levels of concentration so that lessons proceed at a good pace and pupils think and learn for themselves in independent tasks; for example, pupils in the Year1/2 class worked quietly and conscientiously on their independent tasks in the literacy hour without taking the teacher's attention away from the group she was teaching.
 - make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn in the lesson, deal effectively with misconceptions and review progress at the end so that pupils have a growing understanding of their own learning and how they can improve; for example, pupils in a Year 5 mathematics lesson were able to see the gains they had made during the lesson in recognising patterns, relationships, factors and multiples.
 - are well prepared and organised so that little time is lost; for example, the teacher in Year 1 had efficiently prepared many useful resources to improve learning in the literacy hour and her skilful organisation ensured that pupils moved quickly from the whole class activity to group tasks.
 - use questions well to extend pupils' thinking so that pupils develop understanding; for example, the teacher's questions in a science lesson in Year 2 led to a thorough understanding of the effect of exercise on the body.
 - use a range of methods including direct teaching and opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve problems so that pupils acquire new knowledge and skills securely; for example, in a history lesson in Year 3 the teacher provided an effective investigation in which pupils acted as archaeologists. They understood thoroughly one of the ways in which historians learn about the past.
 - choose texts well in English and use them effectively to teach reading skills; for example, in a Year 6 class the teacher engaged pupils' interest well by using a protest leaflet about pollution to explain the use of persuasive language and to extend pupils' vocabulary.
27. Classroom support assistants are generally used well to support groups and individuals and to teach specific skills, improving the quality of learning for these pupils.

28. Where teaching is satisfactory, nevertheless some weaknesses occur that hinder productive learning for different groups of pupils. These weaknesses are:-
- a lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils particularly in mathematics so that they practise skills that are already secure and do not move on to more difficult tasks;
 - difficulties in managing the behaviour of a small minority of pupils so that these pupils work at a slow pace;
 - the inconsistent use of homework in different classes especially in English and mathematics so that pupils spend time in lessons consolidating work that could be done more effectively at home.
 - insufficient use of information and communication technology to support the work in different subjects;
 - marking that does not often indicate areas for improvement.
29. Teachers' planning of lessons has improved substantially since the previous inspection and now indicates clearly the skills to be taught and how these are to be practised. Teachers' judgements of what pupils know and can do have also improved so that the work in English, mathematics and science generally builds well on earlier learning. This is not always the case in other subjects, for example design and technology in Key Stage 2. Other improvements that are having a significant impact on the quality of teaching include:-
- the setting of pupils in Year 6 for English and mathematics for part of the week;
 - the increase in classroom assistants' support time for some lessons throughout the school.
30. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides effective support for pupils with special educational needs, especially in English and mathematics; for example she taught pupils in Year 5 how to use bullet points so that they could order their ideas more clearly and encouraged them to think of alternative vocabulary. She monitors pupils' progress carefully and provides class teachers with notes, on a daily basis, about pupils' gains and difficulties. Classroom support assistants are fully acquainted with each pupil's needs and are often assigned to help them in small group or individual tasks. As a result pupils make good progress towards the targets set for them.
31. Teachers are aware of the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language, especially in terms of developing and explaining vocabulary. A competent classroom support assistant gives help to all these pupils on a regular basis, especially to teach reading and writing skills. Although the support she gives is benefiting the pupils' learning and acquisition of English, she is untrained in teaching English as an additional language. She is keen to improve her skills and could be more effective if training opportunities were provided. The local education authority provides occasional support and advice.

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

32. The curriculum is satisfactory, meeting the statutory requirements for all subjects of the recently updated National Curriculum in key stages 1 and 2. This represents improvement since the previous inspection when requirements were not being met in design and technology and in information and communication technology. The curriculum offers breadth and balance and, in general, there is sufficient allocation of time for the study of all subjects in the curriculum. However, there is insufficient time devoted to pupils' extended and personal writing. Provision for the Early Learning Goals recommended for children in the Foundation Stage is good except where inadequate outdoor play equipment restricts learning opportunities.
33. All subjects of the curriculum have a policy and scheme of work, most of which are drawn from the latest national guidelines. In all subjects other than English and mathematics, these schemes have been sensibly adapted to meet the needs of mixed-age classes by ensuring that pupils do not study the same topics in two successive years. In English and mathematics, where there is a national framework to follow, teachers of mixed-age classes plan jointly with other teachers to ensure that pupils deal with topics at the appropriate time. The quality of planning in all subjects is good. There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection when very few subjects had detailed schemes of work and this was seen to affect pupils' learning adversely.
34. Provision for special educational needs is good. Pupils receive well-targeted support especially to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy. Individual education plans provide realistic targets in

small steps and contribute to good progress. Occasionally, teachers do not provide work that is tailored to their needs. When this occurs and there is no additional support in the class at the time, pupils find work too difficult and their progress is slow.

35. Although individual teachers plan for lessons dealing with topics related to personal, social and health education, there is no coherent overview and the provision varies from class to class. Sex education is offered to pupils in Year 6. The school nurse contributes effectively to this. Some aspects of science cover related topics but there is no planned provision for pupils in earlier years and there is no provision for education in drug abuse.
36. Provision for extra-curricular activities is poor. There are only two activities offered, football and orchestra, neither of which are open to younger pupils. There is no extra-curricular provision for study support, for example a homework club. The previous inspection report commented that the provision of extra-curricular activities "enhanced" the curriculum, but there has since been a decline in this aspect of the provision made by the school. A significant number of parents feel that provision for extra-curricular activities is too narrow and that more should be offered to pupils.
37. The school provision for equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory. The lack of a clear policy means that there is no coherent approach to its positive promotion and there are examples of pupils who do not enjoy equality of access to the curriculum. The considerable number of pupils who play recorders or sing in the choir regularly miss their lessons on Wednesday afternoons, since these two activities take place during the school day. Some pupils, for example, regularly miss part of their science lesson. The arrival and departure of these pupils cause considerable disruption to lessons and those returning from recorders or choir find it difficult to resume their lesson. Insufficient attention has been given to evidence in the latest English test results indicating that boys achieve less well than girls. The school does not identify gifted and talented pupils other than in music where they benefit from instrumental teaching and opportunities to participate in the choir and orchestra. Pupils in Year 5 do not all benefit from the arrangements for booster classes. Year 5 pupils in the Year 5/6 class are taught English and mathematics in a group of 17 on two days per week. This allows the teacher to provide a high level of individual support. Other pupils in Year 5 are taught in a class of 32 and do not derive the same benefit from the arrangements. There is no system for recording the amount of time each pupil spends on a computer to ensure equal access. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into classroom work and as far as possible receive support within the context of the current lesson. Occasional additional support takes place on a withdrawal basis.
38. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory. There are substantial links with the church and members of the church take an interest in the pupils by attending school services. A representative of a local sporting enterprise comes into school to give assistance with the coaching of football and pupils are involved in making harvest gifts for senior citizens. There is a good range of visits to local places of interest and these are used well to support and enrich the curriculum. The school is shortly to be linked to the Internet.
39. The relationships that the school has with partner institutions are satisfactory. There is a very effective system of visits by a representative from the school to the homes of all children who are about to start school. The special needs co-ordinator is effectively involved in liaison with other schools in the area to ensure that information about pupils' special educational needs are passed on when they move from one school to another. Pupils move on to a range of different secondary schools at 11. The arrangements made are such that pupils make a smooth transition.
40. The provision made for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and remains a strength of the school as it was in the previous inspection report.
41. The provision made for pupils' spiritual development is good. Effective opportunities are made, not only in assemblies but also in a number of other contexts. A large number of pupils are in the choir and orchestra and these pupils benefit considerably from having the opportunity of joining together to make beautiful music that gives pleasure to others as well as to themselves. Older pupils are encouraged to reflect with insight and sensitivity on the lives of famous artists. They consider how artists' lives affected the "message" of their work. For example, pupils studying Lowry's work draw parallels between his rather solitary and humdrum existence and the subject matter and style of his paintings. Younger pupils were very moved by the beauty of the photographs of the Italian Alps when studying far away places, and were amazed by the photographs of their class teddy bear taken in this location.

42. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school behaviour policy specifies the sanctions to be expected by pupils who do not adhere to it. Although rewards for good and improved behaviour are not specified, in practice there is a system of house points. These reward endeavour and progress in a number of areas, including behaviour. Pupils are frequently reminded of the high expectations that teachers have of their hard work, behaviour and consideration for others. The difference between what is acceptable and unacceptable is made very clear. All adults working in the school provide admirable role models of tolerance, consideration for others, fairness and good humour.
43. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils of all ages have the opportunity to take on a range of responsibilities that contribute to the smooth running and well-being of their community. For example, younger pupils are expected to return marked registers to the office, while older pupils act as leaders of the "family tables" in the dining hall, when they are responsible for serving the food carefully and fairly to the mixed-age members of their table. Other pupils supervise and assist younger pupils with great warmth and kindness, in the playground and while queuing for dinner. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to go on a five-day residential trip when they live at close quarters with a large group of people from a variety of backgrounds, taking responsibility for a range of aspects of their everyday routine, for example laying tables and tidying communal areas. Many subjects of the curriculum contribute to pupils' sense of social awareness. For example, in English pupils consider such issues as pollution and the effect of traffic on the communities through which it passes while in history pupils study the implications of the use of young children as chimney sweeps in Victorian England.
44. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. The school takes a very positive role in broadening pupils' appreciation of their own culture and the culture found in places very far and different from their own town. There is a good programme of visits to places of interest in the immediate locality and further afield. For example, visits are made to the Imperial War Museum, the smaller local museum that is almost next to the school and to a centre where historical re-enactments are held. In assembly, a feature is made of the music to which the pupils enter and its title, composer and origins are explained to pupils while they are listening to it. During the inspection week, the link between the selected music and Monet's paintings was explained and explored. Pupils are also given opportunities to appreciate and develop an understanding of cultures other than their own. After a visit to an "African" field centre many pupils produced fabric-printing design using traditional African motifs and produced paintings on African themes. A group of pupils celebrated Chinese New Year in traditional style and produced an album of photographs to commemorate this.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. The procedures for ensuring the pupils' welfare and safety are satisfactory. The school works with the appropriate agencies to safeguard pupils from harm. It has good contacts with the social services. The school follows the Area Child Protection Committee procedural guidelines. These are not adapted to ensure ease of reference of all staff to the administrative process regarding disclosure, suspicion of abuse or the recognition of possible signs and symptoms. The lack of such a document was identified as a weakness at the previous inspection. The staff receives information about individual cases but there has been no in-service training to maintain and update understanding and knowledge of procedures.
46. The recently updated policy provides a satisfactory basis for ensuring pupils' health and safety. The governors' committee is pro-active and concerns of the staff are resolved on a day-to-day basis where possible and necessary. Where the school cannot act satisfactorily on its own it notifies the responsible authorities. Several areas of the curriculum successfully promote safety and healthy living, for example science, physical education and design and technology. Some teachers also allocate time to teach pupils self-awareness and succeed in raising self-esteem, for example in circle time. There is no whole school-embracing programme to connect these areas and some important topics are not covered thoroughly, such as education about the misuse of drugs. This was also noted during the previous inspection.
47. Promoting attendance is satisfactory. The teachers of the foundation classes encourage parents and carers to bring and collect their children on time. The class teachers contact parents in the first

instance if there is concern regarding attendance and senior management team members provide support. The education welfare officer takes up difficult cases if the school asks for it. The school has no specific programme to improve on the static attendance rate or to improve the rate of unauthorised absence.

48. The school promotes and monitors the behaviour of pupils well. The behaviour policy encourages a consistent approach to managing behaviour by all in the school. It includes the actions to be taken and sanctions to be applied, but not the rewards. Nonetheless the rewards are consistent and the younger pupils value the smiley faces and the older ones are proud of their contribution to house points. Some classes develop and display class rules for themselves, others rely on the class teachers to remind those who forget. The anti-bullying policy is built on the ethos of the school stating that Christian values 'can only occur within an environment that is free of bullying'. The involvement of specialist support from the local education authority is improving the school's expertise in managing the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, including at play and dinner times.
49. There have been satisfactory improvements in the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in English, mathematics and science since the previous inspection, when it was reported that the school lacked effective strategies. The new policy gives teachers thorough and clear guidance on the programme for the assessment of attainment in each year group. The school receives good support from the local education authority in evaluating pupils' progress. It is gradually introducing a range of annual tests produced by both commercial organisations and national educational bodies in order to measure attainment at regular intervals and these are being placed on a data base for each pupil, in order to set targets, make predictions and identify under-achievement. Since this development is in its very early stages it is too soon to comment fully on its effectiveness, although this information is beginning to be used to assist in the setting of individual targets in English and mathematics. The results of national curriculum tests are analysed and detailed information is now available on how pupils performed in each question of their test. In this case, too, it is too early to comment on the effect of this in raising attainment. At present there is little evidence of the use of national comparative statistics which are produced annually to measure trends in the school against national trends.
50. Assessment in other subjects remains very informal and there is no common method of recording it. Teachers and co-ordinators have no clear picture of attainment and progress. A start has been made on planning assessment, for example in design and technology. Further improvements are required especially to systems for assessing attainment in information and communication technology.
51. Baseline assessment is effective in identifying children's individual needs as they enter the school. Information gained is used to set targets and these are reviewed regularly. Additional assessments are made at the end of the Foundation Stage and gains are measured. Baseline assessment is also used to predict future achievement and this assists the efficient monitoring of progress between the Foundation Stage and the end of Key Stage 1.
52. The monitoring of academic progress is good for pupils with special educational needs. Individual education plans to meet special educational needs ensure that the work builds in small steps and contributes to good progress. The review process for pupils at higher stages on the special educational needs register, including statemented pupils, is thorough and keeps all interested parties informed about progress.
53. The school provides satisfactory educational support and advice for most of its pupils. The pupils contribute a self-assessment section to their year-end report helping them to identify their own academic strengths and weaknesses. Their teachers also set brief generic targets for them in the core subjects in Key Stage 2. The requirements of pupils with special educational needs are identified and receive good support. Booster classes sharpen literacy and numeracy skills.
54. The school monitors and supports the pupils' personal development well. Personal target setting has started for Year 5 and 6 pupils including non-academic targets. Pupils receive good work certificates and the regular achievement assemblies celebrate the successes and skills of individuals and groups of pupils. The certificates are wide ranging: for good poems written by pupils, for mathematics for pupils who know all their tables, for swimming specific distances, for reading in the national reading challenge and so on. These and their performances in front of their peers and the appreciation of their achievements by the fellow pupils make a significant contribution to their

