

# INSPECTION REPORT

**BUCKINGHAM JUNIOR SCHOOL**

BUCKINGHAM

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110329

Headteacher: Mrs J Jones

Reporting inspector: Mr P Orr  
16007

Dates of inspection: 4-8 December 2000

Inspection number: 224256

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Foscott Way Buckingham Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	MK18 1TT
Telephone number:	01280 812864
Fax number:	01280 812806
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr I Morris
Date of previous inspection:	6 November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P Orr 16007	Registered inspector	English	What sort of school is it?
		Religious education	The school's results and achievements?
		Modern languages	How well are pupils taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
			What should the school do to improve further?
J Edmond 9472	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
J Coop 31862	Team inspector	Geography	
		History	
		Special educational needs	
V Davies 20350	Team inspector	Mathematics	
		Information and communications technology	
J Pinney 22790	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Music	
C Worthington 20609	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Art	
		Design and technology	

The inspection contractor was:

Chapel House Inspection Unit Ltd

ICAA Education Centre  
Brighton  
Aldersford  
Hampshire  
SO24 9RE

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Pupils' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

### PART B: COMMENTARY

#### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? 1-15**

The school's results and achievements  
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT? 16-25**

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS? 26-37**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? 38-48**

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS 49-55**

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? 56-64**

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? 65-67**

### PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

#### **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES 68-131**

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Buckingham Junior School is a mixed school for 324 pupils aged 7 to 11. Until September 1999 it was a middle school for pupils aged 8 to 12. The school includes pupils of all abilities. Attainment on entry has varied considerably in recent years, but is rising and in Year 3 is above average. A few pupils do not transfer to the school until the end of Year 3, or even Year 4, and this can restrict the progress they make. The intake is predominantly advantaged, although pupils come from a very wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The number eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. About 25 per cent of pupils are on the register for special educational needs, an above-average proportion. Four pupils have a statement of special educational need. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and none speaks English as an additional language. A new headteacher joined the school in May 2000.

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

The school is improving very rapidly in most areas of its life and work. Standards, although still lower than they should be, are rising. The leadership of the school by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is outstanding, and management at all levels is increasingly effective despite some continuing weaknesses. The teaching is of mixed quality, but good overall, and often very good. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

- The quality of leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is excellent.
- Most pupils in Years 3 and 6 are making very good progress. The teaching in Year 3 is predominantly very good.
- The school is forming very close links with parents.
- Provision for pupils' social and moral development is very good, and pupils are well cared for.
- Pupils' attitudes to the school, and their behaviour and relationships, are mostly very good.

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

- Standards, overall, although improving, are not as high as they should be.
- There are some weaknesses in the overall coordination and teaching of literacy.
- The objectives set for pupils' learning are often too vague and not understood by pupils.

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

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

Weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, in 1995, were followed up, but there are no records of precisely what was done. Furthermore, it is difficult to compare the school as it now is with the middle school that existed in 1995. Nevertheless, since the appointment of a new headteacher in May 2000 improvement has been very rapid. Many changes have been introduced in a very short period of time, focussed strongly on the need to raise standards. Issues identified in 1995 are receiving further attention. There is more challenge in the work in most classes. Class management skills are being strengthened. The school's carefully prepared policy for assessment is being reinforced and extended, and good practice in assessment is developing well in English, mathematics and science. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) have been raised. Pupils' research skills have improved and most use reference books such as dictionaries and thesauruses very well. Library provision has been reviewed and the library is an effective support for pupils'

learning. The curriculum is now organised in line with national requirements. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, and principally of the teaching, are markedly better, and of high quality overall. The leadership of the school is more sharply directed to raising standards. Priorities for further improvement have been identified accurately. These include: provision of a consistently high level of challenge for all pupils in all classes; the raising of boys' achievement; higher standards in mathematics; more effective coordination of literacy teaching; the teaching of reading and writing to pupils who find learning difficult; and the setting of clear objectives for pupils' learning, that are understood by the pupils. Although further work is needed in some of the areas requiring attention at the time of the last inspection the rate of improvement is now good, and the school is well placed to improve further.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests. Similar schools are those where a similar proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals.

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

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

In 1995, standards at the age of 11 were above those expected nationally. They dipped in the National Curriculum tests in 1997, but since then have broadly followed the national trend of improvement. However, they are not yet as good, relatively speaking, as standards in 1995. In 2000, the test results were slightly below national figures overall because of weak, although improving, results in mathematics. The results in 1999 and 2000 were well below the national average for similar schools, and below the Buckinghamshire average. It is not possible to tell whether the results in these years represented satisfactory progress when compared with the Key Stage 1 results of the same pupils because, before 2000, the school did not receive records of pupils' Key Stage 1 results from all the contributory first schools.

In lessons and other work seen during the inspection, standards were slightly higher than in the most recent test results. Good teaching is leading to improvement. The standards seen broadly matched those expected nationally, although they varied across subjects and year groups. In relative terms, standards are higher in Year 3, where they are above expectations, than in later years. Standards in English are close to national standards and are improving in most classes. However, they are held back to some extent by the relatively slow progress of low-attaining pupils in reading and writing in Years 5 and 6. More generally, boys' progress in writing and spelling is not as good as it should be. Standards of spoken English and listening are good but should be better still. Standards in mathematics are still slightly weaker than in English, but are starting to improve rapidly. Standards in science are satisfactory, and slightly ahead of those in mathematics. High attainers generally achieve well in reading, mathematics and science. However, their attainment in writing and spoken English should



be higher in some classes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most areas of their work.

The school knows that standards are not yet as high as they should be when compared with achievement in similar schools, and is working purposefully, and with increasing success, to put matters right. The school exceeded its targets in the national test results in 2000 and has set ambitious targets to maintain this improvement in 2001.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are anxious to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good overall. Although a few pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration, most pupils behave very well.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils take responsibility willingly and help one another. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and friendly.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged 7-11 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good and often very good

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

The teaching promotes pupils' learning effectively and is of good quality overall. It is predominantly very good in Year 3 and often very good in Year 6. The teaching was very good or excellent in 31 per cent of the observations made, good in a further 36 per cent and at least satisfactory in 96 per cent. The small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning was the result of work not well matched to pupils' learning needs. The teaching is weakest in Year 5, although there is some very good practice in this year.

The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall, although improvement is needed in several areas, and provision for the bottom sets in Years 5 and 6 is not raising their attainment. Learning objectives are not always clear to these pupils, and the teaching of basic reading and writing skills is weak. The teaching of numeracy is good. Teachers have a good grasp of the numeracy strategy, which is well coordinated.

The strengths found most frequently are: high expectations of pupils' performance, and the good response of pupils, who want to learn, particularly in Years 3 and 6; thorough planning for improvement in pupils' learning; very good management of pupils' behaviour; effective use of support staff and resources; marking that is detailed and gives clear guidance to pupils about what they need to do to improve; well-planned teaching of key vocabulary; and well-managed homework that extends pupils' learning.

The weaknesses found most frequently are: learning objectives that lack precision and are not understood clearly by pupils; lessons that finish without a review of what pupils have learnt or a preview of what they are going to learn next; unsatisfactory teaching of basic literacy skills; and a tendency for some teachers to talk too much or for too long without ensuring that pupils are learning from what they say.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum meets national requirements and provides a wide variety of learning opportunities. The range of activities outside lessons is very good, and well supported.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. Provision is administered effectively by the coordinator. However, targets for pupils' learning are too general.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good for social and moral development, good for cultural development and satisfactory for spiritual development. A particular strength is the provision of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. For example, they take part in the school council, run the computer club and give a lot of help in managing the library.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are well known to teachers, and there is good provision for their health and welfare. The personal, social and health education programme is well organised.

The school is developing a very strong partnership with parents.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and deputy head work closely together to provide outstanding leadership and management. Key staff provide good support although there are some weaknesses in the coordination of literacy. The school has clear and appropriate priorities for improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	A largely new governing body provides increasingly effective support and expertise. Governors ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Senior staff have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School arrangements for monitoring standards and the quality of teaching are excellent, and subject coordinators are making a developing contribution to this process.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Finances are managed carefully and financial planning is very thorough. Staff are well deployed. The school seeks to obtain the best value possible in its planning and

purchasing.

Staffing is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum, and the accommodation and learning resources, overall, are good in most respects.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What a few parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils enjoy coming to school</li><li>• Pupils work hard and make good progress</li><li>• The teaching is mostly good</li><li>• Behaviour is good and improving</li><li>• Teachers are approachable</li><li>• Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility</li><li>• The range of activities outside lessons is good</li><li>• The school is well led and managed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of homework set</li><li>• The provision for parents of information about pupils' progress</li><li>• The fact that the school does not work closely enough with parents</li></ul>

Inspectors agreed with the positive points made by parents in the questionnaire returns and at the meeting with parents. They did not agree with the criticisms, except that they recognised that the amount of homework set is sometimes inconsistent. However, they found that, overall, homework is well managed. They also found that, in general, the information provided for parents about pupils' progress is satisfactory. They felt that the school is working increasingly closely and successfully with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 in 1999 and 2000 were slightly below national figures, as a result of relatively weak results in mathematics. In 2000, there was, nevertheless, a considerable improvement over the previous year's results in English and mathematics. Compared with national averages, the 2000 results were lower than results at the time of the last inspection in 1995, when results were above national figures. After 1995, the test results dipped in 1997, and have not yet recovered the lost ground although, in broad terms, the rate of improvement since 1997 has matched the national trend of improvement. The main reasons for the shortfall in recent years have been the weaker than average performance of boys in English, and the relatively weak performance of all pupils in mathematics. In 1999 and 2000 the science results were close to the national figures for all schools.

2. The test results in all three subjects in 1999 and 2000 were well below the national figures for similar schools, and below the average for Buckinghamshire schools. These circumstances indicate under-achievement, as the school realises. Because the school did not receive any Key Stage 1 test results from all the contributory first schools until September 2000, it is not possible to establish whether the 1999 and 2000 Key Stage 2 test results represent satisfactory progress from Key Stage 1.

