

INSPECTION REPORT

**Puller Memorial Voluntary Aided
Church of England Primary School**

High Cross, Ware

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117453

Headteacher: Mrs V Townsend

Reporting inspector: Kath Beck
10090

Dates of inspection: 18th-20th September 2000

Inspection number: 225093

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Rev. H Sharman
Date of previous inspection:	10 th June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kath Beck 10090	Registered inspector	Under Fives Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology Art Design and technology Music	What sort of school is it? How high are the standards? How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Diane Jenkin 9587	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?
Martyn Richards 7694	Team inspector	English Science Geography History Physical education Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils? (Assessment) How well is the school led and managed? (Finance)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Puller Memorial Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a very small school with 52 children aged from four to 11 on roll. This number is increasing rapidly with children joining different year groups across the school. Children are organised into two classes, an infants class consisting of children of nursery age to Year 2 and a juniors class, Years 3 to 6. There are no children from the ethnic minorities or with English as an additional language. There are seven children on the school's register for special educational needs. Attainment on entry is broad but mostly similar to that which is expected for children aged four. The school is situated close to a local secondary school and a middle school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school. Standards of performance have been improved in English and mathematics since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has also improved. The governing body is an effective force for improvement, working closely with the headteacher and staff to develop the school and improve standards in all areas of the curriculum. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school keeps a close watch on standards in English and mathematics building on the strengths found in the last inspection. Children read well.
- The school makes very good provision for children's social development.
- Staff collaborate very effectively with other small schools and the local secondary school to provide a broad range of learning experiences for the children.
- Relationships and attitudes in school are very good, resulting in very good behaviour.
- Governors are well informed. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well.
- Resources for information and communication technology are very good.

What could be improved

- The number of teachers and accommodation so that there is better provision for children in the foundation stage and enough time for the headteacher to carry out her management responsibilities effectively.
- Staff skills in teaching the foundation stage and science in Years 1 and 2 and planning for teaching information and communication technology throughout the school.
- The time allocation for information and communication technology, science, history and geography is less than it should be.
- Teachers' expectations with regard to the presentation of work, the achievement of boys and the provision of harder work for the older and more capable children throughout the school.
- The policy for dealing with children with special educational needs. It should meet the requirements of the National Code of Practice. Class work for children with special educational needs is not matched well to targets in their individual education plans and they do not always receive their full curriculum entitlement.
- Communications with parents.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since 1996. Standards in English and mathematics have improved. There are more opportunities for children to explore their ideas in mathematics, art and design and technology, but still not enough investigative work in science. Programmes of work help children to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding systematically. The school development plan is now derived from the analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A close check is kept on children's achievement and progress in English and mathematics. Checks on the quality of teaching and the curriculum are limited as the headteacher has little time free from her classroom responsibilities to carry out these management tasks. In addition to the key issues, the school has strengthened its links with other schools to provide residential visits and good sports opportunities. The number of children on roll and staying on until the end of Year 6 has doubled.

STANDARDS

The table, which normally appears here and shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests, is not published as the number of children taking the tests is less than 10. The small number of children taking the tests means comparisons with all and similar schools are unreliable. That said, the trend in results over the last three years shows sustained good results in English and mathematics tests. Additional information from the Local Authority indicates the school has been doing well in comparison to other Hertfordshire schools over the past four years.

Observations and scrutiny of work show that children do well at age 11 in English, mathematics and physical education. Their achievements in science, art, design and technology, geography, history and music are similar to those expected for children of this age. The picture is similar for children aged seven in English and mathematics, although achievements in science, geography, history and music are lower than they should be. Throughout the school, standards are not high enough in information and communication technology. The school has recognised the underachievement of boys, especially in Year 3, but has not yet put effective strategies in place to improve the situation. Children in the foundation stage¹ achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. However, the lack of appropriate accommodation and a suitable curriculum hinders the speed of children's progress so that they do not do as well as they should in other areas of learning².

The school's targets for children to reach nationally expected levels for children aged 11 for the year 2001 are both challenging and realistic and the school is on course to meet these.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Children are keen to come to school and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good, especially in the dining hall at lunchtime when older and younger children eat their lunch at the same tables.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children get on very well together. The older children particularly enjoy reading to the younger children.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Children in the foundation stage play together very well. In Years 1 to 6, children are keen to learn. They listen attentively to their teachers and do their best to complete work in the time set, but give too little attention to presenting their work neatly. Occasionally, boys in Year 2 become restless when work is not as challenging as it could be.

¹ Children aged from nursery to 5, the end of the reception year.

² Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage are i) personal, social and emotional development, ii) communication, language and literacy, iii) mathematics, iv) knowledge and understanding of the world, v) physical development vi) creative development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good

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

The quality of teaching is generally sound and frequently good. Of the 17 lessons observed, eight were taught well, seven satisfactorily and two unsatisfactorily. This is an improvement over the last inspection when almost one quarter of lessons seen was unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in Years 3 to 6 especially in English and mathematics. In Years 1 and 2, English and mathematics are taught thoroughly, but there are weaknesses in science and music. Teachers give good attention to teaching reading so that children read well and use this skill effectively across the curriculum. Good mathematics teaching means children feel confident in using their number skills in practical situations such as estimating small distances and then measuring that distance accurately. Physical education is taught well in Years 1 to 6. Teaching in the foundation stage is delegated entirely to a nursery nurse. This promotes very good personal, social and emotional development but faster progress, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development is hindered by a lack of expertise for this age group within the teaching staff.