self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

55. Fostering pupils' personal development and behaviour are strengths of the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Parents are generally supportive of the school and more than nine out ten parents who responded to the questionnaire indicated their children like the school, that behaviour is good, that teaching is good and that the school expects their children to work hard. The consensus is only slightly less regarding progress, feeling comfortable about approaching the school and how the school helps their children to become more mature and responsible. Nonetheless, of those who completed the parents' questionnaire, three out of ten had strong reservations about the amount of homework, the information they receive about how their children are getting on and the school's working relationships with the parents. Nearly half of those who responded did not think the school provided an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
57. The inspection evidence supports the positive views of the parents, although there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the rate of progress. The range of activities outside lessons is poor, being limited to playing in the orchestra and to playing football. The amount and scope of homework in English and mathematics are satisfactory and in the upper years the teachers set homework in other subjects, too, though not regularly. There are however inconsistencies in the regularity with which homework is set and little advice is provided for parents on how to help or what is expected. The school does not harness the support of parents for pupils' work at home as well as it could.
58. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. The school informs parents of key events and changes to arrangements well in advance where this is possible. The school communicates achievements and concerns to parents on individual and group level as appropriate. The school encourages parents to approach the school and the teachers with their own concerns. The open evenings and the year-end reports provide parents with formal opportunities to find out about how their children are getting on. The pupils add their own comments and observations to the reports and their parents can do the same. However, whilst the year-end reports are comprehensive for English, mathematics and science they provide only one combined brief paragraph on all other subjects including information and communication technology and religious education. The school makes every effort to work with parents who do not speak English as a first language to help them understand what is expected of their children.
59. The governors' annual report to parents is comprehensive and informative. Although the school prospectus has many good features, some requirements are not included, for example the school's policy on special educational needs; pupils' attendance rate; a summary of the school's National Curriculum tests results and teacher assessments and the comparative national results.
60. The involvement of parents in the life of the school and their contribution to their children's learning are also satisfactory. The Friends of St James's School is a small group of active parents that effectively mobilises the other parents to contribute to the Christmas and summer Fairs. It organises social events and helps out at school functions. Significant sums of funds raised in the process supplement the school's ability to purchase educational material. About a dozen parents and friends help in the classrooms regularly and many more support special performances and occasions, for example educational visits and attending the Eucharist. The parents support their children's learning by encouraging them to do well. Most of them contribute to their children's learning skills through regularly reading with their children at home and using the home reading booklet to record their observations. Some of them also use the booklet for communicating their thoughts on other matters. The school consults the parents about matters concerning them, for example how reading is taught in the Foundation Stage and how they can help in this process. Significant curriculum changes are discussed, for example the recent mathematics evening. This was well supported and appreciated by parents.
61. Although the partnership with parents is satisfactory a small but significant minority of parents is uneasy about their relationship with the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The leadership and management by the head teacher and key staff require substantial further improvement. The head teacher provides supportive, caring management, which makes a positive contribution to the good school ethos and very good relationships are evident throughout the school. However, there is an absence of a clear, secure, and shared long-term vision for the school, and the structures, systems and procedures to realise this. In its present form, the school development plan is too superficial, does not provide a comprehensive overview of priorities or why these were selected. It has important omissions and does not include criteria to assess the extent of progress towards realising agreed objectives. Few people make a significant contribution to this important document or have a thorough working knowledge of it. It does not provide clear direction for the school. This was a significant weakness at the time of the previous inspection and has still not been addressed.
63. The changes required of the school, for example, as a result of national initiatives, have not been managed to ensure continued improvement in standards over time, resulting in test scores in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 which fell between 1997 and 1999, while national standards rose. Standards of pupils' writing remain low, as they were at the previous inspection, indicating that initiatives have not been introduced to improve writing quality.
64. There are no formal systems for monitoring teaching and learning as pupils move through the school, as at the time of the previous inspection, when this was a key issue. Although some monitoring of teaching and learning in English and mathematics has recently been carried out, there are no clear criteria to help evaluate the impact of observations or planned programme of monitoring in order to effect sustained improvement over time. However, at the Foundation Stage, regular monitoring is carried out. The progress of individual pupils is beginning to be followed more closely as they move through the school to help ensure that they are making the best possible gains in learning over time. Targets are now set for individual pupils in Years 5 and 6 to help raise attainment following analysis of performance data. There is no analysis of how different groups of pupils are performing, such as, higher-attaining pupils or boys.
65. The aims of the school place significant emphasis on establishing a caring atmosphere where the contributions of all pupils are valued, and this is reflected in practice. The aims successfully underpin the life and work of the school. However, they provide insufficient focus on developing academic achievement. They are insufficiently precise to enable their impact on all aspects of pupils' development to be assessed, and require review.
66. The recently extended senior management team is beginning to have a positive impact on teamwork, and meets regularly. However, it is not yet functioning effectively as a tier of management. Minutes of meetings are not kept to help inform school development, and the role of the senior management team is not clearly defined or documented, which impairs its effectiveness. Important features, such as implementing, monitoring and evaluating agreed priorities or setting a clear future agenda for the school are not yet embedded in its work.
67. Governors are beginning to play a greater part in the life of the school. The governing body is developing a team approach with staff to achieve agreed priorities. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors are involved in learning about the curriculum through their individual links with specific subjects. Many have attended training to increase their expertise. Committees function regularly and effectively, have clear terms of reference, and provide evidence of increasing involvement. The Chair of Governors meets frequently with the head teacher to discuss a range of issues, and provides good support. However, the governing body is not sufficiently involved in the evaluation of school improvements, such as curriculum initiatives. It is insufficiently pro-active in taking a lead to establish priorities, and remains heavily led by the head teacher. As such, it is not yet as involved as it should be in shaping the future direction of the school.
68. Subject co-ordinators have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Within the constraints of their roles, they are effective, and most subjects are well led. However, their effectiveness is limited because most do not have opportunities to monitor teaching and learning against agreed criteria through observation of classroom practice. This prevents them from securing and maintaining the highest possible standards in the subjects for which they are responsible or developing their competence and expertise as curriculum managers. Subject responsibilities are unevenly distributed, with some staff given too great a workload to be fully effective, while other staff have no subject responsibility. Staff expertise is used to benefit pupils, especially in music. Teachers regularly share their expertise when planning the curriculum. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a very good grasp of this area of the school's work and has developed and

implemented a comprehensive policy that meets all statutory requirements and provides a very effective framework for supporting pupils.

69. The school makes satisfactory use of its monetary resources. It has a formal system of allocating its budget and the finance and premises committee consults the teachers once a year about their spending requirements. It sets priorities but it is not clear how it decides on these. There is a five year buildings and maintenance programme but only a brief educational development plan for a four term period expiring in spring 2001. This has no specific criteria to evaluate the spending decisions. The school has not made significant use of the best value principles in terms of evaluating educational activities, for example assessing the benefits gained from the work of the learning support assistants. There is a large amount carried forward in the budget. The governors have appropriate plans to use this money to provide a computer room for the pupils.
70. Once the allocation is agreed the school's administrator closely and unobtrusively monitors the spending against the cost centres. A local authority audit two years ago concluded that the financial controls were good. It made recommendations for further improvements most of which, but not all, have been implemented. The part time external financial officer provides good support to the administrator and advises the school well how to pool its spending power with other schools for best value purchases whether it is for specific items or training courses. The control system ensures that the school spends specific grants correctly, for example on special educational needs and additional tuition for pupils for whom English is an additional language. The senior management team and the finance and buildings committee receive good quality detailed monthly summary of the status of the budget.
71. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. There is an appropriate match between the numbers, qualifications and experience of the teaching staff and the needs of the curriculum for all pupils. Education support staff are generally used effectively. They make a positive contribution to school life and are valued members of the school community. Their skills, abilities and interests are mostly harnessed well to support pupils' learning. Administrative and clerical staff ensure that the office is run efficiently and that daily routines and procedures are clearly established. Lunch-time supervisory and catering staff promote generally good attitudes and behaviour from pupils. The site manager and cleaners provide a bright and cared for environment throughout the school.
72. Arrangements for the professional development of all staff are sound. They arise as a response to identified need or annual professional development interviews. They do not take into account all the priorities identified in the school development plan. There are satisfactory procedures for the induction of new staff, with mentoring arrangements proving successful in familiarising new staff with school routines, and supporting their teaching.
73. The accommodation meets the needs of pupils and enables the curriculum to be taught effectively. The building is easily accessible by disabled visitors, staff and pupils. The hall acts as a thoroughfare to most Key Stage 2 classrooms, but the school's organisation ensures that there is no disruption to its allocated use. Displays help to improve the school's internal appearance. This is cared for, reflecting the respect shown by its users. However, the present classification of reference books in the library does not encourage good reading habits amongst the pupils. External grounds are spacious and pleasantly located, with hard play areas and a large, but featureless field. There is no outdoor play area for children under five, which inhibits their physical development.
74. Resources throughout the school are satisfactory for the curriculum provided and the age range of pupils, including those who have special educational needs. Most resources are accessible, tidily stored and well managed. Resources beyond the school, in the locality and further afield, are used well to support the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. In order to bring about a more consistent quality to the education provided, to ensure that all pupils achieve their best and to raise standards further the governing body, headteacher and staff should:-
- 1) improve the leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, the senior team, and the governing body by:-
(see paragraphs 62,65,66,67,68)
 - setting a clearer agenda for school improvement by identifying priorities through the monitoring process;
 - involving all staff and governors in the development planning process;
 - preparing outline plans for future years;
 - ensuring that action is taken to address priorities that have been identified;
 - evaluating the success of the priorities identified.
 - 2) improve the quality of teaching and subject standards further by:-
(see paragraphs 64,68,97,103,110,115,121,125,128,132,142)
 - introducing a formal system for the regular monitoring of teaching and learning throughout the school;
 - following up monitoring with agreed targets for improvement and additional support and training where necessary;
 - providing further training for subject leaders and opportunities to monitor teaching and learning and evaluate standards in their subjects;
 - identifying whole school strengths and areas for improvement and providing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other;
 - building portfolios of work that exemplify standards at each level of the National Curriculum in each subject.
 - 3) raise standards in writing and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school but especially at Key Stage 2 by:-
(see paragraphs 3,5,90,93,126,127)
 - providing more opportunities and sufficient time for pupils to write at length;
 - ensuring that pupils apply their grammatical and spelling skills more consistently in different types of writing;
 - using computers more effectively to draft and edit writing;
 - raising pupils' awareness of standards by displaying good models of writing that exemplify the range and quality specified at each level of the National Curriculum;
 - ensuring that teachers receive the training they need to teach ICT effectively;
 - in addition to planning for ICT as a discrete subject, include planning for ICT in lesson plans for each subject where appropriate
 - using assessment more effectively to identify the next steps in learning;
 - 4) improve the achievements of higher-attaining pupils especially in mathematics and writing by:-
(see paragraphs 12,90,93,95,99,100,102,103)
 - identifying higher-attaining and talented and gifted pupils more formally ;
 - raising teachers' awareness of what can be achieved by setting targets for pupils;
 - ensuring that the work provided involves adequate levels of challenge and that pupils do not consolidate unnecessarily work that is already secure.