3. In lessons and other work seen during the inspection, standards were slightly higher than in the most recent test results. Consistently good teaching, good management of the curriculum and careful and well-informed monitoring by the headteacher and most key staff are generating improvement. The standards seen during the inspection broadly matched those expected nationally, although they varied across subjects and year groups. In relative terms, standards are higher in Year 3, where they are above expectations, than in later years. Standards in English are close to national standards and are improving in most classes. However, progress in English is held back to some degree by the relatively slow progress of low-attaining pupils in reading and writing in Years 5 and 6. More generally, boys' progress in writing and spelling is not as good as it should be. In addition, standards of spoken English, although above average overall, should be better still. Standards in mathematics are still slightly weaker than in English, but are starting to improve rapidly as a result of good coordination of the subject and relevant in-service training. However, mental work in the lower of the two middle sets in Year 6 is still not good enough and, overall, there are still too many pupils attaining below the expected standard in mathematics. The school has a number of well-qualified science teachers and the subject is well coordinated. Standards in science are satisfactory, and slightly ahead of those in mathematics. Pupils achieve in line with expectations in all areas of science, but girls out-perform boys slightly.

4. The school is well placed to raise standards further, and is working energetically, and increasingly with a shared sense of purpose, towards this goal. In 1999, the school failed to reach its Key Stage 2 targets in English and mathematics. In 2000, it exceeded its targets in English, mathematics and science, and has set ambitious targets to maintain this improvement in 2001.

5. In other subjects, standards generally match those expected nationally. There is some variability. Development of mapping skills is weaker than it should be in geography, and standards in gymnastics are not as good as they should be, as the result of a considerable and unavoidable delay recently in replacing equipment. In religious education

the reflective and exploratory aspects of the subject are under-developed. By contrast, in art standards of close observational drawing are above average, and pupils' competence in information and communications technology exceeds expectations. Standards of singing in Years 3 and 4 are above expectations, as a result of good teaching and extra practice. Extra-curricular opportunities for information and communications technology in the lunchtime club also have a positive effect on standards.

6. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress during the key stage in most areas of their work. The recent introduction of grouping by attainment in English and mathematics is helpful to these pupils' in Years 3 and 4 because work is matched more closely to their needs. In Year 6 numeracy the setting helps these pupils because activities are stimulating and well planned. Further work is needed to ensure that the work in literacy in Years 5 and 6, and in numeracy in Year 5, is similarly productive. The provision for the most able pupils has recently been reviewed. Teachers are expected to identify them in their planning and to seek to make specific provision for them. They are increasingly successful in doing so, as several pupils in Year 6 testified. High attainers generally achieve well in reading, mathematics and science. However, their attainment in writing and spoken English should be higher in some classes. They are often challenged in information and communications technology, design and technology, art, dance, history and, as a result partly of the additional instrumental provision made by the school, in music. Results at the higher levels in the 2000 National Curriculum tests were satisfactory.

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

7. The last inspection report noted that classroom behaviour was good, attitudes to work were positive and pupils keen to learn. Their behaviour in the dining room and playground was good. Pupils were courteous and confident and enjoyed school life.

8. Parents consider that behaviour is good and improving, and that staff successfully maintain these high standards. The evidence of the inspection strongly supports this view, although there is a small minority of pupils, including some boys in Year 4, who can misbehave unless they are firmly controlled. Nevertheless, pupils' attitudes and behaviour during the inspection were good or better in 82 per cent of lessons and were frequently very good or excellent. They were very good in 47 per cent of lessons and excellent in 11 per cent. Persistently unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in only one lesson. Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school. In the majority of cases, their attitudes to learning are highly positive, particularly when the teaching is energetic and engaging. High levels of interest are apparent in many lessons, as in a Year 5 library skills lesson and in most of the Year 3 lessons seen. The most frequent reason for behaviour being no more than satisfactory, as was the case in just under a fifth of the lessons seen, is the inability of some teachers to maintain pupils' interest consistently, and this can lead to restiveness. Marked enthusiasm for work was noted in some lessons, where the pace was brisk, notably in a Year 4 French lesson, and in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, where pupils thoroughly enjoyed playing mathematical bingo. Pupils' very good relationships with the teacher and with each other help promote good order. Most pupils concentrate and work very well on their own or in pairs. Their capacity to work independently and to persevere is good and even most of the youngest pupils work responsibly on their own. Pupils have a strong desire to improve their work and they take pride in the finished product, as is obvious from the art displays around the school. High standards of behaviour in lessons make a major contribution to the learning of pupils.

9. Behaviour round the school is very good, with pupils behaving sensibly when arriving at and leaving school, even when they have long waits for the school bus. They walk quietly between lessons and to assembly and behave very well in the dining hall. There were many examples of mature behaviour during wet dinner and play times. In the playground pupils play constructively at break time and line up in an orderly manner for lessons. No incidents of

untoward behaviour were seen and bullying is rare. Respect for property is high and there were no graffiti or litter.

10. Last year there were no exclusions. The school has practical measures for identifying any pupil at risk of exclusion and for working with staff and parents to do everything possible to keep them in school.

11. The school lays great emphasis on good relationships between staff and pupils. It has been very successful in achieving this objective, which ensures that pupils learn well in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Pupils are courteous to each other and friendly to staff, being expected to hold doors open as a matter of course. They relate positively to each other and react politely when addressed. They are friendly and helpful to visitors.

12. The school impresses on new pupils and their parents the need to consider others, and pupils respond positively. Respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs is very high, and pupils are very supportive of those with special educational needs.

13. Pupils take an active part in school life. They carry out their many responsibilities very willingly and effectively and take part enthusiastically in the school's programme of extra-curricular activities, for which levels of take-up are good.

14. At the time of the last inspection, attendance was reported to be good, with low levels of unauthorised absence. Pupils' current attendance at 95.2 per cent is well above the national average. There is no unauthorised absence. Teachers are in their classrooms in very good time. Lessons start punctually in the morning and after breaks. Unless there is a problem with the buses, pupils are on time at the start of the day and they have responsible attitudes to punctuality. High levels of attendance and punctuality have a positive effect on the attainment and progress of pupils.

15. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are positive in most lessons. They are eager to learn and respond well to tasks that are matched to their needs, as in Year 6 mathematics. Pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties respond well to targets for behaviour and, because behaviour is well monitored and positively rewarded, pupils are, in general, able to concentrate on the tasks they are set.

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

16. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are predominantly very good in Year 3, and often very good in Year 6. They are excellent in some lessons in these years. Although teaching and learning are weaker in Year 5 than elsewhere, there are examples of very good practice in this year.

17. Overall, the teaching was very good or excellent in 31 per cent of the lessons seen, good in a further 36 per cent and at least satisfactory in 96 per cent. These totals include evaluations of the quality of teaching as revealed in the setting, marking and monitoring of written work. The grade pattern in these three areas is broadly similar to that for lessons. There are various reasons for the unsatisfactory teaching in a small proportion of lessons: in one case the teacher's subject knowledge was unsatisfactory, and in the others the teaching was not well matched to pupils' needs, or the pace of work was too slow.

18. In the majority of subjects, teaching is by the class teacher throughout the age range. Setting by attainment is organised in all years in literacy and numeracy, but teachers do not teach outside their year group for this purpose. The setting was introduced in September 2000 and is already proving of benefit in the encouragement of higher expectations and a

better match between the work set and pupils' learning needs. Except in Year 3, extended writing is taught in normal classes rather than the literacy sets, and this causes some difficulty in ensuring continuity. In other subjects, the timetabling generally supports the teaching well. However, a rotational arrangement for art, music and religious education in Year 5, although it allows for more specialist teaching in art, reduces the amount of time for this subject and limits the rate of progress in consequence.

19. The teachers generally have a satisfactory understanding of the National Curriculum and its current requirements. The guidelines produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) provide important support in this respect. Expertise in applying the numeracy strategy is growing rapidly. Teachers are using well lessons learnt through in-service training, although more work is needed to ensure that learning objectives are precise and that the teaching of mental mathematics is always slick and purposeful. Not all aspects of the literacy strategy are equally well dealt with by teachers. In particular, the teaching of phonics and basic reading skills receives less attention than is necessary, and the need to ensure that pupils apply across the curriculum their language skills in areas such as sentence construction and spelling, is not given sufficient emphasis. Strategies for improving boys' achievement, in written work in particular, are not developed fully. The coordinator for humanities has only recently taken up the post and there is work still to do to ensure that all the necessary geographical skills are taught adequately.

20. Staff and pupils agree that teaching and learning have improved rapidly in recent months; they are now clearly better than at the time of the last inspection. There are two main reasons for the improvement: first there is much better monitoring by and advice for improvement from the headteacher and other key staff; and, second, there is much better planning for improvement both within and across year groups. For example, the headteacher on her appointment quickly realised that teachers did not have sufficient expertise in the teaching of information and communications technology. A programme of in-service training was extended and the coordinator given opportunities to demonstrate and disseminate good practice. Good support by a learning support assistant was made available more widely and equipment improved. The subject is now well taught and standards are above those expected nationally. Similarly purposeful action was taken to improve the teaching of mathematics. Existing strengths in subjects such as science, history, physical education, music and some aspects of art are being maintained.

21. There is no subject where teaching and learning are markedly weaker than elsewhere. However, despite the recent and rapid improvements, further development is needed in several areas. In all subjects except English, mathematics and science the quality of assessment needs to be improved considerably; and there is much work to do in all subjects to ensure that learning objectives for each lesson are clear, attainable and well understood by pupils. Further refinement is necessary in some other areas of teaching. For example, the learning needs of pupils in the lowest literacy groups in Years 5 and 6 are not well met: the teaching of reading and writing in these groups is not good enough to make up for slow learning in earlier years. More generally, there are weaknesses in the marking of writing and spelling that are unhelpful to boys in particular, because they often achieve less well than girls in these areas. Boys' handwriting often lacks care and a sense of pride. In Years 4, 5 and 6, persistent and obvious spelling errors in day-to-day writing at all levels of attainment are often not picked up by teachers or corrected by pupils, although spelling is taught well and tested methodically as a separate activity. Similarly, weaknesses of style and expression in writing are rarely commented on across the curriculum. In Year 5, even in work done during the literacy hour or for homework associated with it, weaknesses in style, organisation and use of vocabulary are often overlooked in the marking. Despite these weaknesses, the quality of marking in the school as a whole is good. It is of consistently high

quality in Year 3 and in most classes in Years 4 and 6. Of particular note are the detailed suggestions for improvement that teachers make regularly in these years and classes.