Teachers base much of the children's work on practical experiences, which makes learning real and captures their interest. Lessons are planned well to build on what children have learned before. A particular strength is that teachers make a good response to children's views and enable them to use their initiative and express their ideas especially in discussions, writing, art and design and technology. Skilled classroom assistants are deployed effectively and under the guidance of the class teacher, take the lead in teaching small groups during literacy and numeracy lessons. Children with special educational needs are enabled to make good progress when working individually or in small groups, but this means they are withdrawn from class at regular times. They miss lessons such as geography, music and information and communication technology and this time cannot be made up. Work in class, especially in literacy and numeracy, is not matched sufficiently to children's individual education plans. In Years 1 to 6, while teachers take into account the children's ages when planning work, it is not always hard enough for the older and brighter children in each class.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Children enjoy a broad range of practical learning experiences but too little time is spent on acquiring skills in information and communication technology, science, history and geography. There is no clear programme of work for the children in the foundation stage.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good in small group work undertaken outside the classroom.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for social development through residential visits, links with other schools and responsibilities for the older children to look after the younger ones. Provision for spiritual and moral development is satisfactory and good for cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for its children and supports their personal development well.

The school's partnership with parents is not as good as it should be. Parents are supportive and value the school's strengths. They rightly identify shortcomings in the quality of the school's communications especially with regard to the children's progress.

The very extensive physical education programme, including swimming takes up considerably more time than in most other primary schools, but children achieve good standards. There is not enough time for information and communication technology throughout the school, science in Years 1 to 6 and for history and geography in Years 1 and 2. Children are cared for well. The youngest children are made to feel welcome quickly when joining the school. There are very good procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour and good manners. Children respond very well to these so that there is a very good atmosphere in which children can learn.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led effectively. This means standards have improved and the number of children on roll has risen sharply. A heavy teaching commitment limits time for the headteacher to carry out leadership and management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is an effective force for improvement and fulfils most responsibilities well. The school's policy for special educational needs ought to be brought up to date.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Information from the school's evaluation of its performance in national tests is used appropriately to identify priorities for development.
The strategic use of resources	The school does not spend as high a proportion of its budget on the provision of teaching staff as other schools, but spends more on administrative staff than other schools.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory, as they are insufficient to meet the needs of children in the foundation stage and allow the headteacher time to carry out her management responsibilities. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They play an important part in shaping its work, especially the drive to improve standards in information and communication technology and improved provision for children with special educational needs. The headteacher and governors are aware of the principles of getting the best value for their money. They apply these principles well with regard to spending on tenders for building, equipment and services. They have yet to apply them to spending budget headings relating to teaching and administrative staff.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Good teaching which enables children to work hard. • High standards of behaviour. • Improvements in standards in mathematics, provision for children with special educational needs, resources and security. • The way the school helps children become mature. • The welcome the youngest children receive when they first start school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement in information and communication technology. • Leadership and management. • Faster consideration of issues relating to children with special educational needs so that they get the help they require quickly. • More opportunities to examine and discuss their children's work with the teachers. • Information about the work children are asked to do at home. • A closer partnership, so that parents find it comfortable to approach the school. • More out of school activities.

Inspectors fully support the parents' positive views and most of what they would like to see improved. The extra curricular programme, including that available through the liaison with other small schools, is satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Children are making steady progress and the standard of work in most subjects is similar to that in other schools. Children in Years 3 to 6 make faster progress as they benefit from consistently good teaching. The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has contributed to the improved quality of teaching for children in Years 1 to 6, bringing about higher standards in English and mathematics. Standards are higher in mathematics as children now cover all aspects of the curriculum thoroughly, correcting a weakness identified in the last inspection. As a result, standards are good in English and mathematics for children at ages seven and 11. This is reflected in national test results for both age groups over the past two years.
- 2 At age 11, standards are good in physical education and satisfactory in science, art, design and technology, history, geography and music. At age seven, children achieve better in physical education and as well as others of their age in art, design and technology. They do not achieve as well in science, history, geography and music. This is because too little time is set aside for these subjects and lessons are too infrequent to allow children to build up their knowledge, skills and understanding in a well-ordered way. Although teachers have undergone training in their own time and are competent and confident in their own computer skills, they are not yet planning for and teaching information and communication technology well enough to add to the skills that children bring from home. This means children's achievement in this subject is not high enough. The recent provision of very good resources, accommodation and planned training according to a national initiative for teachers to improve their technical knowledge, skills and curriculum planning means the time is right for standards to improve quickly. At the present time information and communication technology is not used often enough to help raise standards in other subjects.
- 3 Assessments of what children know and can do on entry to school show that children have a broad range of academic and social skills. Mostly they are typical of children aged four. They make good progress personally, socially and emotionally and work together very well, sharing resources and playing games requiring good co-operation and communication. For example, during the inspection a small group of children worked well together to complete a large jigsaw puzzle successfully. Limited resources, accommodation and expertise in teaching are hindering the provision of high quality learning experiences so that children in the foundation stage make slower progress in language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. At present, the school is not adding much to the skills the children bring from home. Most children are not making fast enough progress towards achieving the expected learning goals³ at the end of the foundation stage.
- 4 The school recognises that there is a difference in the achievement of boys,

³ Achievements expected in each of the areas of experience in the curriculum for children in the foundation stage.

especially in Years 3 and 5. Girls do better in reading and writing, while boys do better in mathematics. However, it has taken little action to enable boys to improve their achievement. Children do not take enough care in the presentation of their work, which makes it hard for them to work accurately in mathematics and raise achievement in writing.