The following minor issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:-

improving the organisation of the library; (paragraphs 97)

improving equal opportunities; (37)

improving the consistency of homework; (28,57,103,131)

improving the provision for extra curricular activities. (36)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	23

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	11%	51%	38%	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	YF – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	336
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	53

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YF – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	68

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	22

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	27	19

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	20	21
	Girls	17	18	18
	Total	37	38	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (80)	83 (88)	85 (92)
	National	82 (81)	83 (82)	87 (86)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	23	24
	Girls	18	18	18
	Total	39	41	42
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (86)	89 (92)	91 (98)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (85)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	21	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	11	15
	Girls	13	13	14
	Total	25	24	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (70)	57 (59)	69 (70)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	8	11
	Girls	15	14	16
	Total	26	22	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (78)	52 (65)	66 (71)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	6
Indian	6
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	7
White	313
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	1	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: YF – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.8
Average class size	30.5

Education support staff: YF – Y6

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	182

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
	£
Total income	579235
Total expenditure	558455
Expenditure per pupil	1693
Balance brought forward from previous year	51983
Balance carried forward to next year	72763

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	336
Number of questionnaires returned	76

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	3	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	55	4	1	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	57	7	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	50	24	4	4
The teaching is good.	30	63	1	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	45	28	4	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	45	12	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	38	57	3	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	17	50	22	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	22	49	16	7	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	37	50	1	0	12
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	7	28	18	29	18

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

76. The provision for children under five is good and they all make good progress during the Foundation Stage. Although many of the children start school with below the standards expected, by the time they start in Key Stage1 they have caught up. A few higher-attaining children exceed the expected standards.
77. The co-ordinator has already developed an annual programme based upon the Early Learning Goals introduced for the new Foundation Stage. There are detailed lesson plans, good arrangements for the regular assessment, recording and monitoring of children's work and this has a good effect upon progress. The planning of work is carefully structured to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between the six areas of learning. Throughout the Foundation Stage teachers and support staff work well together as a team to provide good quality early years education for all children including those who have only a tentative grasp of English. As a result children achieve well. The personal and social skills of a few children are more advanced than would normally be expected for children in this age group.
78. Children start school in the autumn and spring terms. There are sixteen children in one class and eighteen children in another class that includes both Foundation Stage and Year 1 children. A further twenty-five children will be admitted in the spring term with some adjustments to both classes. On entry to the school children's attainment is below average, many have a restricted vocabulary and a few have very limited communication skills. They soon develop positive attitudes, self-motivation and a good degree of independence for their age. This is because of good teaching and the specific importance attached to nurturing personal and social skills. When they start school, children's numeracy skills are approaching those of children in this age group. In all areas of learning most children will have made good progress in terms of their attainment on entry. The majority are on course to achieve the Early Learning Goals. This is a direct result of skilful teaching and the effective approach of the Foundation team in promoting positive attitudes to learning and the promotion of language skills.
79. The organisation of the teaching spaces in the Foundation classes is designed to maximise the learning opportunities for class group and individual work. There are exciting displays of children's work and easy access to a wide range of resources. However, there is no outside area with climbing frames and opportunities to use large constructive toys for building big structures. The area has a computer but the use of information and communication technology as a learning resource is at an early stage of development.
80. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is good overall and often very good. Lessons are invariably well planned with a strong emphasis upon literacy and numeracy in all the work. Very good use is made of both the learning support assistants. Class, group and individual sessions are used to target the needs of the pupils. For example, in one lesson children in one group were matching rhyming pictures while in another group higher-attaining children were using magnetic letters to make words. In this way the progress of both the higher and lower attaining children is achieved.

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

81. Personal, social and emotional development is a priority in the Foundation Stage and a firm beginning is made in the early part of the year when emphasis is placed upon giving children the skills, confidence and initiative to become effective learners. Teachers and support assistants have high expectations and well-established routines which promote interaction, turn taking and careful listening. This helps children to settle into school quickly. The induction programme begins with a pre-school visit. Then the children come to school for an afternoon. Photographs of mother and child are taken in the home. These are later used effectively as a contribution to literacy and become part of a topic 'All about Me'. Because of the good provision the majority of the children are in line to achieve their Early Learning Goals for personal, social and emotional development by the time they enter Key Stage 1.

Communication, Language and Literacy

82. Progress is good. From the beginning, children start looking at books and think about the illustrations on the front and back covers and are introduced to words like "author" and "illustrator." Children are already reading some of the words with the teacher. They know that we read from left to right and that print carries meaning. In phonic work they participate in games picking out initial sounds 'p' for 'pig', 'sh' for 'sheep' and 'c' for 'cow'. These activities encourage children to look at words closely. They lead on to painting a pig and individual practice of writing 'p'. A group of higher-attaining pupils went on to underwrite 'Well, Well, said the pig'. This helped them to pick out this repeated phrase. Teachers encourage children to find words that rhyme, for example when they listen to a story about Mr Big they find words that rhyme with big. The children responded with interest in the story and the high attainers were able to pick out words like 'made', 'jelly' and begin to form simple sentences. The children also keep News/Writing Books and record some of their activities at home in simple sentences like 'I rode my bike'. They are developing good pencil control. The children's speaking and listening skills are well promoted as is careful listening to what others have to say. They appreciate other children's efforts and applaud enthusiastically. Most children are on course to master many of the steps towards their reading, writing and speaking goals.

Mathematical development

83. In mathematics children make good progress and are in line to achieve many of the Early Learning Goals before they leave the Foundation Stage. This is a consequence of good teaching and the provision of a range of well-chosen, enjoyable and relevant activities that develop children's skills. Children are beginning to understand addition and subtraction and practise counting up to 20 and counting back from different numbers. Good use is made of the white board and illustrations of counting five speckled frogs involving individual children taking away one or more. A variation on this theme is putting 10 green leaves on the tree waving in the breeze. "Along came the caterpillar and then there are nine". They count and match circles, triangles and squares. More challenging work is provided for higher-attaining pupils. They build number lines up to 20 and learn to make a good guess of sets up to 20. They then check how many there were to see how close they were to the right answer.

Knowledge & Understanding of the World

84. Children make good progress overall. Teachers provide a range of interesting activities that are relevant to the children's interests and use every opportunity to help children to understand the world about them. There is a strong emphasis on learning at first hand. As part of an autumn topic they visit a local park and investigate pine cones, the bark of trees, tall and short trees. They plant bulbs and study the growth of seeds in a soil compost. They make their own bread and also study different kinds of bread from other countries, for example pitta bread. A child working with dough noticed it got bigger and smelt wonderful when it was cooked. Children make biscuits, decorate them and construct a simple packet to hold them. On a windy day they observe leaves falling from trees and wind making the grass wave. One child said, 'I ran in the wind with my windmill and it turned'. They experiment with sand and water and build with construction equipment. At the time of the inspection all the children are working well towards achieving the goals set for this area of learning.

Physical Development

85. Physical skills develop well. Children improve manual dexterity through the use of small tools such as scissors, pencils, paintbrushes and cooking equipment. They fold paper to make a bag and use the stapler to hold down the edges. They learn to manipulate different materials. Children use the school hall and playground for activity sessions. They practise throwing, rolling and retrieving balls and take part in a wide range of activities to improve balance and control of their movements. The children in the Foundation Stage lack suitable outdoor play equipment. This deficiency has been recognised by the school and now that a secure boundary fence is in place there are plans to remedy the situation. Careful attention is paid to the health and safety of the children.

Creative Development

86. Children made good progress with exploring sound and moving to a steady beat in music. They experience a range of activities which not only explore sound but provide opportunities for playing short and long sounds, learning key words like "long", "short", "refrain" and "verse". They listen to the "Bling Blang" song, join in the singing and at the same time make hammer movements to the music. They were learning to listen to the song, to become aware of sound patterns and to start to design and make songs with their percussion instruments. They also develop awareness of instruments with short sounds, those with long sounds and to experiment with them before all joining in the chorus. In art, they develop their observational drawing skills, increase their awareness of colour and talk about artists' work. Looking at a portrait of Van Gogh they described his hair, his squashed face, the shape of his lips and mouth. Later they made their own portraits in pastel. Already at the start of the school year they have made very good progress towards achieving the Early Learning Goals.