22. The strengths found most frequently in the teaching across the age range, but particularly in Years 3 and 6, include consistently high expectations of pupils' performance and progress. In the literacy hour, for instance, the introduction of new work is often uncompromising in its demands on pupils' linguistic understanding. In the lessons seen, pupils generally responded well in such circumstances, and made good gains in language competence. Demanding language and ideas are often introduced successfully in science lessons and, across the curriculum, key vocabulary is generally well taught. In most lessons, teachers have access to, and usually make good use of, a wide range of appropriate resources. Whiteboards and overhead projectors are almost always well used. Good use of resources reflects another strength – that most lessons contain a good variety of activities that catch and maintain pupils' interest. Planning for individual lessons is very thorough throughout the school. In the lessons seen, planning was extremely detailed – almost to a fault at times, in that multiple learning objectives were sometimes generated and teachers found it difficult to know where to concentrate. Generally, however, learning in each lesson is linked very effectively with earlier learning and prepares well for the learning that is to follow. Homework, which is almost always well managed throughout the school, extends pupils' learning effectively. Some particularly effective homework was seen in science. Under such favourable circumstances, it is unfortunate that the targets set for the learning of individual pupils – targets that are usually based on paraphrased versions of the level descriptions of the National Curriculum – are often too broad for pupils to use purposefully.

23. Pupils' behaviour is very well managed in almost every class. Pupils settle quickly to work, have very good attitudes to school and want to learn. When given opportunities to do so (and this does not happen frequently enough in a few subjects, including religious education) they venture opinions, develop one another's ideas and ask thoughtful questions.

24. The weaknesses found most frequently in the teaching and learning are in some respects the obverse of the strengths. Teachers sometimes try to cover too much ground in each lesson and attempt to do so in too much detail. In consequence, lessons sometimes finish without a review of what pupils have learnt or a preview of what they are going to learn next. Some teachers talk too much or for too long, without ensuring that pupils learn from what they say; the introductory phase of lessons is often extended unhelpfully in these circumstances, and pupils' concentration is lost. Because of the complexity of many of the objectives set for their learning, pupils sometimes leave lessons without much idea of what the 'key learning points' of the lesson were supposed to be. Nevertheless, despite features such as these, the strengths in the teaching clearly outweigh the weaknesses.

25. Apart from the weaknesses in the teaching of basic literacy skills after Year 3, provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Some of the teaching is good and occasionally it is very good. Learning support assistants help pupils effectively in lessons and are usually enabled by teachers to support teaching and learning well. When support is used most successfully, learning objectives are clear and based on specific targets, which pupils understand. In these circumstances, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is brisk with a good range of short, specific tasks that focus pupils' attention and ensure that learning is broken down into manageable steps. Overall, however, although teachers try hard to adapt activities to support the different learning needs of pupils, their use of different teaching strategies remains under-developed. For example, pupils with special educational needs have limited opportunities to work alongside and learn from higher-attaining pupils when researching or analysing materials. School policy requires that, in the teaching, particular account be taken of the needs of the highest-attaining pupils. This policy is increasingly successful in Year 3 and in many classes throughout the school. However,



these pupils are not always challenged sufficiently through written work, and their potential in spoken English is often overlooked.

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

26. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant, which is an improvement since the last inspection. An appropriate amount of time is allocated to each subject, except for art and music in Year 5 where there is not enough. The statutory curriculum is in place, with policy statements and schemes of work in all subjects. The school provides a good range of high quality learning opportunities beyond English, mathematics and science; for example, very good provision is made for French, including a planned French trip. Examples of art work of good quality demonstrate the wide range of appropriate experiences in this area, and performing arts are well represented in singing, dance and drama. Provision for information and communications technology has improved greatly since the last inspection. Pupils have good opportunities to develop research and information retrieval skills in the library and on the Internet. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. They are integrated effectively into the setting system, but their individual education plans are not specific enough to support their progress fully.

27. Setting in English and mathematics improves opportunities for higher-attaining pupils in particular and is currently having a very positive effect on the work of lower-attaining pupils in mathematics in Year 6. In many lessons in both subjects, the work is adapted appropriately to meet the needs of pupils of all abilities.

28. The provision of extra-curricular activities, which are very popular, is very good. Since almost a third of pupils travel home by bus, most activities take place at lunch time, and several – for example the computer club – are run by pupils themselves. The wide range of activities includes sailing and many other sports, and dance and music. Pupils generally have equal access to the curriculum. All activities are open to boys and girls. Access to the curriculum is, however, restricted slightly because some pupils are removed regularly from literacy and numeracy lessons for music tuition.

29. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. This is a great improvement since the last inspection. Timetabled lessons (including 'circle time') deal with drugs and sex education, and personal safety and moral issues, such as the need to respect property. The very well thought out scheme of work also addresses questions of beliefs and feelings, cultural awareness, global economies and team building.

30. Support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school's policy in this area has clear and appropriate aims and objectives. Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum, but their individual education plans are not matched carefully enough to their needs and are too general in their aims. In consequence, pupils do not fully understand what they need to do to improve. The lack of well-informed, specific support for the development of reading skills limits these pupils' progress in all subjects.

31. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. Spiritual development is promoted satisfactorily. The school provides an environment where all pupils are valued. Discussions and assemblies affirm the importance of respect for others' values and beliefs and provide opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and feelings. The result is that pupils treat each other with sensitivity and respect. Assemblies are used well to create a spiritual atmosphere of prayer and reflection. The school enjoys good links with local churches.

32. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. It is effectively promoted through the mutual respect prevalent throughout the school. The school rules reflect an ethos that effectively encourages pupils to understand the consequences of their actions on others. The "De-Bug" system, which encourages pupils to walk away from confrontation, also encourages them to consider the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Staff clearly understand the importance of raising pupils' self-esteem through praise and reward rather than sanctions. They apply the code of behaviour consistently. As a result, pupils' sense of morality increases and by the time they reach Year 5 it is clear that they are firmly aware of the difference between right and wrong and are willing to take responsibility for their actions.

33. The school makes very good provision for pupils' social development. Adults around the school present good role models in terms of care, consideration, trust, reliability and good manners. There are many opportunities for pupils to work together co-operatively and to use their initiative. For example, pupils from each year group are democratically elected to the school council and action is taken as a result of their recommendations. Staff involve pupils in charity work and encourage them to think of others who may be less fortunate than themselves. The quality of relationships, both between adults and pupils and among pupils, is very good, and a strength of the school. This has a direct bearing on the good behaviour and enthusiastic approach which pupils display. The provision of a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and the opportunities for residential trips are particularly effective in developing pupils' social skills, building confidence in relationships and instilling a sense of citizenship. Pupils are also helped in a variety of ways – for example through religious education - to learn about the diversity of cultures represented in their own country, but provision in this area is not coordinated across the curriculum.

34. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils are given sound insight into their own culture and heritage through lessons in history, art and music and through frequent visits to local areas of interest. Pupils learn something of the values and traditions of other countries, through subjects such as religious education, French, art and music. Several recent initiatives will soon make a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of other countries. These include an exchange with a school in France, for which Internet links have already been established.

35. The last inspection report indicated that links with other schools were good, with satisfactory liaison arrangements for the transfer of pupils. It also noted that links with local business and commerce were developing rapidly, but with scope for further development. The school offered good opportunities for personal development through visits.

36. Although contacts with local businesses are not extensive, the enrichment of the curriculum through links with the outside world is now satisfactory overall, with some strong features. The school is in the early stages of developing its own Internet website and is starting to access the Internet. It is planning to develop an e-mail pen-pal system with an Australian school, following an imminent teacher exchange. Pupils' horizons are broadened by some visiting speakers and by educational and cultural outings and field trips, which include a yearly residential trip for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and a visit to France for a large number of older pupils is planned for 2001. Pupils enjoy substantial opportunities for taking part in sporting competitions and have entered local poetry and art competitions with enthusiasm. They are actively encouraged to give of themselves by collecting for local and national charities. The school has obtained some useful financial support from local commerce, but currently contacts with local businesses and other local community organisations are not extensive.

37. The school has established close and very successful links for the transfer of pupils with all schools in the area. Its relationships with the main contributory infant schools, one of which is on-site, are especially productive. An excellent example of joint co-operation is the development of a uniform pupil record-keeping system. The school is a member of an effective consortium of all schools in the area. It welcomes student and returning teachers and work experience pupils, who make a useful contribution to pupils' development.

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

38. The last inspection report noted that the headteacher and staff were undergoing child protection training, which demonstrated commitment in this area. The school complies fully with child protection guidelines, and staff are well trained in identifying potential neglect or abuse. No instance of either has been recorded in recent years. Liaison arrangements with external agencies are very good.

39. There was no mention of health and safety matters in the last inspection report. The school complies with legal requirements for health and safety and there are no obvious causes for concern. The school has a good health and safety policy, and backs this up with practical and frequent inspection procedures, which include staff reporting any matters needing attention immediately. Provision for medical care and first aid are good and there is a medical room where sick pupils can lie down. Regular tests are carried out on all types of equipment, but there is no risk assessment programme and no member of staff has been trained to assess risks.

40. The last inspection report noted that the school was a safe, orderly and caring place, where pupils felt secure. There was a good atmosphere, which promoted mutual trust and confidence between staff and pupils and relationships of a high order. Systems for the support and guidance of pupils and for the provision for their welfare and personal development continue to work very well and make a positive contribution to educational standards and to helping pupils feel happy and secure. The school's ethos, backed up by assemblies and the effective use of the personal, social and health education programme, helps pupils to develop a strong moral and social sense and to act responsibly. The school has a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere, as at the time of the last inspection. Class teachers support their pupils very well and are familiar with their strengths and weaknesses. They keep a close eye on personal progress and pupils know that they can turn with confidence to them or other staff for help. The school offers pupils in all year groups a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility, such as minor classroom duties, issuing and collecting playground equipment, and membership of the school council. Years 4 and 5 are allowed to organise their own fund-raising efforts and Year 6 pupils take major responsibilities, such as running the library system and the computer club. Parents greatly appreciate the school's very close liaison with its contributory schools and its highly effective procedures for helping Year 2 pupils to look forward with enthusiasm to joining the school.

41. The last inspection report noted that the school actively promoted good attendance. The present measures for monitoring and improving attendance are good, and the school works effectively with the local education welfare service to follow up any pupils with difficulties in attending.

42. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour and for eliminating bullying are very extensive and effective; they include 'circle time' and the 'De-Bug' system. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour and promote an orderly and cheerful atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils negotiate their own class rules and know that the school expects them to behave sensibly. Bullying does occasionally occur, but the school has an effective system for dealing with inappropriate behaviour and for involving parents

rapidly, when required. Time spent by the headteacher or her deputy with those having difficulty in behaving sensibly, and the reporting of bad behaviour to parents act as effective deterrents. Proper records are kept.

43. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good and include opportunities for pupils to win merits for good work or behaviour. Year 3 parents are given a questionnaire after the first few weeks of the autumn term to comment on how their children have settled in. Teachers keep track of all pupils through the weekly year group meeting and keep records of those with problems. The school is to extend this system later in the academic year by introducing a new personal development record for all pupils, starting with Year 3, which will provide a common information base for new teachers and classroom assistants about each individual's needs.

44. Arrangements for the support and guidance of pupils with special educational needs are good. There are very good links with outside agencies for monitoring pupils' progress and for carrying out diagnostic assessment and therapy – and all of this is monitored effectively. Provision outlined in statements of special educational need is implemented effectively, and annual reviews are held in accordance with statutory guidelines. The administration of provision to ensure pupils receive appropriate support is very good.

45. Assessment arrangements have been radically overhauled since the arrival of the new headteacher. Attainment is now assessed frequently and carefully. Procedures are in place that will enable the school to trace the progress of year and class groups, of different groups of pupils, and of individual pupils. The responsibility for assessment has been merged with the overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluation. This shows the school's concern for the centrality of assessment.

46. The school is improving practice in assessment on the basis of an existing and appropriate policy for assessment and marking. Much has already been achieved. Approaches to assessment in English, mathematics and science have been reviewed and revised. Work is now starting on the foundation subjects and religious education. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs, which is already in place but does not involve diagnostic assessment for specific weaknesses, is to be linked with a revision of the individual education plans because these are too general to provide much help for individuals, being based on group rather than individual targets. The school has introduced voluntary QCA tests, which are taken by Years 3 to 5 in May each year. It is hoped that these will enable the school to measure more consistently and reliably the value it adds to pupils' education. These procedures are supported by 'tracking' and target setting for individual pupils. Individual targets, which are based on the level descriptions of the National Curriculum, are stuck into pupils' 'planners'. While this is, in theory, a good system, it is causing some difficulties because of the lack of precision in many targets, and the problems pupils have in interpreting their significance for the work they are actually doing. This difficulty is partly overcome by teachers explaining to pupils what they should aim at, but further simplification will be necessary if the individual target setting is to serve its full purpose.

47. A range of other pertinent procedures is in place, including portfolios of 'levelled' work and clear arrangements to ensure that assessment informs teachers' planning. As yet, the links between assessment and the setting of learning objectives are not clear enough. Nevertheless, the arrangements represent a very good beginning, and the school is well placed to ensure that assessment plays a central role in the raising and maintenance of standards.

48. Marking systems have been introduced, which are clear and mostly followed carefully, but the follow-up by pupils to teachers' marking remains very uneven.

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

49. The last inspection report noted that parental support was good and parents were actively involved in their children's education, with a good number of parents helping in the classroom and library and with other activities. There was an active parent-teacher association, raising funds for pupils' education. Parents responded positively to arrangements for reporting pupil progress. Parents did, however, want a clearer, more coherent policy on homework.

50. Generally parents continue to have a very positive view of the school. They confirm that their children enjoy coming to school and consider that they make good progress. Respondents to the questionnaire feel that behaviour in the school is good, and those at the parents' meeting noted that, now the school is addressing this issue more vigorously, behaviour is showing improvement. This group also expressed very positive views about the working of the school council and the range of responsibility the school gives to pupils. Parents see the teaching as good and consider that the school is well led. They feel comfortable about approaching the school and recognise that it expects their children to achieve their best and helps them to mature. Most consider that the school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.

51. While respondents to the questionnaire generally gave positive answers to all questions, a small minority expressed more negative views of the school's performance in three areas. They felt that pupils did not get the right amount of homework, though the consensus at the parents' meeting was that the setting of homework is now more consistent and that children especially enjoy project work, such as making Aztec jewellery. Those at the meeting praised the quality of homework diaries. A few parents felt they were not kept sufficiently informed about how their child was getting on and that the school did not work closely enough with parents. These minority concerns were not confirmed by the inspection, as parents have the opportunity to make contact with the school at any time. However, the school is always keen to improve communication with parents and has included this in its planning.

52. The school's links with parents are very effective. Parents want their children to do well and most see that homework is done. They ensure that pupils look well turned-out in their uniform. The school consults parents on its performance, as in the recent survey on parents' evenings, and intends to continue the consultation process. It provides parents with information evenings on school and curriculum matters, such as the 11+ tests and the national numeracy strategy, and on more general topics such as drugs awareness. Support for these events varies. The school holds regular, very well supported parents' consultation meetings, and actively encourages informal contact by parents. A small minority considers there is not enough formal consultation. As far as is practical the school makes a point of answering parental complaints on the day they occur. Parents are invited to a wide range of musical and dramatic productions, sporting events, assemblies and other activities. There is an active parent-teacher association, which holds social and fund-raising events that have raised significant sums for the benefit of their children.

53. The quality of information provided for parents is generally very good. The tone of the school's documentation is welcoming and the contents are informative. The prospectus and governors' report to parents are comprehensive and meet statutory requirements. There are half-termly newsletters to keep parents informed on specific school events and requirements. These are rather short, but are supplemented by year group letters and curriculum notes to give parents an understanding of what their children are learning. Parents are supplied with copies of key policies, such as those relating to homework, behaviour and uniform.

54. The quality of the annual written reports is generally very good and they meet statutory requirements. Most evaluate pupils' performance clearly, but staff are not always consistent in setting out what pupils know, can do and understand, particularly in the foundation subjects, where the layout does not allow much room for comment. Pupils' reports are discussed with parents and the school is intending to incorporate pupil targets. Parents of pupils with individual education plans or statements of special educational need are fully involved in the reviews of their children's progress and the setting of revised individual targets. There is a close working relationship between school and parents, who are always welcomed to discuss with the school's special needs co-ordinator any problems they may have. Reports for the annual reviews of statements are clear and detailed and parents are given time to reflect on these before annual reviews.

55. The contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is good. Most parents have the opportunity to keep themselves informed about their children's homework and to support day-to-day progress through the homework organisers. Currently there is a good number of parent volunteers working effectively to broaden pupils' experience in school. They help in class and support outings and residential visits.

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

56. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development. She makes good use of previous experience as a headteacher to inform an agenda for change and has a thorough knowledge of national priorities for educational development. These qualities are extended and reinforced by very good organisational skills and a sensitive concern for the individual needs of pupils and staff. She is very strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and by a recently reconstituted governing body with good financial and managerial expertise and a thorough knowledge of the locality. The deputy headteacher brings important personal and professional qualities to the management of the school. She works very well with the headteacher. Governors already have close links with the school and ensure that it meets statutory requirements. Together with the staff, most of whom provide strong support and a good range of expertise, they are seeking rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's life and work, through well-organised support and monitoring systems, agreed targets for improvement and teaching and learning of high quality.

57. The school is already achieving considerable success in implementing these aims. There is a growing sense of close teamwork. Teachers at all levels work extremely hard. Although there are continuing weaknesses in some aspects of school leadership and management, almost all of these are recognised by senior managers and subject to carefully thought-out programmes for continuous improvement. Further work remains to be done in the use of assessment to inform planning within subjects, in target setting for individual pupils including those with special educational needs, and in the identification and use of learning objectives in lessons. Excellent arrangements for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching are already effective at school level, and there are established procedures to allow subject coordinators to monitor work in their respective areas. This monitoring is developing well, but is still of mixed quality and effectiveness. The quality of subject management is often good, although there are some weaknesses in English.

58. There are no records of the precise action taken after the last inspection to implement the recommendations for improvement. However, measures introduced to improve assessment and the organisation of the curriculum show that some appropriate action was taken. The strong thrust to raise standards dates from the recent appointment of the new headteacher. Progress is now rapid and improvement since the last inspection is already good. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to ensure that standards match those in

similar schools. A number of other, related, areas require continued attention. Most of these have been identified in the thorough self-evaluation procedures the school has recently carried out, using comprehensive guidelines produced by the LEA for this purpose. Areas requiring further development include: the provision of a consistently high level of challenge for all pupils in all classes; the raising of boys' achievement; higher standards in mathematics; more effective coordination of literacy teaching; the teaching of reading and writing to pupils who find learning difficult; and the setting of clearer objectives for pupils' learning, that are understood by the pupils. The last of these was identified at the time of the previous inspection as an area needing attention.

59. Management of high quality is supported by very good financial planning and control. The governors' finance committee gives very careful consideration to the allocations of funds and resources. They have to do so partly because the school is currently running a deficit. Because of changes in the age of transfer the funding available to the school decreased, yet the budget for the 2000-2001 financial year was set despite the likelihood that it would lead to a significant overspend. The governors and the new headteacher acted swiftly to ensure that budgetary balance was re-established. There is constant evaluation and questioning to ensure that spending is linked to provision that is most likely to ensure that pupils achieve high standards. The impact of spending on different groups of pupils - including high and low attainers and boys and girls - is examined. For instance, the school is currently evaluating the role of special needs support staff from outside the school, and challenging service providers to deliver high quality.

60. Day-to-day financial management is good and allows the headteacher and teachers to focus on meeting the immediate needs of the pupils. Grant-related spending is,

appropriately, largely used for training. Outcomes of training are assessed as part of the rigorous classroom monitoring programme.

61. Overall, the school is managed very efficiently. Although there are areas still requiring attention, and although standards are not yet as high as they should be, the school makes good use of the funding it receives which, for each pupil, is close to the national median, and it gives satisfactory value for money.

62. Staffing is managed efficiently, with clear priorities for effective deployment and continuous improvement through pertinent staff development opportunities and in-service training. The range of staff qualifications meets the demands of the curriculum, and educational support staff are generally very well used. Accommodation is well managed and of good quality, except that some of the classrooms in the lower years are adequate only because class sizes are relatively small in these years. Resources also are well managed and of sufficient quantity except in the provision of reading materials suitable for older pupils who still have difficulties in reading. The library has been much improved recently and is now a well-managed resource, with a more extensive book stock than is usually found in schools of this type and size. There are continuing weaknesses in a few areas - for instance in the provision of books with a multicultural focus, and in the numbers of books for older, reluctant readers - but, overall, the library is of good quality

63. Much has been done since the last inspection to improve the provision of computers, but further improvement is needed.

64. The school's provision for special educational needs is administered efficiently. The coordinator has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in the provision and an appropriate action plan to deal with the areas of weakness. The coordinator, nevertheless, lacks the specific training in special educational needs that would enable her to respond

more effectively to a changing role, from administration towards support for teaching and learning. In the interim, funding for special educational needs is used appropriately to 'buy in' advice and support.

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

65. The school's self-evaluation procedures are so thorough that, in almost every case, the areas for improvement have already been identified. The priorities outlined below broadly match the school's own intentions.