- 5 Teachers, especially in Years 3 to 6 give good attention to teaching basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Children's speaking and listening, reading and mental arithmetic skills are good. Children are articulate and confident when expressing their point of view. They read fluently, expressively and with good understanding of the characters and plot. Stories written by older children are lively and interesting in content. They use their mathematics skills to solve problems and apply them to other subjects such as design and technology. However, there is evidence in the scrutiny of work that some teachers' expectations are low as children are presented with uninteresting worksheets that require colouring in. This does little to extend children's knowledge skills and understanding, especially in science, history and geography. Also work is planned, on the basis of children's ages and National Curriculum levels, rather than the needs of the brighter and older children in each age group.
- 6 The school has set its targets for improvement in children's achievements. With the number of children on roll increasing in each year group, including an increasing number of children with special educational needs, it is hard for the school to predict whether it will meet its annual targets for achievement. Targets for 2001, where it is anticipated that 86% of children will reach the nationally expected level 4 in English and mathematics, are both realistic and challenging. If the children in the current Year 6 remain the same, on present performance the school is on course to meet them. This is because there is a shared commitment to help the children succeed. In mathematics in Years 3 to 6, children have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- 7 The percentage of children on the school's register for children with special educational needs is lower than in other schools. These children receive good support from an able classroom assistant who leads small group and individual sessions. Much of their good progress in literacy relies on work completed in these sessions. Progress in lessons is slower as the challenging targets in their individual education plans are not carried forward into their class work. Also children are taken out of lessons, such as geography, for work in literacy. The co-ordinator for children with special educational needs has expertise in this area. With a heavy teaching commitment she cannot check the quality of provision and teaching for children with special educational needs systematically.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 8 Children's attitudes to learning are very good. In class they concentrate well and

show a keen interest in the tasks they are doing, trying hard to give of their best. There is a high level of participation in lessons with most children showing an eagerness to contribute and a real enthusiasm for their work. Children listen carefully to their teacher and each other and contribute very well during discussions.

- 9 Behaviour is very good throughout the school and especially in Years 3 to 6. Children behave well at all times, for example when working alone and not as part of a teacher led group, or during wet playtimes. Some younger children can become restless and show lapses in concentration. This causes slight disruption to lessons, but is usually managed well by the teacher. Children move around the school in an orderly manner and treat the school's property and resources with respect. The children are polite, friendly and helpful to each other and adults. They are happy to talk to visitors about themselves and their interests and they are enthusiastic about their school. Almost all parents are happy with the standards of behaviour in the school.
- 10 Relationships are very good. Children co-operate well and work responsibly together in pairs or groups. They are sensitive and supportive of each other's feelings, for example when taking part in paired reading. Children are aware of the 'Golden Rules' and the school's expectation that they treat each other with kindness and the vast majority respond very well to this. No incidents of bullying or racism were observed during the inspection.
- 11 Almost all children respond well to the opportunities to take responsibility or show initiative. They carry out helpful tasks around the school in a conscientious manner, often showing enthusiasm and maturity. The oldest children are to be congratulated on the very responsible way they look after the welfare of the younger children, particularly at lunchtime. They take this responsibility very seriously and they are proud of the contribution they make to the friendly, family atmosphere in the school.
- 12 Attendance is satisfactory and similar to the national average. There is hardly any unauthorised absence. Children are happy and keen to come to school.
- 13 The very positive attitudes and the very good behaviour displayed by the children, together with the positive relationships, are a strength of the school and have a very significant impact on children's personal development and the educational standards achieved. This is a further improvement on the positive situation described in the previous inspection report.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 14 The quality of teaching is generally sound and frequently good and this represents an improvement since 1996 when almost a quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory. Of the 17 lessons observed, eight were taught well, seven satisfactorily and two

unsatisfactorily. The good teaching, in Years 3 to 6 enables children to make good progress especially in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Good lessons in Years 1 and 2 helped children to make good progress in mathematics and physical education. Undemanding and uninteresting work in science and music meant children did not make the progress they should in these lessons. All teachers are looking forward to undergoing training from a national initiative in information and communication technology soon so that they can make the most effective use of the new resources. They are aware that they do not give enough time to the subject or build children's skills systematically and this limits the progress children make.

- 15 Teaching of children in the foundation stage is delegated to a nursery nurse under the direction of the teacher of the infant class. Observations of these sessions show that relationships are very good and there is a strong, successful emphasis on the development of children's social skills. There is a positive atmosphere in which children feel confident and secure. At the time of the inspection the nursery nurse was temporary, covering for staff absence. The teacher worked well with the nursery nurse but lack of expertise with this age group meant the tasks planned for each session did not take into account what children already knew, what they were to learn or how they were to learn it. This, together with limited resources and accommodation, means expectations are too low and children work on tasks, which they can do easily. This is similar to the situation in 1996.
- 16 As at the time of the last inspection, teachers use a good balance of teaching methods, such as whole class, group or individual activities. Teaching in literacy and numeracy has been implemented well following guidance within the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This is having a positive impact on sustaining good standards in English and raising them in mathematics. Teachers use the skilled classroom assistants effectively to lead groups in the daily literacy and mathematics lessons. Teachers give clear introductions to lessons and ask effective questions which enable children to think hard about what they are learning. A good relationship between the teachers and the children makes for a positive atmosphere giving children confidence to learn. A particular strength is the value teachers place on children's contributions to lessons. These are used well to reinforce learning for other children. Since the last inspection, teachers provide more opportunities for children to develop investigative and research skills, especially in art, design and technology and information and communication technology in the juniors' class. Reading is taught well and remains a strength from the previous inspection.
- 17 Most lessons in Years 1 to 6 are planned in detail and build on what children have learned before. Much of the work is based on first hand, practical experiences, which makes learning purposeful and engages children's interest. Teachers give attention to planning work at the National Curriculum level for their age group but unlike the picture at the time of the previous inspection, there is not always a good level of challenge for the older or brighter children in each class. There is a reliance on worksheets, especially in the foundation stage, geography and history and occasionally in science and mathematics, that children complete by colouring in.