ENGLISH

87. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are broadly in line with national levels at the end of both key stages. Standards in reading are higher than in writing. Results in the most recent national tests in 2000, for pupils aged seven and eleven have improved. These improvements follow a period of decline in national test results at the end of both key stages between 1997 and 1999, except in reading at Key Stage 1, where average standards were maintained.
88. By the age of seven, pupils talk confidently, using complete sentences to express their ideas clearly. They are keen to participate in discussions and listen carefully to what others have to say. A group discussing the story they had just seen read on the television, for example, were not only eager to add their observations about the characters in the story but also took other ideas into account. Pupils make satisfactory use of discussion to extend their own knowledge and understanding. Standards are typical of those found in most schools.
89. Standards in reading are average. Pupils read simple words accurately and understand the skills necessary to work out words they find difficult. Higher-attaining pupils use punctuation, especially speech marks, to help with expression. Most pupils express enthusiasm for reading and read frequently at home. Many pupils comment perceptively on the characters in the stories they read, showing appreciation of more than the basic narrative. When reading in unison in lessons, nearly all pupils join in with confidence and gusto, using punctuation and rhyme to read with good expression. This is a strength.
90. Standards in writing are broadly in line with national standards although personal and imaginative writing is a relative weakness. By the end of the key stage, pupils write in complete sentences and write a short sequence of sentences on a given theme or idea. There are insufficient opportunities for them to develop their writing skills in extended pieces of personal and imaginative writing. Higher-attaining pupils, particularly, could achieve more. Nearly all pupils show increasing awareness of the use of capital letters and full stops to demarcate their sentences, although only higher-attaining pupils use these consistently and accurately. Handwriting is generally regular and well formed.
91. By the age of eleven, standards in speaking and listening are typical of those found in most schools. The confidence and enthusiasm with which nearly all pupils participate in discussions is a particular strength. Pupils speak clearly and at an appropriate volume in order to express their ideas and viewpoints as effectively as possible. Most pupils benefit from the opportunity to hear the ideas of others and make good progress in using this to inform their own thinking.
92. Standards in reading are in line with the national average. Most pupils read accurately, including words with which they are unfamiliar, although lower-attaining pupils do not read with sufficient expression. Pupils read a wide range of books in school and are familiar with an appropriate range of genres, for example plays and biographies, explaining their tastes and preferences. Most pupils express great enjoyment of reading and some are avid readers. Older pupils express dissatisfaction with the organisation of the school library. They are discouraged from using reference books as a source of information for the topics they study and to follow their own interests because of the difficulties in finding relevant books.

93. Standards in writing are broadly average although personal and creative writing is a relative weakness. All pupils can convey meaning clearly and most use sufficient detail to clarify their meaning. Most pupils use an appropriate range of punctuation accurately, although lower-attaining pupils do not use it consistently. All pupils show in both discussion and in written exercises that they understand grammatical concepts such as the use of connectives and suffixes, but their use of these in their own writing is inconsistent, because they have insufficient opportunities to practice using them independently. Pupils produce only a very limited amount of independent and extended writing and, because of lack of experience, their writing lacks creativity and individuality. Most pupils, including higher-attaining pupils could achieve more. Although most pupils spell basic words correctly, they do not use dictionaries as a matter of course and fail to check spellings of which they are uncertain.
94. Literacy and oracy skills are used effectively to promote learning in a range of other subjects. Pupils develop their note-making techniques when preparing pen portraits of Henry VIII and write successfully from the point of view of Victorian chimney sweep boys. In science, pupils make significant use of speaking and listening to discuss and reinforce their knowledge and understanding.
95. The teaching at Key Stage 1 is consistently good. At Key Stage 2 it is satisfactory overall but varies from class to class. At both key stages, teachers make effective choices of whole-class texts and use these well to develop pupils' skills and understanding. They inspire pupils' interest and commitment. As a result, pupils of all ages are enthusiastic about the texts they read in class. They are eager to participate in discussions about them, listening carefully to what is said by both their teachers and their peers. For example, pupils reading an up-dated version of "Little Red Riding Hood" showed a very positive response to returning to an "old favourite." They used their familiarity with the story to make good progress in understanding the various narrative stages and the contribution made by all the well-known characters. Teachers make good use of questioning to encourage pupils to think hard and to check their knowledge and understanding. Teachers offer good additional support to pupils who require it and set work to meet the needs of all pupils across the attainment range. This has a positive impact on their learning. Teachers' high and explicit expectations of pupils' behaviour promote a positive working environment. As a result, pupils usually settle to work quickly and organise their work in groups sensibly. When engaged in individual tasks pupils are capable of working in almost complete silence. They nearly always work hard and maintain good levels of concentration. Although pupils are capable of working hard and show good levels of concentration, in a few otherwise satisfactory lessons in Key Stage 2 the pace of work was too leisurely. Teachers did not make it clear to pupils what they expected them to achieve and pupils responded with little sense of urgency. As a result many tasks remained incomplete and the amount of written work was small. At the end of most lessons teachers make good use of the plenary sessions to reinforce pupils understanding and to focus their attention on future learning. Insufficient emphasis is placed on offering pupils the opportunity to undertake independent or extended writing, including creative writing, and they do not make sufficient progress in this. Teachers mark work regularly and supportively, but marking does not usually include any indication of what a pupil should do to improve and in this way a significant means of promoting progress, especially at Key Stage 2, is not fully utilised.
96. The introduction of the national literacy strategy and the literacy hour has been satisfactory. Teachers have a clear understanding of the national requirements and plan together to ensure that these are met in mixed-age classes.
97. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Effective measures have been put in place to raise attainment. Good use was made last year of "booster classes" and this contributed to the rise in standards at the end of Key Stage 2. These classes are to be extended this year. Although the school recognises the need to provide more opportunities for extended writing, insufficient action has been taken since the last inspection. Checking the progress of individual pupils is in the early stages of development. Positive results are already being seen, for example in the identification of the level of support needed by pupils in their "booster groups." The co-ordinator has had opportunities during the current term for monitoring the work of all teachers in the classroom. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There are plans to follow up monitoring with further visits. Additional support for the development of writing is to be provided by the local education authority literacy adviser. Weaknesses remain in the monitoring process; for example, underachievement by boys in the latest tests has not been identified. Time is allocated, on a daily basis, for pupils in Key Stage 2 to read independently and this encourages regular reading habits. There is an appropriate selection of both fiction and non-fiction books available for

pupils to select and read in their classrooms in both key stages. The way these books are arranged and presented in some classes does not engage pupils' interest. The library stock is generally adequate, although some books are rather worn or out of date. The lack of efficient organisation of reference books according to a classification system means that the library is difficult to use.

MATHEMATICS

98. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in mathematics are broadly in line with national levels at the end of both key stages. When compared to the previous year, results in the most recent national tests for pupils aged seven and eleven have improved. Improvements follow a period of decline in national test results at the end of both key stages between 1997 and 1999. Contributing factors to recent improvements in standards include: -
- the satisfactory introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy;
 - booster classes and grouping arrangements in Years 5 and 6;
 - good teaching in Key Stage 1. This is helping all pupils to make at least satisfactory gains in learning as they move through the key stage;
 - the use of information gained from the analysis of performance data;
 - the setting of targets for older pupils, providing clear direction.
99. Pupils' test results are now at least in line with the average for similar schools. Although, with standards rising, the picture is encouraging for most pupils, higher-attaining pupils in all classes often do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is because work is not always matched to their needs, and pupils sometimes are required to complete work, which they already understand before they are given appropriately challenging tasks. This is especially true in the mixed-age classes where there is a particularly wide spread of ability.
100. In both key stages, most pupils make sound gains in learning across all components of the subject. However, progress is slower in the development of problem solving techniques, in pupils' ability to handle numbers confidently, and in their willingness to communicate their developing mental processes. This is because this important area is given insufficient emphasis, although the amount of time allocated within the mathematics curriculum is increasing. Insufficient attention is given to the development of information and communication technology skills through mathematics.
101. Pupils in Year 1 count, sequence, add, subtract, read and write numbers, begin to count in steps of ten, and start to identify different shapes and number patterns. By the end of Year 2, pupils recognise odd and even numbers, start to understand place value of digits, and begin to use standard units of length, such as metres. In data handling, they produce accurate block graphs of their height and birthday months. They use a computer to complete surveys of hair and eye colour. Year 3 pupils begin to approximate using numbers to 1000 and start to classify 2-D shapes using their properties. Pupils in Year 4 begin to use different approaches to solving number problems, calculate the perimeters of regular 2-D shapes, and measure precisely the lengths of different bones in their body. Year 5 pupils start to use decimals, begin to identify and describe number patterns requiring use of multiples, and increase their language of shapes. By the age of 11, most pupils understand place value to 1000 and beyond. They begin to employ equivalent fractions, complete long multiplication problems, and are starting to use fractions and percentages to show recognition of proportion. They communicate collected data about favourite crisp flavours in a tally chart and graph and interpret their findings well.
102. Teaching is good in Key Stage 1, and is satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Teachers are enthusiastic and this contributes to both progress and motivation for many pupils. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive at both key stages and in the best lessons they show real enthusiasm. In Key Stage 2, however, the quality of teaching varies considerably with lessons ranging from satisfactory to very good. Where teaching is good, teachers' high expectations result in challenging work. This ensures that pupils put a lot of effort into their work. Purposeful questioning develops clear understanding of new knowledge. A good choice and use of resources and range of well-chosen activities ensures that learning is productive. Helpful marking identifies areas for improvement. Good use of support staff improves the achievement of groups of pupils. Assessment is beginning to be used more consistently to inform future planning to enable teachers to build effectively on previous learning. Plenary sessions are generally used well to consolidate learning. Unsatisfactory features of otherwise satisfactory teaching include too much teacher direction, which hinders the development of mathematical thinking; ineffective control and imprecise instructions that confuse pupils and waste time. The quality of the mental starter is too variable. Sometimes, the pace is insufficiently