66. In order to maintain, consolidate and extend the improvements already achieved, and in the broad context of work to raise standards in all subjects, governors and staff should:

- (1) Raise standards in and improve the overall coordination of literacy, with particular attention to:
  - teachers' understanding of the programmes of study and learning objectives of the National Curriculum for English;
  - good practice in the teaching of basic literacy;
  - the close study of, and learning from, texts used in lessons;
  - the use of reading records to promote wide and challenging reading;
  - boys' writing and spelling throughout the school;
  - the contribution of other subjects to the teaching of literacy;
  - the use of questioning techniques and group work to raise standards of spoken English, with particular reference to high-attaining pupils.

(See paragraphs 3, 6, 19, 21, 68-77)

- (2) Raise standards in:
  - skills in geography;
  - skills in gymnastics;
  - understanding in religious education.

(See paragraphs 5, 23, 105-107, 124-126, 127-130)

- (3) Ensure that learning objectives are clear, attainable, and understood by pupils, with particular attention to:
  - learning objectives for each lesson;
  - targets for individual pupils;
  - targets in the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs;
  - the assessment of pupils' learning, during lessons, and over time

(See paragraphs 21, 22, 25, 26, 30, 46, 48, 74, 80)

67. In addition, the following less central issues should receive attention:

The time allocation for music and art in Year 5 (See paragraph 18)

Risk assessment procedures (See paragraph 39)

Liaison with receiving secondary schools and with the LEA concerning the teaching of French (See paragraph 119)

Contacts with local businesses (See paragraph 36)

The extent to which the curriculum may be restricted for those pupils who are removed regularly from literacy and numeracy lessons for music tuition.

(See paragraph 28)





## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	89
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5	26	36	29	4	0	0

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

### **Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll	324
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	8

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	81

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### **Attendance**

<b>Authorised absence</b>	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	6.0

<b>Unauthorised absence</b>	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.4

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

### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	57	51	108
	[1999]	[54]	[51]	[105]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	42 [27]	40 [29]	48 [41]
	Girls	41 [38]	33 [32]	44 [40]
	Total	83 [65]	73 [61]	92 [81]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 [62]	67 [58]	84 [77]
	National	75 [70]	72 [69]	85 [78]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	43 [30]	44 [31]	48 [36]
	Girls	44 [40]	36 [35]	35 [43]
	Total	87 [70]	80 [66]	83 [79]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 [65]	74 [65]	86 [86]
	National	70 [68]	72 [69]	79 [75]

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	322
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	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.6
Average class size	27

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	62

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	618740
Total expenditure	625896
Expenditure per pupil	1774
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-7156

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

324

Number of questionnaires returned

170

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	36	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	46	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	58	3	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	44	16	1	1
The teaching is good.	47	48	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	46	11	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	68	27	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	39	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	49	9	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	59	38	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	48	3	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	43	9	0	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

68. Standards in English in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 and 2000 were close to national figures, broadly on a par with those in science and above those in mathematics. In 2000, the results matched national averages at level 4, the national standard, and also at level 5, the standard expected of higher-attaining pupils. In 1999, the results were below national figures at level 4, but above at level 5. Since 1997, an improving trend in results has broadly followed the national trend of improvement. However, in both 1999 and 2000 the results were well below the national average for similar schools. This shortfall implies under-achievement and a decline in standards since the last inspection. There are two main areas of weakness: first, the unsatisfactory progress of many of the older low-attaining pupils, in basic reading, writing and spelling skills; and, second, at all levels of attainment, inadequacies in boys' writing. These weaknesses are exemplified in the results of the optional national tests taken by each year group in July 2000. Another factor may be significant in relation to the poor performance in comparison with similar schools: this may partly reflect the presence in the school of a higher-than-usual proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. Nevertheless, the school recognises that there is under-achievement in literacy and is introducing measures to rectify the situation.

69. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were described as fluent readers capable of using a variety of skills when tackling new words. Currently, standards in reading match national expectations overall, but they are not as good in all respects as in 1995. Although the majority of the oldest pupils read fluently and accurately, a small minority in Years 4, 5 and 6 lack the confidence in basic reading skills they need to cope with unfamiliar words: too often they turn to the teacher for help; or when guessing incorrectly do not recognise lack of meaning in the text as they interpret it. In consequence, they do not attempt to draw on contextual clues in looking for meaning, nor do they attempt to correct themselves. In part, these circumstances reflect the fact that phonics have not been, and are not, taught systematically enough after Year 3. The lowest-attaining readers from Year 3 to Year 6 are, almost uniformly, reading at or below level 2 of the National Curriculum, or just starting at level 3 – in other words they are not making enough progress. Nor do the texts or textbooks they use, in many cases, motivate them to want to read.

70. There is also evidence of much better practice in reading, however. Pupils make better progress in research and retrieval skills than at the time of the last inspection. Most use the library regularly, and many use it well. In all years, pupils develop a good level of competence in using dictionaries and thesauruses. Many pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, higher-attaining girls, read very widely. School systems ensure that pupils keep records of their reading, and in Year 3 these are used very effectively to maintain contact with parents about their children's reading. In other years, the reading records are not monitored closely by teachers, who very rarely make comments in them, or challenge pupils to read progressively more demanding texts. In consequence, many pupils lose valuable opportunities for language development through reading. In almost all classes, pupils take part willingly, and often with considerable enthusiasm, in shared reading and text work during the literacy hour, and teachers often make good use of history texts to support pupils' language learning. Less use is made of science and other subject-based texts in this context, however. Nor are the approaches of the literacy strategy used often enough to develop pupils' competence as readers in subjects such as religious education. Text level work in the literacy hour is rarely used to make pupils interested in particular books or to develop their appetite for wide reading. Another persistent weakness is that pupils are not given enough opportunities to learn in depth from the texts they study. Several teachers

seem not to be sufficiently aware that pupils need to study texts closely if they are to absorb from them the vocabulary, style and understanding of imagery they need to become accomplished readers and writers. There is, nevertheless, some excellent practice in this regard. For example, pupils in a Year 3 class were so obviously captivated by their teacher's enjoyment of a poem and ability to explain this enthusiasm by close reference to the evocative images in the text that, in the shared writing that followed, the pupils surprised themselves (but not their teacher) by the maturity and sophistication of their own choice of words and images.

71. At the time of the last inspection, writing across the age range was judged to be of an above-average standard, matching that of reading. Handwriting was reported to be well formed and practised regularly. The school had well-established routines for the drafting and re-drafting of written work and effective conventions for achieving accuracy in pupils' spelling. To judge by these evaluations, standards have dipped since the last inspection. There are some persistent weaknesses in basic literacy skills, for example. Analyses of the work of pupils who have recently joined the school show that they arrive with a wide range of different experiences in learning to write. Some of the weaknesses they often bring with them - particularly immature handwriting and a failure to recognise misspellings in everyday words - persist for too long, and are still relatively widespread in Years 5 and 6, mainly among boys.

72. The implications of the literacy strategy for the teaching of writing are increasingly well understood by most teachers, and new approaches are gradually leading to an improvement in standards. Drafting in the sense used in the report of the last inspection is little taught at the school at present, but pupils are encouraged, often to good effect, to consider alternatives in the use of language and sentence structures when writing, and to identify and build on their successes. They study (though often not in sufficient depth) appropriate models to learn from, and generally make satisfactory progress. Currently, in relative terms, the most successful writing is in Year 3, where the linguistic strengths that many pupils bring with them to the school are built on and developed effectively. There are also some examples of very good writing in all year groups, including Years 5 and 6. However, the achievement of boys in writing (and spelling) is often unsatisfactory, and the school has not yet explored in depth approaches - in the choice of tasks and resources, for example - that might raise their achievement. Boys' progress is, nevertheless, improving slowly, in sentence construction, width of vocabulary and punctuation.

73. Standards of spoken English and listening are, overall, above national expectations though, in spoken English in particular, not as high as they should be, particularly for higher-attaining pupils. Some teachers do not appreciate sufficiently the links between the development of spoken English and improvement in literacy. Pupils are often encouraged to be adventurous and imaginative in their use of language in writing, but not often enough in speaking. Across the curriculum, pupils are rarely asked to extend answers to questions, or re-phase them more appropriately.

74. Despite the presence of weaknesses, the teaching of English is good overall. In Year 3, it is often very good and sometimes excellent. Lesson planning is, in most cases, meticulous and the recommendations of the national literacy strategy are followed carefully, although they are not always fully understood, particularly in Year 5, where some of the teaching is unsatisfactory. In contrast to the situation at the time of the last inspection, learning objectives are stated and shared with pupils: they are quite often too vague, however, and not fully understood by pupils. Objectives for each lesson are not always clear and attainable. The quality of marking is high, except in Year 5 and in some classes in Year 4 where, although conscientious, the marking does not indicate to pupils what they need to do to improve. In all years, teachers' explanations in lessons are generally clear and helpful, and increasingly effective approaches are being developed to ensure that tasks are well matched



to pupils' learning needs. Homework is mostly well organised to support and extend pupils' learning. There is excellent practice in the use of homework in Year 3, and practice in Year 6 is often very good.

75. The recommendations of the national literacy strategy are sometimes followed too slavishly, and, in consequence, the teaching becomes mechanistic. In a significant number of lessons, the balance of attention to different aspects of the literacy strategy is uneven. Although pupils generally do word and sentence level work very thoroughly, they do not spend enough time exploring texts closely and finding out what is really successful about them, nor do they spend enough time learning to write successfully themselves by applying what they have discovered or been taught. This is true even of some of the lessons supposedly devoted to the development of writing.

76. Overall, pupils' learning matches the teaching and is good. However, the learning varies in quality. It is weaker among boys than girls, and is often slow in the low sets in Years 5 and 6, where much of the work is not relevant to pupils' needs and does not build clearly on earlier learning.

77. English is managed conscientiously, but not effectively enough. Coordination within year groups is generally satisfactory. However, overall leadership is not disseminating sufficient understanding of the approaches to language development required by the National Curriculum and the national literacy strategy associated with it. There are weaknesses in three areas in particular: first, in ensuring that the literacy teaching provides enough appropriate opportunities for pupils to develop as effective readers and writers; second, in overcoming weaknesses in the teaching of basic literacy; and, third, in devising appropriate responses to boys' under-achievement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

78. Results in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 were well below average, and in 2000 they were below average. In both years they were well below the national figures for similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils achieving above-average scores was in line with the national figure for all schools. Standards are improving and the percentage of pupils reaching the national average rose by 10 per cent in 2000. Nevertheless, too many pupils still fail to reach the standard expected nationally. Standards of work in Year 6 during the inspection showed that the majority of pupils reach the standard expected nationally, with a significant number doing better than this. The most talented generally perform at an appropriately high level. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress. In mathematics, boys and girls reach similar levels and make similar progress.