These tasks require little intellectual effort. Teachers do expect children to complete good amounts of work in the time available, but in their hurry, children do not take sufficient care over the presentation of their work.

- 18 Children with special educational needs receive good attention in small groups or individually in sessions away from the classroom. They are taught by an able classroom assistant, who knows them well and who follows closely activities planned to help children achieve the targets in their individual education plans. The tasks are challenging and reflect the needs of the children. In these instances, relationships are very good, children are motivated well, keen to please and make good progress. This is at the expense of learning in subjects such as geography, music and information and communication technology from which the children are withdrawn for the additional work in literacy. Work planned in class takes too little account of these children's needs, which are identified in their individual education plans and advice from other professionals and this hinders progress.
- 19 Resources are chosen well in Years 1 to 6 to support learning. Time is used well in most lessons, but sometimes time is lost as lessons, such as science and music, are inappropriately planned to take place after physical education lessons. Young children take time to change and this eats into time for other subjects.
- 20 Children's work is marked but not always regularly and consistently enough to give children a clear idea of how well they are doing, how they can correct their mistakes or what they need to do to improve. During lessons, teachers check that the children can do the work and in art give clear indications of how they can improve their work. They do not check sufficiently if the work is too easy or too difficult in order to plan work accordingly in the next lesson. Homework is set, but not always built into lessons to check children's understanding of the work done at home, enhance learning and enable children to make faster progress.

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

- 21 The last inspection noted some weaknesses in the curriculum the school offered to its children. The full breadth of the National Curriculum was not being taught and the requirement for investigative work especially in mathematics and science was not being met. The way work was planned over time did not ensure a steady lesson by lesson build up of knowledge and skills in all subjects. The school has addressed these issues with a good measure of success. All subjects are now taught in accordance with statutory requirements, although there is still too little investigative work in science, especially in Years 1 and 2. Planning is much improved and learning progresses more systematically over time.
- 22 Governors and staff have energetically and successfully implemented the recent national initiatives for literacy and numeracy and these are helping raise the standards seen at the last inspection. While adopting these new programmes, staff have also tried to retain the full breadth of the rest of the curriculum. This has meant a very demanding development programme for such a small staff and while it has been largely successful, there are aspects in which the curriculum is unsatisfactory and the work programme as a whole is unbalanced.
- 23 The very recent, new curriculum programme for children in the foundation stage has

yet to be planned in depth to ensure children develop appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate. Its strength is in developing children's personal and social development so they have high self-esteem and work well together. At present teachers' expertise, limited resources and accommodation restrict the curriculum for children of this age in other areas⁴. The children are cared for separately from the children in Years 1 and 2, who share the same classroom. This means they often work in the multi-purpose hall. Activities are planned to take place at the same time each week depending on whether the classroom or hall is available. As a result it is hard to provide for a wide variety of good quality learning experiences that challenge children's intellectual, physical and creative efforts and take into account their needs and achievements.

- 24 Too little time is given to science in Years 1 to 6 and there are still too few opportunities for children to develop their investigative and experimental skills in the subject. As a result, standards in science are not as good as they should be. This is especially marked in Years 1 and 2, where the provision of history and geography is also unsatisfactory. The school is still at an early stage in teaching the statutory programme for information and communication technology. While the curriculum in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory at present, and too little time is given to it, this is recognised by the school and its annual development plan gives priority to raising the quality of provision in the coming year. The school's very extensive programme of swimming, games and physical education uses considerably more time than is usual in primary schools.
- 25 The school has a good programme for personal social and health education and arrangements with a local secondary school give older children a valuable opportunity to take part in a citizenship day. A sound sex education programme is offered and children learn about healthy and harmful substances in their science lessons.
- 26 The school's membership of a local cluster of small primary schools is a very important factor in enabling it to offer a broad and varied programme, both within the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. In addition, the small schools work together on management issues such as the production of curriculum policies and schemes. Staff are currently working together to implement the changes brought about by the newly revised National Curriculum. These collaborative arrangements are a strength of the school.
- 27 Much of the work in classrooms begins from well planned first hand experiences, such as visits to historic sites like Wimpole Hall, field trips to study river systems and ecology and the annual residential study trip. The effort put into the provision of these opportunities pays dividends. They motivate the children, help ensure good levels of interest and attention and bring learning alive for them. In many lessons, children are encouraged to express and argue their own points of view, to take small decisions for themselves and to show a measure of independence. This is one of the school's strengths, building up a sense of personal responsibility, as well as promoting their spoken language skills.
- 28 The school itself offers few extra-curricular activities but joins enthusiastically in the

⁴ communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development, creative development.

local small schools cluster to provide curricular enrichment for the children. In addition to shared lessons in some subjects, extra-curricular arrangements include team games, combined teams for local competitions, combined school journey, and drama, art and music clubs. Overall extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.