brisk to enable pupils to increase their speed of mental recall to help improve their learning or it is too short to ensure thorough understanding. Teachers do not use mathematics sufficiently in real-life situations to help to sharpen pupils' skills or to bring the subject alive for them.

103. The subject is well led, and there are clear plans for its continued development. Mathematics is securely represented in the school's curriculum. Mathematics records are well maintained to enable teachers to know what pupils can do and what they understand. Resources have been recently audited and extended, although there are still some identified deficiencies, such as mathematical dictionaries. Numeracy is developed soundly, for example in history, but there are many missed opportunities to develop it further, especially in science, information and communication technology and design and technology. The subject co-ordinator has no opportunity to monitor classroom practice to help improve standards of teaching and learning. There is a lack of consistency in the allocation of homework. However, overall, there has been good improvement in many areas since the previous inspection, with increased staff confidence and expertise, more direct teaching of skills and better planning of work that builds on earlier learning.

SCIENCE

104. The findings of the inspection indicate that standards are broadly average. This confirms the results of the most recent national tests and assessments for pupils aged seven and eleven. Standards have fluctuated widely since the previous inspection but, following a marked fall in 1998, results improved significantly in 2000. The recent improvement can be attributed to several factors:-
- the analysis of the 1999 national test results and their use in planning work for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2;
 - the establishment of a scheme of work that provides clear guidance on planning for successive year group;
 - individual assessments of skills in investigative science.
105. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils attain standards that are expected of eleven-year-olds and build upon their achievements in the earlier key stage. They extend their knowledge of materials, living processes and forces. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were studying friction. They responded well to probing questions and showed good understanding of the effect of friction on skateboards and roller skates. They were able to relate the connection between heat and friction with references to different surfaces and angles. The same pupils successfully completed a true or false questionnaire about the classification of metals, plastics, textiles and their previous experiments of testing materials in terms of hardness and strength. In a lesson about the function of the human heart, the pupils in Year 5 were measuring and recording pulse rates, before and after exercise. They were keen to learn and co-operated well in the practical task, although progress was slow. They were surprised to be using multiplication as part of their science lesson, revealing their inexperience in applying mathematics in real-life situations. A significant number of pupils found great difficulty in multiplying by four the number of heart beats in 15 seconds and even more failed to explain why they needed to do this. Younger pupils in the key stage were learning about skulls and identifying the different types of teeth, incisors for cutting, canines for tearing and pre-molars for grinding. These activities provided good opportunities for speaking and listening skills. Pupils worked together collaboratively and their positive attitudes and interest promoted sound learning.
106. When pupils enter Key Stage 1 their knowledge and understanding is average. The teaching in Key Stage 1 is good. Teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn, lessons proceed at good pace and the pupils contribute well. Good question and answer techniques are used to assess the pupils' knowledge and to probe their understanding and this has a positive effect on the quality of learning. By the end of the key stage pupils identify and classify the characteristics of different foods. Studies of food with different tastes lead towards an understanding of healthy eating. This topic provides a good introduction to investigative work as teachers provide opportunities for tasting, comparing and recording evidence. Pupils recognise substances with similar properties. They know about the dangers of electric sockets, scissors and broken glass. They make observations and record findings about their bodies when studying life and living processes. They learn about the impact of exercise upon the heart and recognise that after exercise the heart pumps faster. Overall, learning is good and pupils make good progress in all aspects of the subject, including scientific enquiry.
107. At Key Stage 2, the teaching is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, the work is well planned and appropriate for the range of abilities in the class. Teachers have rigorous expectations, a good

grasp of the content and move the learning on briskly. In lessons that are otherwise satisfactory, the pace is too leisurely and teachers are uncertain about what pupils know, understand and can do. This slows the progress of some groups of pupils as the work is either too hard for some or too easy for others.

108. Where classroom support assistants are assigned to science lessons and where the work is modified to suit their needs, the achievements of pupils with special educational needs are good. There are occasions, however, where this does not happen and then their achievements could be better.
109. In general the teachers use a good range of teaching methods and strategies including whole class teaching and group work. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection on the teaching of scientific enquiry. A start has been made on improving the match of work to the needs of higher and lower-attainers. Teachers have begun to use information from the recently introduced individual science records. It is too early for this to have had a significant impact.
110. The subject is well led within the limits of the co-ordinator's responsibilities. There are no opportunities to raise the quality of teaching further through the monitoring process.

ART AND DESIGN

111. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above national expectations and has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils work in a wide range of media and demanding techniques, for example sketching in pencil and printing using cross sections of vegetables. When they make visual interpretations of their favourite books and stories they take great care and show good control of the medium. For example, pupils represented "The Snow Whale" using moulded plastic material subtly blended with colour. Pupils representing the theme of harvest use cut onions and cross sections of mushrooms with great neatness and good dexterity to make prints on paper. Pupils who sketch in pencil hold their pencils in the correct grip and make light and flexible strokes in order to define shape and texture. Most pupils make good use of the entire page, placing their sketches centrally and drawing large, bold shapes. Nearly all pupils clearly understand the principle of drawing from a given angle and only draw what they can actually see. They can explain why they do this and can describe what would happen to their drawing if they were to move to a different position.
112. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectations, with some areas of particular strength. This is similar to the judgement on attainment reported after the previous inspection. Pupils use colour in a range of media appropriately, especially in the representation of skin tones. They have a good sense of colour and the way this represents mood. They use oil pastels well, applying a thick layer of colour and blending it carefully to simulate the effect of paint. When they print fabric with African patterns and motifs, pupils make their own printing tiles by carving polystyrene, select appropriately warm and vibrant colours and apply the printing medium neatly and regularly to produce a repeated pattern. Most pupils have a satisfactory sense of shape and proportion but do not fully understand the effect of using pencils of varying degrees of softness and blackness. Since most hold their pencils in a tight grip suitable for writing, their sketches have insufficient subtle shading and indications of texture. Although there was not a wide variety of three-dimensional evidence on a display at this early stage in the school year, there were colourful African masks based on traditional designs and photographic evidence of work previously carried out using an appropriate range of materials. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to review and discuss their own work and that of others and comment with good sense and discrimination on how this could be improved. Nearly all pupils have good knowledge of the work of a range of well-known artists, for example Picasso and Lowry, and show great interest in how their lives shaped the work they produced. Older pupils are able to discuss the life and work of Lowry with great sensitivity. Although pupils understand the basic principles of proportion and are familiar with the techniques used by the artists they study, they use this knowledge to produce direct copies of some of the well-known works instead of using it to inform and support their own creative efforts.
113. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the lesson observed in Key Stage 1, it was good. In this lesson the teacher's clear explanations, demonstrations of techniques and effective support for pupils who found the work difficult, promoted good progress. Teachers make particularly effective use of teaching and discussion about the lives and works of famous artists to stimulate and maintain interest. When teachers plan activities that offer interest and appropriate variety, pupils make considerable progress, but when activities do not offer sufficient scope for pupils to

make decisions about their work and use their creativity, progress is slower. The previous inspection report commented on the lack of opportunity for pupils to express their creativity and there is little evidence of progress in this aspect. Teachers make effective use of whole-class discussion at the end of lessons. This promotes pupils' evaluation of their work. The classroom assistant provided good support for a pupil in the early stages of English in one lesson observed. This ensured that the pupil understood what was expected, improved her artistic skills and developed new vocabulary well.