79. The oldest pupils in the key stage, including those in the lower sets, develop accurate, reliable methods for adding and subtracting three-digit numbers. They can multiply and divide whole numbers by 10 and a 100. Average-attaining pupils can multiply and divide using a reliable method. These pupils also use simple fractions and percentages. Higher-attaining pupils can multiply and divide large numbers and decimals. Most Year 6 pupils can classify shapes and many can draw these shapes on grids. Some of the higher-attaining pupils can measure and draw angles to the nearest degree. The ability to do mental arithmetic is developing well but pupils, particularly those in the lower of the two middle sets, are not as advanced as they should be and often response time is too slow. Pupils in Year 6 are using estimation to check their results. In the top two sets they are able to analyse key information in word problems and they have sufficient knowledge of the wide vocabulary associated with the four mathematical operations to correctly identify an appropriate method of calculation.

80. The teaching of mathematics is good overall with very good teaching in Year 3 and in some classes in Year 6. Not all lessons meet this high standard. In some lessons learning objectives are too numerous or too broad; in consequence, teachers find it difficult to select appropriate activities. Sometimes teachers continue to use the same teaching approach for too long and pupils become bored and lose concentration. On the other hand, in the best lessons teachers use both visual and oral means to teach. This is particularly effective during oral and mental introductions to lessons or topics. Teachers also use simple aids very effectively when questioning, so enabling pupils who grasp the answer to confirm their thinking. The pupils who are still uncertain are able to test their answers against a simple visual aid, such as a number square.

81. In very good lessons in Year 3 pupils played simple games with coins to develop their ability to select appropriate coins to make a specified amount. In one lesson, a ten-second time limit maintained pace and excitement. The whole class was involved in this activity. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils made very good use of opportunities to work with partners to discuss differences between alternative approaches to the subtraction of decimals. In another class, pupils benefited from very focussed teaching, which helped them to develop their ability to solve problems by highlighting key words and specific vocabulary: these indicated which calculation was needed. The teachers involved consistently required their pupils to explain their thinking; in consequence, they used mathematical language in context and consolidated their learning. In the very good lessons teachers vary their approaches when working with the whole class, using a variety of interactive techniques and not relying solely on questions. In nearly every lesson seen very good use was made of overhead projectors. Well-made slides effectively promoted understanding.

82. Teachers are still becoming familiar with the numeracy strategy, but some aspects of the necessary training are still outstanding. As a result, some aspects of subject knowledge are not strong enough and several teachers are not confident enough to select the most effective resource to teach to the required lesson objective. The three-part lesson is well established in some classes. In other classes the oral and mental 'starter' is too long and not sufficiently focussed on rehearsing and sharpening pupils' mental skills.

83. Pupils' ability to use information and communications technology to support their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding is developing well in data-handling, and pupils can select and draw appropriate graphs and charts. In Year 3 in particular, the purpose of the data collection and methodology was purposefully explored. In other areas of mathematics links with information and communications technology are not in place yet. Links with the other subjects of the curriculum are not well developed. Sometimes, the mathematical demands in other subjects exceed pupils' mathematical understanding - for example, in pupils' ability to understand spreadsheets in information and communications technology and during graphical and measuring activities in science.

84. Teachers use informal observations and regular tests to assess attainment. In some classes, notably in Years 3 and 6, marking provides pupils with good feedback about progress and areas for improvement in the next lesson. Assessments are made at the end of term and results passed to the mathematics coordinator, who analyses outcomes. In some year groups, this information is used to modify and focus future planning, but this is not yet standard practice throughout the school. This omission should be addressed. The school uses non-statutory test material and is beginning to establish procedures for tracking the progress of individual pupils and cohorts as they move through the school; the procedures promise well for the future, but are not yet developed to the point where they provide the information needed to support coordinated planning.

85. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Since May 2000 the school has made rapid progress in implementing the numeracy strategy and providing much needed training. Subject management is very good. The mathematics coordinator has been in post only a short time and has worked hard and purposefully to remedy shortcomings. She has supported colleagues well through modelling lessons and by helping with planning. The LEA numeracy consultant has also given the school good support. As a result, the teaching of numeracy is emerging as a potential strength of the school.

## **SCIENCE**

86. The oldest pupils in the key stage reach the standards expected for their age in all areas of science - physical, biological, material and investigative. At the time of the last inspection, standards were judged to be above average, but thereafter fell sharply. Since 1997, however, there has been a steady rise. In the latest National Curriculum tests in 2000, standards were average compared with all schools, but well below the average for schools with similar intake. Girls have done a little better than boys on average over the last three years.

87. Pupils are making good progress in their science lessons, as a result of mainly good teaching. The standards broadly matched those of the test results, and in the current Year 6 were close to the standards expected nationally. Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of materials and their properties, such as the ability to dissolve in water, because their teachers plan an effective range of activities, which are mostly practical and which enable them to further their knowledge and understanding. Pupils are given very good guidance on planning investigations to find out, for example, how the thickness of some liquids affects the time they take to run down a ramp. Higher-attaining pupils write their own accounts of their work well, but lower-attaining pupils and some of average attainment need help with this. Most teachers provide helpful worksheets and writing frames. Many pupils in the lowest literacy sets, however, are not able to read scientific texts with full understanding, nor to write their own reports of work unaided.

88. Good use is made of classroom assistants during practical lessons to help pupils work out and understand how to plan their work effectively; this was seen operating very well when pupils were investigating how elastic bands stretch as greater force is applied. Investigative skills develop well from Year 3 onwards. Some very good work was seen in Year 4, where teachers had guided pupils very well in their investigations into the heat-insulating properties of materials, by looking at their own clothes, chosen to keep them warm in winter. Such work helps pupils put the science they do in the context of their own lives. Teachers encourage very thorough planning of investigative work in order to instil the concept of controlling variables to make a fair test, but do not always explore the need to have a control in their investigations.

89. Because of the improving provision for numeracy in the school, most pupils have – according to their age - good measuring skills, which they apply in science, using the correct units, for example, for length and temperature. They find it difficult, however, to draw and interpret line graphs, though higher-attaining pupils in a top mathematics set worked out simple patterns between the gradients of the slope and the extension of a rubber band. Pupils are given opportunities to use computers in their science work for the analysis of data. For example, in an investigation of ‘themselves’ in Year 3, the proportion of the class with different eye and hair colour was explored, and results produced in colourful bar charts and pictograms. There are not enough resources for more advanced uses of ICT in science, however, such as data logging, to follow the course of investigations into the best way to keep water warm.

90. The teaching of science is good. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and teach to the highest level of understanding in the class, for example when presenting difficult ideas on the ways in which plants use the sun's energy to photosynthesise their own food from simple molecules. A lively explanation from a Year 5 teacher in basic terms and a clear diagram helped the majority of pupils to understand the process, and those of lower attainment grasped the simple principle that plants can make their food and provide food for animals. The teacher linked this to common vegetables that everybody was familiar with, such as potatoes and carrots. Pupils behave well as a result of their teachers' high expectations of their ability to work together responsibly in groups. Some teachers put their pupils in mixed-ability groups to give those who are good at recording and those who have good practical skills opportunities to work together for mutual benefit.

91. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science are good, particularly in Years 3 and 6, and these attributes are used to good advantage to devise imaginative methods of reinforcing knowledge and relating it to children's everyday experiences. Some homework in Year 3, for example, asked children to find out about healthy diets, and this information was compared to the diets of their various pets at home. Pupils learned that not only did animals' dietary requirements differ from humans', but also that animals have different types of teeth to cope with their food.

92. Pupils know how well they are doing in science because teachers mark their work promptly, and most put helpful suggestions for improvement in pupils' books. Assessment is thorough at the end of each module of work, and teachers keep careful records of pupils' progress, noting which aspects of the curriculum are met and understood, so that the next stage can be successfully planned.

93. The subject is well managed by an experienced coordinator who monitors the curriculum in the classroom by checking pupils' books and teachers' plans, and by a structured programme of classroom observation for which there is specific non-contact time. Resources for the subject are good, and the coordinator has made them more accessible by allocating them to topics covered in the scheme of work, which is satisfactorily adapted from the QCA guidance.

## **ART**

94. The standards reached by the oldest pupils in art and design are similar to those expected nationally, but there is also evidence of work of above-average quality, particularly in the skills of drawing from close observation of natural material such as twigs, leaves and flowers. At the time of the last inspection also, standards were judged to be above expectations in observational drawing.

95. The teaching is good overall. There is a sound basis of knowledge and expertise in the school and teachers share ideas readily. Teachers generally teach the subject to their own classes, but in Year 5, the talented art coordinator takes classes in rotation. In these lessons, although teaching skills are good, there is not enough time for pupils to benefit from them fully when, for example, they are doing still-life drawings. Pupils' work in monochrome pastels or paint developed well in the time allowed, but other pupils using coloured pastels or soft pencils were unable to achieve a good finish before they had to move on; their evaluation of their own work was, however, knowledgeable and accurate. There are examples of good art work in records or on display in the school and this shows that pupils have been well taught in skills and technique.

96. Pupils use a variety of different media well, such as paint, collage, pencil and pastel, and they also produce artefacts such as Aztec or Greek masks, which are shaped to give a

three-dimensional effect, and realistic Aztec jewellery produced from solid materials, and painted gold. Most of these articles are very striking and show not only the pupils' good observational skills but also different techniques being learned and used. In a Year 3 class, a display of different techniques, such as scrunching, quilling, folding and scoring, showed that pupils had been prepared well for their activity of making Greek masks. Many pupils were keen to show their designs in their sketchbooks.

97. Good use is made of ICT in art, both to make pictures in the style of famous artists and to research their lives to find out more about their styles and well-known works. Good examples of the pupils' response to ideas generated by the study of famous artists were seen all over the school. The pond was imaginatively used as a setting for paintings in the style of Monet's 'Water Lilies', which captured the impressionist effect well. In the hall, younger children's gymnastic friezes illustrated convincingly the features of Matisse's style with the human body. Some good sketches were seen in sketchbooks as a precursor to this work, which showed that pupils had been taught to observe carefully the properties of the human body.