- 29 Staff and governors are aware of the importance of ensuring equal opportunity by making all curriculum activities available to all groups of children. They are largely successful in this, but there are areas in which some groups of children receive less than their full entitlement. The school recognises that boys, especially in Year 3, are not progressing as well as girls. However, not enough action has been taken to address the issue. When some children with special educational needs are withdrawn from class lessons, they miss learning opportunities to which they are entitled. The regular withdrawal of children in Years 5 and 6 from their only weekly geography lesson is an example.
- 30 Provision for children with special educational needs has improved recently but needs to be reviewed so that they make progress in all subjects. The work in individual and small group sessions with a classroom assistant or specialist teacher is closely matched to the targets in children's individual education plans. Children are taught well and make good progress in reading, writing and oral skills in these sessions. Teachers do not take sufficient account of the targets in children's individual education plans when planning their work in class, especially in the daily literacy and mathematics lessons and this holds back progress. There is also a need for harder work for the brighter children.
- 31 The strengths in the provision of opportunities for children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development noted in the last inspection have been sustained. Parents recognise the school's success in these areas.
- 32 The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual and moral development of the children. In addition to opportunities in assembly, children are often moved to wonder and appreciation in the normal course of school lessons. Older children marvelled at new life when a newborn baby was brought to school as part of their science programme. Texts used in literacy lessons often challenge children to think about the differences between people's beliefs and to reflect on their own. In class, teachers regularly raise issues of fairness, honesty and telling the truth. Teachers themselves set a very good example of kindness and fairness.
- 33 Arrangements to promote social awareness and development are very good. Older children help and care for younger ones, for example during paired reading, in sensitive ways. They learn about their own dependency on others and their duty to help others in their turn. They contribute generously to charities, recognising their wider social responsibilities. Joining children from other cluster schools is an excellent opportunity to make new relationships and the combined school trip journey gives an ideal chance to learn about social living outside the home. The school, supported by the local cluster group, makes good provision for cultural development. There is a strong programme of visits to places of cultural importance, as well as musicians who visit the schools. Activities such as Irish dancing add a multicultural dimension to this provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 34 The school takes good care of its children and supports and monitors their personal development particularly well. All staff know the children well and offer good support, guidance and help when necessary. This is enhanced further by the quality of the relationships throughout the school. Parents feel the small size of the school is beneficial in ensuring that staff know children as individuals and can respond to their needs and this view is justified.
- 35 There is a good induction process to ensure children have a welcoming and positive start to school life. The school provides a secure environment where children feel happy and confident. A number of measures have been put in place in order to improve the security of the site. Children's welfare is ensured through good routines, adequate supervision and sound procedures for monitoring health and safety and dealing with illness and accidents. Appropriate child protection procedures are known by staff. In response to the previous inspection, personal, social and health education, including sex education, is now included in the timetable of lessons in order to ensure children cover the work.
- 36 There are policies for behaviour and the prevention of bullying which are followed by staff. The school's expectations are reinforced during discussions in 'circle time' and 'golden time' where clear rules, rewards and sanctions are set out. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school places a strong emphasis on good behaviour and social development and its efforts are very effective. Attendance is monitored and records fulfil statutory requirements. Parents are discouraged from taking their child on holiday during term time.
- 37 Overall, the steps taken by the school to ensure children's welfare, health and safety have a very positive effect on the educational standards achieved.
- 38 The school keeps a close check on children's progress in English and mathematics to ensure that the targets that children at age 11 are to achieve at the end of each academic year are realistic and manageable. Annual tests are used to check children's progress in English and mathematics from Year 3 onwards. The results of these are analysed for strengths and weaknesses and the information used to improve standards. Reading standards are regularly assessed to check that children are making good progress. The school's procedures for identifying children with special educational needs are satisfactory, but they are not set out clearly in the school's policy. However, children's individual education plans are not used consistently and effectively to help plan and guide their classroom work. Targets set within the plans are demanding.
- 39 Teachers vary in the extent to which they keep track of children's learning during lessons and adjust work on a day to day basis to reflect this. Lesson plans are not generally adapted for children with differing abilities, although mostly, their ages are taken into account. As a result, the tasks children undertake are not always pitched at the right level for them. This is particularly so for brighter children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 40 Overall parents have a positive view of the school, they are satisfied with the provision the school makes and want the school to do well. In particular they feel that behaviour is good and that their child makes good progress and likes school. However, a number of parents do have concerns about leadership and management, homework, the range of activities the school provides out of school hours and the school's ability

to work closely with parents.

- 41 Parents receive very good information about general matters through regular newsletters and helpful notices that are displayed where parents can see them easily. The school's prospectus and the 'Early Years' leaflet are attractive and informative. The governors' annual report to parents does not report on the school's provision for children with disabilities and the information on special educational needs is very brief and therefore it does not fulfil all statutory requirements. Parents are given useful information on the topics that their child will cover during the year and the headteacher has given helpful presentations on the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies at the governors' annual meeting for parents. Formal arrangements are made for parents to discuss their child's progress with teachers on three occasions during the school year. However, these do not include enough opportunities for parents to have a good look at their child's work and then discuss it with the staff. Parents are justified in their view that this is insufficient for them to gain a clear understanding about what their child is achieving and progress. Children's annual reports on progress are satisfactory and describe what children know, understand and can do. They include clear information on children's personal development and comments from the children on what they feel they have achieved during the year. The school's expectations for homework are not sufficiently clear for parents and there is some inconsistency in the amount, content and timing of homework.
- 42 Parents give very good financial support to the school and have provided many resources for the benefit of the children. This is mainly achieved through the 'Friends Association' which organises a variety of social and fund-raising events. Parents help the school by working in the library, assisting on school trips and providing transport, particularly when the school joins with other schools for extra- curricular or sporting activities. This support by parents for their child's education has a positive effect on children's achievement and personal development. However, a significant number of parents, do not feel the school works closely with them and it is not always clear to parents when, especially with substantial class teaching responsibilities, the headteacher is available to see them. A good number of parents responding to the questionnaire do not feel comfortable approaching the school with suggestions or complaints and therefore additional strategies are needed to enable parents to feel more confident about communicating with staff at the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 43 The headteacher was appointed shortly after the previous inspection. Since then the leadership has been strengthened so that governors and staff work well together to lead the school effectively. Good attention was given to the key issues identified in the last inspection report and the implementation of national initiatives and this has ensured improved standards in English and mathematics. There is a clear vision about the school's development in the longer term stemming from the governors' good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, the rapidly increasing number of children on roll aged from four to 11, including children with special educational needs, has created difficulties with regard to staffing and accommodation.
- 44 Governors are well-informed and up to date with initiatives in school such as the implementation of new performance management procedures. They work closely