114. The quality of learning is sound overall. Pupils respond to tasks that engage their interest with enthusiasm and hard work. For example, pupils drawing a series of quick sketches in order to enhance their understanding of proportion and shape showed sustained concentration and made clear progress. When work does not offer sufficient opportunity for pupils to use their creativity, for example copying the work of the artists they study, they work with less concentration and begin to chat among themselves on unrelated topics. All pupils show considerable and mature interest in the life and work of famous artists and join in discussions enthusiastically, exchanging ideas and extending their knowledge and understanding. For example, they reflect on how Tudor portrait artists might have used preliminary sketches to plan their work. Pupils respond appropriately to the support and practical demonstrations offered by teachers by working hard to improve their skills. This represents a picture very similar to the previous report, when pupils were judged to be adventurous and creative when they were given the chance. One lesson observed was considerably disrupted by pupils leaving to attend recorder lessons and choir practice. These pupils missed a significant proportion of the lesson.
115. There is a policy and a commercially produced scheme of work, which is being sensibly adapted for use in mixed age classes, and there are plans to re-write sections of the scheme in order to meet more precisely the needs of the school. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the report noted that there was no policy or scheme of work. The co-ordinator has no opportunity to monitor the work of colleagues in classrooms, and since all assessment is very informal and is not regularly recorded, there is no overview of progress across the whole school. There is a good range of resources, including special "packs" to support the study of well-known artists, and these are stored in an orderly and easily accessible way.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

116. At the time of the previous inspection, provision did not meet statutory requirements. The co-ordinator has led substantial improvements since then, in terms of planning a curriculum that provides teachers with detailed guidance on lesson planning for different ages and stages. The storage of resources has been improved and a wheeled trolley provides ready access to a range of tools. The introduction of the new scheme of work is recent and is yet to have a significant impact on standards throughout the school, although the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved. Standards are now broadly average for pupils of this age. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are still below average.
117. Timetable arrangements made observation of more than a few lessons impossible but there was evidence of work in progress in several classes. The work completed by pupils last year had not been retained although some photographic evidence is kept. It is not therefore possible to make judgements about the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
118. There is evidence of good teaching and progress in Year 2. Pupils have made model homes from reclaimed materials and added windows using transparent materials. They have made doors using more resistant materials and fixed them with a folded hinge so that they can be opened and closed. Printing techniques, learned in art and design, have been used by the pupils to decorate the exterior with brick patterns. The quality of the finish is good. This is one example of many where good links with other subjects contribute to the quality of pupils' learning. Another example is where pupils' knowledge of forces, developed in science, contributed to the standards of the land yachts that they constructed. The pupils' evaluation and testing of these contributed to progress in science investigations as well as to their understanding of materials. Pupils use a suitable range of fixing methods, for example, staples, glue and stitching and evaluate which is best for the work in hand. They have a developing knowledge of different materials and use it when planning their work. Good opportunities are made in lessons for pupils to investigate and evaluate familiar products, for example puppets, before making their own.

119. Completed work and work in progress in Key Stage 2 does not show a clear development of the skills taught in Key Stage 1. There are some exceptions, for example the construction of musical instruments in the Year 5/6 class. Here, a wider range of materials, joining techniques and tools have been used successfully. Pupils' planning and designing skills receive little attention at Key Stage 2. There is no evidence of carefully thought out designs for the products they make, measurements, lists of materials, modifications or evaluations. Some of the tasks offer insufficient challenge for pupils' ages and capabilities. For example, when designing packaging for biscuits, pupils in Year 6 were not encouraged to plan first or to consider the use of the product. Their efforts concentrated on the aesthetic appeal of the package and as a result the quality of the construction was poor. Other pupils in Year 6 were observed making biscuits; they co-operated well under the guidance of a competent classroom assistant, evaluated the recipe, made modifications to it to suit their own tastes and used tools sensibly and carefully. Good links were made with science when they discussed the changes taking place in the cooking process.
120. Opportunities are sometimes missed to develop mathematical skills, for example by measuring accurately, estimating and using a range of scales to weigh ingredients. There are good examples of pupils co-operating effectively in several classes. The residential visit in Year 6 involves pupils in constructing a shelter from a range of natural and man-made materials and evaluating the effectiveness of materials and construction methods. There are few links with information and communication technology (ICT) in evidence to date. This is now planned for but pupils' lack of skill in ICT is currently restricting progress in control technology and in using computers in the planning process.
121. There are no opportunities made for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning and no expectation that pupils' work throughout the school should be evaluated to ensure good progress and high standards.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

122. Both subjects are securely represented within the school's curriculum. However, planning arrangements meant that little geography was taught or viewed during the inspection. As a result of this, there was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards of teaching and attainment, quality of learning and the extent to which pupils respond positively in the subject. However, younger pupils in Key Stage 1 learn about the seasons through stories, such as, "The Snow Whale". By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are beginning to demonstrate an awareness of localities beyond their own. For example, following a visit by Barnaby Bear and his owner to Lake Como in Northern Italy, they learn that the surrounding area, which is dominated by the Alps, is very different from their home town. They begin to acquire a geographical vocabulary when they consider features they pass on their way to school. They begin to develop important mapping skills when they identify the location of features on a simple map, using co-ordinates. By the end of Key Stage 2, they have extended their geographical vocabulary, for example, through work on rivers, they know "meander", "waterfall", "source", "tributary" and "estuary". They learn about rivers from first-hand experience, through a study of the River Stour at Flatford. They experience the African way of life when they visit Aklowa. They have developed their mapping skills to enable them to consolidate geographical learning through a residential visit to Ringsfield Hall. The learning objectives compiled for field trips are good and help to ensure that geography is given sufficient emphasis.
123. Standards in history are broadly typical of pupils nationally by the end of Key Stage 2, and most pupils make satisfactory gains in learning as they move through the school. However, work is rarely matched to the needs of pupils of different ability and as a result higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable. All areas of the subject are appropriately represented. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about the quality of teaching, the standards pupils attain and the extent to which they make progress as they move through Key Stage 1.
124. Teaching is sound overall in Key Stage 2. Some good teaching was observed in both key stages. Good teaching in history is characterised by secure subject knowledge, varied and interesting introductions to lessons that stimulate interest and involvement, purposeful questioning that improves understanding, and good use of different sources of evidence, including artefacts, which contribute to learning. As a result, pupils acquire secure knowledge and understanding of events, people and historical change. Teachers use an appropriate range of information sources and

historical enquiry is used effectively. This helps to bring the subject alive and ensures satisfactory levels of motivation and interest. Pupils learn to employ dates and vocabulary associated with the passage of time, and place events, people and changes into their correct time periods to develop an understanding of chronology. In Years 1 and 2, pupils begin to show an emerging sense of the passage of time by sequencing events, initially within their own lifetime. Through their study of the Tudors, pupils in Years 3 and 4, acquire knowledge of different homes of the period and prepare a Tudor menu, discovering that the rich ate beef, oranges and mutton, while the poor ate fish, vegetable stew and rabbit. Pupils learn about the work of archaeologists and their importance in understanding the past, by re-creating an "archaeological dig" in the classroom, providing them with opportunities to form ideas from gained evidence. They acquire knowledge about the Mary Rose, and its value as historical evidence. They produce a pen portrait of Henry the Eighth, developing their ability to make notes in a good link with literacy. Year 6 pupils, through a study of the Victorians, compare school life and leisure activities then and now. They learn that in Victorian schools, pupils sat with straight backs, called their teacher "sir" or "ma'am", and were forced to use their right hand for writing. They empathise with the harsh conditions for many employees, by writing about the life of a flower seller, chimney sweep or farm worker, from their viewpoints. They learn about one mode of Victorian transport through first hand experience when they travel on a steam train along the Colne Valley railway.