98. Older pupils studying the work of William Morris had made intricate sketches and designs that captured the style very well; with some it was not possible to tell easily which was the original. All pupils questioned said they loved art, and this is borne out by the quality of work observed around the school. Inspiration for work in art is taken from many sources, including poetry, stories and accounts of journeys abroad to Australia, for instance, where some Australian aborigine art gave rise to imaginative work in a similar style, and postcards of rivers produced striking paintings and collage work. In such contexts, art makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

99. Assessment in art is at an early stage, but pupils evaluate their own work satisfactorily with their teacher and check that their objectives have been met.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

100. It was not possible to see enough lessons in this area of the curriculum to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching, but a good variety of work displayed around the school, and photographic evidence, show that the standard of work is close to that expected nationally. The situation was similar at the time of the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily, and those with weaker academic skills often shine in this practical subject.

101. In a good lesson in Year 6, pupils were seen designing and making slippers. They had considered the function of slippers and the person for whom they were being made. Because of the teacher's good questioning about this, most could identify features special to their own client. If it were a baby, for example, there would be a need for an absence of buttons or other objects a baby might chew or swallow. Pupils showed good knowledge of the purposes of a design brief during this lesson. Last year's 11-year-olds produced working models of motorised buggies in which they had to have a working electric motor and also produced a card design for the body to be mounted on a chassis. These were precisely designed and cut; butt joints were neatly glued and triangular reinforcement corners were used well, showing pupils had satisfactory knowledge of how to combine materials for added strength. Pupils in Year 3 can work out simple mechanisms such as an inflating balloon that opens the mouth of a model monster, accurately cut out and imaginatively decorated.

102. Art skills are good and many two and three-dimensional artefacts displayed show that pupils' knowledge of how to finish articles well is developed effectively in both art and design and technology. Sketchbooks used to design work show good development of ideas into a

finished product. Pupils in Year 4, for example, were working on designing and making a cardboard model of a plate, later to be realised in clay decorated with tissue paper motifs. They were well motivated by the task and looked at various examples of plates – some designed purely for eating and others of a more decorative nature. Pupils understood the difference well and were all designing for a particular purpose. Their sketchbooks showed some good examples of drawings of decorative plates, especially willow pattern plates. The drawings of some pupils showed achievement above average and the skills of many demonstrated that they had been well taught to observe and draw accurately.

103. Teachers have a satisfactory knowledge of the requirements of design and technology, and plan appropriately from the QCA guidelines for each year, aiming for two or three well-researched and thought-out projects rather than many rushed ones. This gives pupils a good idea of everyday life as they begin to realise, for example, that they should take economy of cutting materials into account when placing their patterns onto one piece of felt to cut a slipper design. Pupils enjoy practical work and are keen to talk about their products. They work well together in groups, discussing their work and often admiring that of other members of the group. They work sensibly and safely, reflecting the good teaching they have had in practical skills.

104. There is at present no designated coordinator for design and technology, but the science coordinator is doing a good caretaking job for the subject. The curriculum is satisfactorily based on QCA guidance, and most projects can be carried out with the use of good resources. Though assessment is in its infancy in the subject, thorough evaluation of products takes place, particularly as pupils get older. There are insufficient links with ICT, especially in the provision of control technology.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

105. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were judged to reach standards in line with those expected nationally. The timing of the current inspection meant that very little teaching could be observed and that not much work was available for analysis. Limited evidence suggests, however, that pupils continue to reach standards that are broadly in line with national expectations. Evidence from planning shows that previous weaknesses in the number of visits and quantity of resources have been remedied, but that the geographical analysis of the topics studied and progression in the development of skills remain inconsistent overall.

106. In lessons and other work seen, pupils in Year 4 were gaining a satisfactory understanding of the use of ordnance survey symbols and were beginning to realise the importance of keys on maps; pupils were using their skills appropriately to create imaginary village maps. In a good lesson - when the teaching encouraged discussion concerning the needs of villagers - pupils gained an appropriate understanding of why it is important to build a settlement above the flood plain of a river. Overall, however, pupils' mapping skills remain underdeveloped across the school. Year 4 pupils were confused, for example, about how to represent houses on a map. This gap in their knowledge showed a lack of prior learning about maps and plans before they had begun to work on ordnance survey maps. There was little evidence of two-figure grid referencing in a previous study of rivers and water, and no progression to four- or six-figure referencing, or work on scale. In Year 4, in a small study of the local area dealing with leisure activities, there was effective teaching, which used a variety of approaches and enabled pupils to explore geographical questions and to use ICT successfully to produce and analyse the results of a survey of leisure activities. However, an analysis of earlier work on Chembakolli, an economically deprived area in India, was narrow in focus. The teaching did not stimulate an understanding of the different lifestyles, or enable pupils to use their skills of enquiry to demonstrate their capabilities by different forms of

presentation. In contrast, an earlier study on rivers and water successfully developed pupils' enquiry skills and allowed them opportunities to analyse pollution and environmental issues.

107. Overall, the subject is managed well. Much has been done in a very short time to make good deficiencies in the organisation and teaching of the subject, but there is much still to do. The organisation of the subject does not yet ensure that the topics studied not only conform to the revised Orders of the National Curriculum, but are taught in sufficient depth to achieve continuity and progression in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not yet fully assess pupils' work, and marking that shows pupils what they need to do to improve is relatively rare.

## **HISTORY**

108. Standards in history have been maintained since the last inspection: pupils continue to attain in line with national expectations. Pupils' skills in writing continue to be a strong feature. In Year 6 some pupils are attaining above-average standards. This is the result of strong teaching and activities that challenge and stimulate pupils.

109. In Year 3, pupils have a sound awareness of life in ancient Greece and use appropriate vocabulary when writing on this topic. Most recognise and use the term 'BC' correctly and, because marking is positive, they make good progress in their understanding of the different ways in which life in Greece has been depicted. Most pupils understand the use of a 'time line' and can place important events in sequence. In Year 5, for example, pupils in one class correctly dated the reign of Henry VIII, and some central events during that reign. When supported by teaching that encourages discussion, together with skilful open questioning that challenges pupils to consider the evidence they have gathered, they begin to comment perceptively, as they did in one lesson, on the lives of rich people in Tudor times and on attitudes to the poor. In less successful lessons, an over-emphasis on 'neat work', without time for discussion, leads to pupils being less confident about analysing their research findings. In general across the school, pupils are secure in their factual knowledge of the periods they study and can explain important events, life styles, living conditions and clothing, but they are less secure about distinguishing between fact and opinion, and recognising bias in the evidence. However, as a result of effective cross-curricular links with English, pupils are increasingly able to write interesting reports and descriptions. In Year 6, for example, a range of good work was observed, the result of teaching that encouraged research and analysis, and enabled pupils to produce good reports demonstrating sensitive awareness of the effects of the Crimean war on the lives of nurses and the wounded. Their writing of journalistic articles in the style of the Victorian era, reporting on the lives of the poor, demonstrated good understanding of life in that time. Through effective use of local census data from 1851 and 1881, teaching stimulated pupils' sense of enquiry and, because they were motivated, pupils were able to identify pertinent changes that occurred in the lives of people in certain streets. Overall, the quality of teaching is good.

110. The recently appointed coordinator has achieved much in a short time. Pertinent plans are in place to address recent changes in the National Curriculum, although the planned 'world study' is currently given too little time on the timetable in Year 6 to ensure an appropriate depth and breadth of study. Resources, visits and visiting speakers effectively support the curriculum, and because of this pupils enjoy history and benefit considerably from the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

111. Standards in information and communications technology are above average overall. Improvement since the last inspection has been very rapid during the past year. Until

recently, all the teaching was done by learning support assistants with small groups of pupils. Now the majority of teachers teach the subject in class lessons and do it well.

112. Teaching is at least very good and occasionally excellent in Years 3 and 6. In other year groups it is always at least satisfactory and is often good. A knowledgeable learning support assistant, who makes good use of teachers' planning, supports lessons very well. There is very good use of class teaching to demonstrate skills and procedures and help pupils understand the general application of their work. Pupils share resources effectively and work well together, taking turns to use the keyboard and mouse. Planning is thorough. In each lesson seen there was clear and focussed teaching to the whole class before pupils worked on the computers. In each instance, higher-attaining pupils were given more challenging tasks and pupils with special educational needs received extra support. In order to ensure that one pupil did not dominate, partners were chosen with care. All was well managed.

113. Pupils in Year 6 are able to create multi-media presentations, using sequences of instructions and presenting their information in different forms and styles. Pupils in Year 5 are able to build a spreadsheet as a means of carrying out calculations. In Year 3, pupils learn how to combine text and graphics by locating clip art and re-sizing frames. In all classes pupils can log on to the network. Pupils willingly talk about their work and can describe and recall the purposes of earlier work. There was limited evidence of modelling and control, but this strand is included in the scheme of work. Throughout the key stage, pupils' understanding of the use and effects of information and communications technology in the wider world is well developed for their age. Pupils' skills are further enhanced because they are able to attend a daily lunchtime computer club. This is supervised by the coordinator, but run by a highly competent group of Year 6 pupils on a rotational basis.

114. The coordinator for information and communications technology has successfully introduced a new scheme of work based on the QCA materials. New equipment and new software have been introduced and most staff are now confident enough to teach the required programme. Those still lacking confidence are very well supported by the coordinator, who does some specialist teaching. There is further training planned in the very near future to bring all the teachers up to a high level of competence. The school has made a good start in adopting some good locally produced assessment materials. These are not in place across the school yet, and need developing so that the school can judge the attainment of individuals and cohorts and their rate of progress. Cross-curricular links are not yet firmly established although some training is booked to develop this aspect of provision. The rapid progress made in the development of the subject is the result of very good management by the coordinator, supported by the headteacher, particularly in the setting of clear priorities. The school has invested heavily in a new computer suite; more computers are to be purchased shortly. This has enabled teachers to work with whole classes in order to bring knowledge and skills up to a high level.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

115. The teaching of French has been continued since the school became a primary school. When it was a middle school, French was taught in all year groups, often by non-specialist teachers, a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection. Currently, French is taught by specialists throughout the age range, on a flexible basis, with the headteacher joining two other teachers to ensure provision of one 45-minute period a week for each class.