with the staff to push developments forward. Overall, governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily, but the policy for dealing with children with special educational needs does not fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. It does not make clear to staff and parents the criteria for identifying children with particular needs nor how they move up, or down, the designated stages.⁵ Provision for children with special educational needs requires review as they are taken out of lessons such as geography to spend more time on literacy.

- 45 The results of the national tests vary each year depending on the number of children in Year 6. As this is very small, comparisons with schools nationally and schools with children from similar backgrounds are unreliable. National test results and those from annual tests for children in Years 3 to 5 and information from the local authority are analysed carefully to rectify weaknesses in performance. However, brighter children are not always challenged sufficiently.
- 46 In such a small school responsibilities for leading development and overseeing standards in each subject are shared. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, appraisal, provision for special educational needs and for children in the foundation stage is the responsibility of the headteacher. This cannot be done systematically, as the headteacher is rarely free from classroom and administrative responsibilities to carry out this role effectively. As a result, issues relating to unsatisfactory standards in the presentation of work, especially in science in Years 1 and 2 and the implementation of advice for children with special educational needs have not been picked up and dealt with quickly enough.
- 47 Since the last inspection, the school has refined the way in which it identifies priorities for development and allocates funds to achieve improvements. The development plan is much improved, providing a well-constructed and realistic programme for moving the school forward year by year. Recently, governors have given priority to new national initiatives in literacy and numeracy and to providing an excellent new base for information and communication technology. The annual budget last year showed a small deficit, but this was comfortably met from a surplus carried forward from earlier years. A small but prudent sum of money is held back each year to meet unexpected circumstances. The school makes good use of local authority financial support services in managing its budget and the governors finance committee oversees month by month expenditure. The main recommendations of the 1998 financial audit have been implemented. Financial management is satisfactory.
- 48 While the pattern of annual spending is broadly similar to that in most primary schools, a much lower percentage of the school's income is spent on providing teachers than is usually the case. As a result, there are not enough teachers to meet

⁵ The Code of Practice outlines 5 stages of assessment. Children on Stage 2 and above have individual education plans which set out the steps children need to take, with support, to make progress in their learning. Children on Stage 3 can receive the help and advice of specialists from outside the school. Stage 4 is when children undergo a formal assessment to see if they require a Statement of special educational need. Provision set out in a statement becomes a legal requirement on both the school and local authority.

the demands of the curriculum and the teaching burden on the headteacher is too heavy to allow her to carry out some of her other management duties effectively. Children in the foundation stage have too little access to a qualified teacher. The governors have ensured that administrative and clerical provision is made to release the headteacher for her other work. This provision is considerably greater and more costly, than in most similar schools and does not represent good value for money. Building costs have also been high.

- 49 The headteacher and governors are aware of the need to ensure best value for their expenditure and, with the exception noted above, apply these principles successfully. They have taken action through the resourcing of initiatives in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology to promote good standards in those subjects. They analyse the good range of assessment data that the school has, in order to see where improvements need to be made. They routinely seek competitive tenders for equipment and services. Their support for the school's membership of the local small schools cluster is an example of the efficient use of resources to provide a richer and broader curriculum for the children. Parents discuss the school's work and its development priorities each year at the annual meeting for parents. However, governors are still at an early stage in systematically seeking the views of parents, children and the community as they review their plan each year.

- 50 With the exception of provision for children under five, the school's accommodation and equipment for learning is satisfactory. The newly built accommodation for information and communication technology is excellent and parental financial support has been instrumental in providing a very good range and quality of computer hardware. The accommodation provided for children in the foundation stage and the equipment and apparatus available to them, are unsatisfactory and this means children do not achieve as well as they should. When the youngest children are working in the classroom they share with Years 1 and 2, the older children work in the hall. This limits the kind of activities the children can undertake and hinders consistent progress across both the foundation stage and Years 1 and 2. Sounds in the hall reverberate making it hard for children to hear well what the teacher is saying. The library is small, but contains an appropriate range of books and enables children to value reading as a source of pleasure and information. The headteacher does not have a private office where issues can be discussed confidentially with parents, staff or governors. Children's achievements on entry are broad but mostly they are typical of those found nationally. In view of the mostly satisfactory standards, quality of teaching and average costs, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51 To improve standards further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) Increase the number of teachers in order to:
 - a) improve teaching for the children in the foundation stage;
 - b) enable the headteacher to undertake her management and monitoring responsibilities more effectively;

Paragraphs: 3, 7, 15, 43, 45, 46, 48, 51;

- (2) Make satisfactory provision for the children in the foundation stage by:
 - a) ensuring the full implementation of an appropriate curriculum;*
 - b) providing appropriate accommodation and resources for effective learning;

Paragraphs: 23, 48, 50-58;