125. Both geography and history are well led by one co-ordinator, and there are clear plans for the development of both subjects. There are now policies and schemes of work in both subjects, which are improvements since the previous inspection. Resources have been improved and extended, and are well used and tidily stored. Visits help to enrich the curriculum of both subjects. The locality is used more often to develop important skills than at the time of the previous inspection. Literacy skills are developed well through history and geography. Both subjects are communicated in different ways, such as through writing, models, art, maps and diagrams, as required by the National Curriculum. However, there is no formal assessment at present to provide evidence of what pupils know and understand other than brief comments in the annual reports. The co-ordinator has no opportunity to monitor teaching and learning to help her assess strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning and provision. The use of information and communication technology, though evident, such as when pupils in Year 6 use a CD-Rom to find out about the Victorians, is under-represented.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

126. At the time of the previous inspection the subject did not meet statutory requirements and resources were inadequate. Assessment and record keeping were in need of attention and the subject was not monitored to ensure the quality of teaching and learning or the standards pupils attained. The recently appointed co-ordinator has considerable expertise in the subject and, in addition, technical skills that are of vital importance to the school. New equipment has been installed, software purchased and arrangements have been made to link the school to the National Grid for Learning. A new scheme of work, drawing on recent national guidelines, has been introduced. This should ensure that statutory requirements are met. It is too soon to make judgements about the impact of these developments on standards. Improvement since the previous inspection has been too slow and development of the subject is a long way behind many other schools. The standards that pupils achieve by the time they are 11 are still well below average.
127. Teachers' expertise varies and overall is inadequate for the demands of the new curriculum. A training programme has been set up to upgrade teachers' skills so that they can teach the scheme of work effectively. This has not yet begun. No teaching of ICT was observed at Key Stage 1 and only one lesson was observed at Key Stage 2. There was only one other occasion when ICT was planned as part of a lesson during the week. Computers are still not used routinely to support the work in other subjects and there are many missed opportunities to do this even given the current level of expertise. Pupils in the Year 3/4 class are successfully developing their data handling skills by gathering information about favourite drinks and hobbies, entering this information onto a database and graphing results in different ways, for example, bar graphs and pie charts. The next stage, introducing pupils to line graphs, is planned for a science lesson when pupils are to plot the changes in pulse rate they noted during exercise in an earlier science lesson. Good attention is given to technical language. There is also evidence in Key Stage 1 of other work in data handling successfully developing pupils' understanding of graphs. The work provides evidence that the skills that are taught build on earlier learning and provide opportunities to present results in a variety of ways, for example pictograms and Carroll diagrams. In a lesson in Year 6, pupils made good

progress in using the different tools available to them in a graphics program. The teacher explained the possibilities clearly, how the work could be presented and developed and then allowed sufficient time for pupils to experiment with new techniques. Good use was also made of a video camera and new techniques learnt when pupils planned and filmed an advertisement. There is no evidence of other graphics work in the school, little word processing or the use of computers to draft writing in English lessons. Pupils have used CD-ROM facilities to research topics in history but no other subject specific programs are currently in use, for example, for composing in music, mapping in geography, or using sensing equipment and control technology in science and mathematics.

128. There are no opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and learning or to evaluate standards. There is no systematic assessment of pupils' attainments or checking their progress and little consistency in recording how much time is spent by each pupil on computers. Opportunities are not routinely identified in lesson plans of how ICT could support the work.

MUSIC

129. Musical performance remains a strong feature of school life and the high standards of performance noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained. This applies particularly to those pupils who take part in the choir, orchestra and recorder groups or benefit from instrumental tuition provided by the Essex Music Service. Only one class lesson was observed. It is not possible to make judgements about standards of composition or pupils' ability to appraise and evaluate different types of music as this did not form a part of the musical activities observed.
130. The music co-ordinator is given time away from her class to take recorder groups and choir rehearsals. The teaching that takes place is good. New skills are taught thoroughly. Time is allowed for pupils to put them into practise and refine them. Close attention is paid to reading musical scores. The teacher questions the pupils thoroughly to check their understanding of pitch, note length, musical signs and terms. This develops pupils' ability to "hear" the music "in their heads" and improves their sight-reading. She uses a good range of strategies, for example demonstration on the bigger tenor recorder, so that pupils can see the fingering required, improving rhythms through clapping each section, singing a tune and then pupils echoing each phrase. Pupils concentrate well, put a lot of effort into their practise and performance and make good progress as a result. Their enjoyment of music is obvious and standards are high. Pupils sing and play in several parts keeping together very well. The practice of everyone learning to perform each part is strongly influential on this. Pupils in the choir show good control of phrasing, accurate pitch and diction and the ability to produce a sweet sound reflecting the mood of the music.
131. Around 30 pupils benefit from instrumental lessons provided by the Essex Music Service. Brass, woodwind, stringed and keyboard instruments are all taught. A charge is made to pupils for this. The school provides help with fees where necessary. The quality of the teaching and learning observed was good. A diary system keeps parents well informed about specific aspects to practise, records practise undertaken and provides space for comments from tutor, parent and pupil. It is an effective system that contributes to the good progress that pupils make and one that might usefully be modified for other homework.
132. A new scheme of work is in place and this should ensure that music in the classroom provides for the full range of activities and skills described in the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator provides support and advice to non-specialist colleagues but there is no monitoring of teaching and learning and no mechanism for ensuring that the curriculum is covered adequately. Teachers will require further training to teach all the aspects successfully. There is no evidence to indicate that standards of composition have improved since the previous inspection when they reported to be a relative weakness.
133. The opportunities provided for pupils to take part in recorder groups and choir and to receive instrumental tuition are valuable and contribute strongly to high standards in music. The arrangements made, however, particularly for the choir, where 80 pupils take part, cause considerable disruption to classes as pupils leave and return. Pupils taking part in musical activities miss important teaching in other subjects, for example art and design in Years 3,4 and 6, history in Years 5 and 6 and science in Year 5. There is no evidence that a rolling programme is in place to minimise the loss of particular subject time or that pupils' progress is monitored to evaluate the impact of the arrangements.

134. An orchestra of around 20 pupils meets weekly after school. Very good opportunities are made to develop individual and group performing skills and, as a result, pupils achieve high standards of ensemble playing for their age. Brass, woodwind and stringed instruments are all represented. A good balance is achieved in providing an experience that is clearly enjoyed by the pupils and at the same time improving their skills and encouraging them to work hard.
135. Music contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual and social development. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for organising and operating equipment and to work hard together to produce performances of high standards for the enjoyment of other members of the school, parents and the wider community. Visiting instrumental groups and visits to secondary school performances also contribute well to pupils' understanding and enjoyment of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

136. Standards in physical education are broadly typical of those found in most schools. A significant minority of pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve high standards in swimming. All Key Stage 2 pupils receive six weekly blocks each year and work towards a range of awards. The best achieve success in the district swimming gala.
137. By the age of 11, pupils have experienced a wide range of activities and games. The school has an extensive range of equipment for gymnastics and games. They take full advantage of a spacious school field where teachers introduce pupils to a number of sports, including netball, hockey and football. Pupils' techniques are improved in football by specialist staff and a visiting coach who works voluntarily in the school on a weekly basis and assists with football club after school.
138. It is not possible to make overall judgements about the quality of teaching in games as no lessons were observed as a result of bad weather during the inspection. In the dance lesson observed in Year 1, the pupils made good progress in dance using a taped programme. This enabled pupils to explore basic dance skills, actions and movements and to respond to stimuli and music. They learn to crouch, stretch, hold still and make big, heavy steps. They learn to control their bodies when they make powerful striding steps contrasting with delicate hand gestures. They create basic dance patterns changing the rhythm, speed, direction and level of their movements. Boys and girls participate with enthusiasm and interest and achieve similar standards.
139. In a Year 3 gymnastics lesson the teaching was good. The pupils learnt to develop their strength and control well. They devised and practised a sequence and began to evaluate their work and the work of others. They were all engaged in the activities and concentrated upon balancing with straight arms and legs and holding a fixed position. They were learning to plan and remember some complex sequences working alone on the floor. They transferred these sequences to benches and mats and co-operated well with others in group activity. Pupils move rapidly and safely around the hall. The learning of other pupils of a similar age although satisfactory was less successful. This was because the teacher allowed too much inattention when tasks were explained. Not all pupils were clear about what to do and time was lost as the teacher went over instructions again. A minority of pupils took too long to organise group work and this slowed their progress. Other groups showed pride in their work as they demonstrated to the class the high standards they achieved in mirroring a sequence developed in pairs.
140. At both Key Stages insufficient opportunities to warm up thoroughly at the start of lessons has an adverse effect upon pupils' readiness to perform well in more static exercises of taking weight and balance.
141. Qualified instructors, employed by the school, teach swimming throughout Key Stage 2. Very good teaching was observed in Years 5 and 6. There is a strong emphasis on technique. Instructors correct style mistakes, use praise to acknowledge achievement and provide good feedback on individual and group performances. This has a positive impact upon the rate of progress and enthusiasm of the pupils.
142. The subject is well organised by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. There is no provision, however, for the co-ordinator to monitor the teaching and learning across the key stages. This means that it is difficult to monitor consistency, progress and standards across the school.
143. Since the previous inspection the subject policy and scheme of work have been amended to accommodate the new national guidelines. There is no evidence of teachers' lack of confidence and

expertise reported at that time. Physical education plays a strong role in the development of social skills.