116. The teaching seen - two lessons in Year 6 and one in Year 4, all taken by the headteacher - was predominantly of very high quality. All the lessons moved at a very good



pace, pupils were kept on their toes throughout, a wide range of suitable resources was used, and almost all the teaching was in the foreign language. The teacher ensured that there was lots of chorus work and well-managed reinforcement of earlier learning. Pupils made very good progress in the lessons, though in Year 6 it was more rapid in one class than the other. The standards reached were appropriate, given the variations in pupils' earlier experience in the subject. Pupils' grasp of the language was particularly good in one of the Year 6 classes. They had learnt good patterns of intonation, had good pronunciation and were familiar with an appropriate range of words and expressions. They had learnt to listen carefully for detail, how to answer questions on the topics they had covered and how to initiate and develop simple conversations on familiar topics. They were well versed in methods for memorising words and phrases. All showed confidence in talking and listening and were developing an interest in France and things French. They clearly enjoyed learning the language.

117. In the second Year 6 class, response was less consistent, and pupils' progress was uneven. A few pupils, mainly boys, felt they had lost their way in the language and could not keep up. They were, in a sense, already disaffected because they had not received consistently good teaching in earlier years. This was by no means the dominant pattern of response in this lesson, however. Most pupils listened carefully to and responded well to questions. A high-attaining boy showed particular perceptiveness, and an understanding of the links between his work in French and learning in the literacy hour, when he asked, after looking at some French words on the board: "Are virtually all the e's silent in French?" The development of understanding of this sort demonstrates one of the significant contributions that French can make to the primary curriculum. Most pupils in this class showed a good level of accuracy in using and applying material they had already learnt and absorbed. However, their pronunciation and intonation were less accomplished than in the other Year 6 class seen.

118. In the Year 4 class, pupils had made a very good start in learning the language, and their attitudes and behaviour were excellent. They already knew in French the numbers to 20, the main parts of the body, the days of the week and the months of the year. They had remembered and could sing some simple French songs. The lesson seen was very well managed, with plenty of appropriate repetition and reinforcement, but it never became boring.

119. French makes an important contribution to pupils' learning at the school, and the subject is managed effectively by a well-qualified coordinator. However, if the contribution of French is to be significant in the longer term, contacts should be maintained with the receiving secondary schools to ensure that pupils' learning there builds effectively on earlier experience of a modern language at the junior school. The teaching of French means a slight reduction of time for other areas, mainly English or personal, social and health education, and it is important that the subject should make a worthwhile long-term contribution to pupils' learning of modern languages if this reduction is to be justified. Links between French and other subjects should also be developed further. The school intends to build up contacts with a French school, and has organised an ambitious trip to France for the summer of 2001, to which over 70 pupils are looking forward and for which they are already preparing.

## **MUSIC**

120. The oldest pupils in the key stage attain the standards expected for their age. This is a similar picture to that reported at the time of the last inspection.

121. All pupils sing tunefully in the daily assemblies, showing good control of pitch, dynamics and rhythm. Younger pupils sing very well and achieve standards that are higher

than expected for pupils of their age. This was evident when pupils in Year 3 effectively sustained their own parts while singing a call and response song and as they performed a two-part round. Pupils make good progress in their singing because of the direct teaching of skills, which effectively improves their performance. For example, pupils are continuously reminded of the need for correct posture and to consider their breathing as they are singing. Pupils develop their appreciation of music from other countries as they listen to and perform a wide range of songs, including African and French songs. In Years 4 and 5, pupils show below-average skills for their age; they could not maintain a simple repeated rhythm in accompaniment to a song, for example. However, pupils in Year 6 make good progress and are able to work in pairs to perform their own compositions on tuned percussion instruments, using the pentatonic scale. Some higher-attaining pupils use standard musical notation to record their compositions. Pupils become familiar with the works of famous composers when, for example, music is used to create a reflective atmosphere as pupils enter the hall for the daily act of collective worship. The school is strongly committed to enabling pupils to play musical instruments, and all those who wish are given the opportunity to do this. This provision considerably enhances pupils' learning. Currently 16 per cent of pupils receive brass, strings or woodwind tuition from a visiting teacher. Although most pupils are relative beginners, those who were observed clearly enjoyed the tuition and were beginning to play their instruments expressively. Many other pupils attend one of three recorder groups, and 30 pupils belong to the school guitar club. Learning is further enhanced by the opportunities that are provided for pupils to perform within the school and in the community.

122. The quality of teaching is mostly good and never less than satisfactory. In one Year 6 lesson, teaching was very good. This lesson was well planned and effectively organised. A brisk pace was maintained and the teacher's high expectations ensured that all pupils made very good progress in their learning, as they were given good opportunities to listen, compose, perform and evaluate one another's work. A good number of tuned percussion instruments were provided so that pupils were able to work effectively in pairs to compose a short song, which they then performed to the rest of the class. In this instance, all the pupils were very well behaved and worked with enthusiasm and concentration. In all music lessons, teachers use the correct musical terms and, as a result, most older pupils are familiar with musical terms such as 'tempo' and 'dynamics'. In Year 4, the immature behaviour of some pupils, mainly boys, adversely affected learning, because they did not listen well to the teacher's instructions or work collaboratively to maintain accompaniments. In most lessons, however, pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy performing to the rest of the class.

123. Although not a music specialist, the coordinator manages the subject well. As there are no musicians on the staff of the school a scheme of work has been chosen specifically because it provides good guidelines for non-musicians, and teachers' confidence is beginning to improve as a result. As yet, there are insufficient systems in place for assessing or recording pupils' progress in music from one year to the next.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

124. Overall, standards in physical education are in line with those expected nationally. This is similar to the situation at the time of the last inspection. Girls achieve as well as boys. Dance is a strength of the physical education provision and, in this area of the subject, the standards reached by the oldest pupils exceed expectations for pupils of this age. Two years ago, the physical education apparatus in the hall was deemed unsafe for use, and until this was replaced pupils were unable to practise and develop their gymnastic skills. Because of this, the gymnastic skills of some older pupils are below expectations.

125. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. In the dance lessons observed the teaching varied from very good to excellent and, in consequence, pupils made very good or excellent progress. Teachers have very good expertise in this area of physical education, and their confidence and enthusiasm are transferred to the pupils, who are very well motivated to give of their best. Resources, such as a video recording of the musical "Cats", are used well to demonstrate the techniques of dance, and the direct teaching of skills effectively enhances learning. As a result, the majority of pupils use their bodies extremely effectively when, for example, they work in pairs to devise and perform a synchronised routine where they stretch, creep and pounce in the manner of cats. In the lesson observed, Year 6 pupils were totally absorbed in their dance routines and the behaviour of all was exemplary, as they evaluated one another's performance and made constructive suggestions for improvement. Gymnastics and games lessons are mostly well planned and a brisk pace is maintained, so that pupils spend the majority of the lesson in physical activity and make progress that is at least satisfactory. Teachers are always suitably dressed in order to be able to demonstrate techniques, and pupils are used well to illustrate good performance. In every lesson, pupils explain the importance of warming up before physical activity. In Year 4, pupils demonstrated good catching and throwing skills as they participated in a team game by passing the ball to each other. They understood the techniques of interception and evasion, and passed a large ball accurately. Year 5 pupils demonstrated growing gymnastic competence as they created movement sequences of increasing complexity, moving on and over the apparatus by linking rolls, balances and jumps. However, the control and coordination of most of these pupils are below average. In some cases, the apparatus used and the way it is arranged are insufficiently challenging for this age group and this limits their progress in the development of gymnastic skills. The school supports an effective swimming programme and most pupils are able to meet the swimming requirements of the National Curriculum before the end of Key Stage 2.

126. The subject is managed well by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinator. She is a dance specialist who has used her specialist knowledge most successfully to raise standards by providing in-service training in dance for the rest of the staff. Long-term planning is based on guidelines that have been effectively adapted by the coordinator to meet the particular needs of the school. She has correctly identified the need for improved assessment as a priority for development and is in the process of developing procedures. Throughout the school, pupils' physical education is considerably enhanced by the good opportunities that are provided for extra-curricular activity in a wide variety of sports, and for involvement in inter-schools competitions.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

127. Standards in religious education broadly meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, as was the case at the time of the last inspection, but standards should be higher, particularly for average and lower-attaining pupils. The subject is organised effectively now, with appropriate time allocations, guidelines for each year group and improved resources. Where there are weaknesses, they are the result of undemanding teaching and an over-emphasis on knowledge about religious practices as opposed to an understanding of religious belief and its significance for and influence on people's lives.

128. Almost all the lessons seen during the inspection were concerned with the festival of Advent in the Christian calendar. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of Christianity. They know that Advent is concerned with waiting for the coming of Jesus and many can point out, unaided, that Jesus is 'The Light of the World' and that for this reason Advent is celebrated through the lighting of candles. A significant number are able to draw parallels between Advent and festivals such as Diwali in religions they have studied previously. Higher-attaining pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the

diversity of the world's religious faiths, including Judaism and Islam. The knowledge and understanding of other pupils vary greatly and many find it difficult to remember with any precision the different topics they have covered. To judge by the lessons seen, teachers do not reinforce earlier learning sufficiently, or draw together clearly enough the common threads in the different areas of the syllabus.

129. There are examples of very good work in exercise books and displays, but much is decorative rather than interpretative. In too many of the lessons seen, pupils were deflected from potentially valuable discussion or investigation to worksheet-based exercises that often involved little more than writing short accounts or short answers to questions, or the completion of various forms of illustration or 'colouring-in'. In the early part of a Year 5 lesson, which was particularly lively and interesting, pupils showed good understanding of the implications of Advent and contributed to a general but searching discussion about religious belief. The teacher directed the discussion sensitively and effectively. This very promising beginning was extinguished, however, when the class was turned over to making Advent cards, which were supposed to include a prayer that explained the meaning of Advent. Because pupils had not been prepared precisely enough for this demanding task, the results were predominantly superficial. By contrast, pupils in the same year had clearly benefited from recent and well-planned visits to local places of worship. One girl had written: "The Maids of Moreton in the church were beautiful and wherever I sat they seemed real and to look at me. Outside the church there was a carpet of red leaves on the path...I liked the whole of Maids Moreton because it made me feel secure in God's House."

130. The quality of the teaching is satisfactory overall, and one very good lesson was seen in Year 3, when pupils were taken beyond the immediate and superficial and required to reflect. They responded thoughtfully and intelligently and made very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Lessons throughout the school are prepared conscientiously and supported by mainly appropriate use of resources, as in an effective Year 6 lesson when the pupils learnt about symbolism through studying the significance of colour in paintings. In this lesson, effective links were made with earlier learning, but the impact was reduced to some extent by follow-up tasks that did not demand enough of the highest-attaining pupils.

131. Religious education is well coordinated and well placed to improve further if the reflective and interpretative aspects of the subject can be given greater emphasis, and better links made with pupils' learning in literacy. There is little evidence of the use of ICT in the subject.