- (3) Adjust the balance of the school curriculum to ensure that there is adequate time for teaching science, information and communication technology, history and geography and, enhance staff skills in planning for and teaching these subjects, especially in Years 1 and 2 and the foundation stage; *

Paragraphs: 2, 14, 22, 24, 66, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 88, 91;

- (4) Raise teachers' expectations about standards of work especially in respect of:
- a) presentation of work in children's books;*
 - b) the underachievement of boys;*
 - c) ensuring the work is hard enough to challenge the older and more capable children throughout the school;

Paragraphs: 4, 5, 17, 43, 45, 61, 69, 73, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80-83, 94, 96;

- (5) Make sure that:
- a) work in class, for children with special educational needs, is matched carefully to their individual education plans or group intervention plans;
 - b) the school policy for special educational needs meets the requirements of the National Code of Practice for special educational needs;
 - c) children with special educational needs receive their full curriculum entitlement;

Paragraphs: 7, 18, 29, 30, 41, 43, 44, 65, 97;

- (6) Improve communications with parents by:
- a) increasing the number of formal opportunities for parents to examine and discuss their children's work;
 - b) enabling parents to feel more comfortable about approaching the school;
 - c) making clear to parents the extent of the headteacher's availability;
 - d) clarifying the arrangements for homework;

Paragraphs: 20, 40 - 42, 75.

* These issues have been identified by the school as part of their development programme

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	17*
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	6

* In addition groups led by classroom assistants and the nursery nurse were observed.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0%	0%	47%	41%	12%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	5	47
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	6

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	6.0
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

The table of results is not published, as the number of children taking the tests is less than 10 at the end of each Key Stage. Publication of the results would result in individual children being identified.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	39
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: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7
Average class size	21.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	33

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery and reception

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	15

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	146,680
Total expenditure	147,665
Expenditure per pupil	3,435
Balance brought forward from previous year	4,302
Balance carried forward to next year	3,317

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	47
Number of questionnaires returned	24

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	21	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	33	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	25	33	8	0
The teaching is good.	46	50	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	46	21	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	29	13	8	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	38	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	33	33	17	17	0
The school is well led and managed.	38	29	17	17	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	29	8	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	21	29	8	8

Other issues raised by parents

Impact of the impending closure of the village nursery school on the intake of the primary school.

The quality of provision for the youngest children.

Computers not used often enough in lessons.

Wide range of ages within classes.

Disappointment that French and recorder lessons had been discontinued at the end of the summer term.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 52 There was no requirement to report separately on provision, achievement and teaching of the youngest children at the time of the last inspection. In September 2000, curriculum guidance was introduced for schools to follow for children in the foundation stage. That is, children aged from three to five or until the end of the reception year. At present children achieve very well in their personal, social and emotional development. They do not do as well as they should in other areas of learning⁶.
- 53 Provision for children in the foundation stage is unsatisfactory. Children are admitted to the infants' class, which includes children in Years 1 and 2, in the September of the academic year in which they become five years of age.⁷ This situation is due to change in January 2001 when children aged three will attend on three afternoons per week, while children in the main school go swimming or attend games lessons at another school. It is asking a great deal for one teacher, with the assistance of a nursery nurse to meet the needs of over 24 children of such a wide age range, three to seven years and with diverse and challenging needs. The school acknowledges that expertise in teaching very young children is limited and so while maintaining an overview of the curriculum, the class teacher delegates all teaching to an able nursery nurse in order to concentrate on the needs of children in Years 1 and 2.⁸ Even so, specific knowledge, skills and understanding are not taught effectively enough through appropriate activities for children to make good progress. Curriculum and lesson plans omit the achievements children are to gain from the activities and how they build on what children have learned before.
- 54 Accommodation is unsatisfactory as the children are often taught in the multi purpose hall. This makes it hard to plan and provide high quality learning experiences. Resources have to be selected and organised by adults in each session. This reduces opportunities for children to extend their language skills in role-play situations such as acting out a play of 'Goldilocks and the three bears'. To do this effectively, using the 'home corner' play equipment, children in Years 1 and 2 have to move out of the classroom and go to the hall. Access to an outside area is also limited.

Personal, social and emotional development

⁶ Communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development.

⁷ Children born between September and February of the academic year in which they become five attend full time. Those born in March to August of the academic year in which they become five attend part-time until January.

⁸ See paragraph, How well are pupils taught? Paragraph 15.

- 55 Staff ensure that children settle quickly into school so that they are confident and have good self-esteem. Relationships between the nursery nurse and the children are very good so that they respond to questions and discussions very well and carry out instructions correctly. Children's efforts, especially in drawing and attempts to write are valued, giving them the confidence to improve. They sustain their concentration when responding to challenges, such as, 'Can you build a house with two windows and a door?' In role-play situations, children play together well and allow each other to take turns and take on different roles. Children take responsibility for the care of resources and tidy up carefully. Behaviour is always very good as children are interested in what they are doing. However, tasks do not always take into account the different intellectual needs of the children or allow them to be independent and make choices about their work. The need to move between classroom and hall hinders opportunities for children to pursue their learning without interruption and come back to activities when necessary.

Communication, language and literacy

- 56 Speaking and listening skills are developed well in the individual discussions the nursery nurse holds with the children about books they are looking at or the drawings they are doing. Interventions during children's play activities to extend their vocabulary are limited. Opportunities to recall events or explain what they have been working on are also limited at snack time as this takes place in the classroom while older children are trying to concentrate on the introduction to literacy or numeracy lessons. With both events going on at the same time it is hard for the children to concentrate.
- 57 Children who have just started school already know some sounds that letters make at the beginning of words. None can read although some tell stories well from pictures. Reception⁹ children have just made a start in reading books with simple sentences. Younger children are encouraged to write their letters correctly and reception children can copy sentences dictated to an adult. The classroom environment is more conducive to the promotion of literacy skills as books are close to hand and displays have notices on them. This is not the case in the hall.

Mathematical development

- 58 Mathematical progress is better when the reception children join in with the daily mathematics lessons for Years 1 and 2. In this way, children enjoy a variety of experiences which cover all aspects of mathematics such as shape, space, measurement and number. When reception children join the younger children for activity sessions twice a week, they miss these lessons. The younger children learn to count to ten and recite number rhymes, counting forwards and backwards, while the reception children attend assembly. They recognise numbers to ten and complete successfully, puzzles, which help them to put the numbers in the right order. However, the 'nomadic' life between the hall and classroom makes it hard for children to enjoy practical experiences that make learning real, such as playing in a shop and this hinders their progress. Reception children know how to play simple games to help them improve their number skills on the computer.

Knowledge, understanding of the world

- 59 Reception children attend the science lessons for Years 1 and 2 and so know about

⁹ Reception-children of statutory school age, five.

plants and how they grow. However, the curriculum offers few opportunities for children to be curious, experiment and solve problems. Scientific vocabulary is not used frequently in discussions and space for children to carry out investigations is limited. The younger children know about time passing by comparing their life as a baby to their life now and reception children know about the life of Florence Nightingale.

- 60 Resources and equipment are not readily available to the children to allow them to make choices, especially in designing and making three-dimensional models of insects or houses. Adults choose the tools and techniques children are to use to shape and join materials. Although there are suitable computer programmes for the younger children to use, they have little experience of using them to give the computer instructions to draw pictures or move shapes around the screen. Similarly they have little knowledge of the way technology affects our everyday life such as telephones, traffic lights or bar codes in shops.

Physical development

- 61 There is little planning to show that adults plan activities that offer appropriate physical challenges. Reception children join in physical education lessons with Years 1 and 2 with a qualified teacher. These are good lessons and enable children to develop appropriate skills in throwing, catching and rolling a ball. However, there is not enough space or equipment indoors or outdoors for children to enjoy large-scale movements such as climbing over, under, through or round items to improve co-ordination and co-operative games. Nor can children move spontaneously between the indoor and outdoor environments.

Creative development

- 62 There was not enough evidence during the inspection to judge children's achievement in this area of the curriculum, which includes, dance, music, art and imaginative play. Plans do not indicate how younger children are enabled to make connections between one area of learning and another or express their ideas through painting, drawing, making models, collage, music, dance or inventing their own role play. Reception children are more successful when they join in with lessons for Years 1 and 2. For example, they successfully completed three-dimensional pictures using different kinds of paper that they folded or plaited.

ENGLISH

- 63 When the school was last inspected, standards of English were found to be at least

satisfactory. Overall standards in English are now good at age seven and eleven. Most children meet the targets the school sets for them. The school's thorough introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has helped it sustain and improve English standards. In writing, however, standards at age seven are lower than they should be because of careless and untidy presentation of much of the work. The school recognises the underachievement of boys, especially in Year 3. Standards of literacy are reinforced by the imaginative use of writing in other subjects. This is particularly the case in science, history and geography in Years 3 to 6. An example is to be found in the vivid imaginary newspaper reports children wrote in a history lesson about the accession of Queen Elizabeth I.

- 64 Most children in Years 1 to 6 are articulate and orally confident. They use a good vocabulary and, by the time they are 11, have become skilled in adjusting the way they talk to meet the expectations of a listener. Children in Years 1 and 2 explain their work clearly, recount previous experiences and disagree politely when they feel an incorrect point has been made. By the age of 11, they give reasons for their opinions, speculate about possible outcomes from the work they are doing and organise their arguments intelligently. In both classes, the children are courteous and interested listeners, to each other, to teachers and to visitors.
- 65 In Years 1 to 6, children read confidently and standards are good. By the time they are seven, most children have a good grasp of sounds and use these skills to help read new words. They recognise a good range of common words on sight and they read with expression. Most enjoy reading and share stories regularly with their parents as homework. By the age of 11, most children are fluent and expressive readers. They read intelligently and can discuss plot and character at a sophisticated level. They can predict the likely outcomes of stories they are reading and can draw inferences from hints provided in a text. They enjoy a good range of books and can explain the qualities of their favourite authors clearly. Most read regularly at home and many continue to share reading aloud with their parents. They know how to use the library and how to set about locating and extracting information from a book.
- 66 The written work of the seven year old children usually shows a sound grasp of the spelling of simple and common words. Most can use full stops and capital letters correctly in simple sentences and they have a level of handwriting skill typical of children of this age. Some of their work, however, is untidy and careless. When this is the case, children do not show the levels of competence they really have and they do not progress as fast as they might. Most 11 year olds write a clear joined script at a reasonable speed. Their spelling of regular and common words is good and their knowledge of punctuation is satisfactory. They have learned how to write in different ways for different purposes. Many of the stories and personal anecdotes they write are lively and interesting in content, often with a pleasant sense of humour and an eye to reader reaction. They write short dramatic extracts, newspaper reports, sets of instructions, letters and poems. They can use computers independently to word process some of their work, although this is still at a simple level.
- 67 Children with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in mastering the English skills set out in their individual education plans. While the specialist work they do with learning support assistants is good, their individual education plan targets are not always reinforced by the work they do in class lessons.
- 68 In both classes, children respond well to their English lessons. Their behaviour is

usually very good. They enjoy the class discussions which open most literacy lessons, putting forward their own ideas and answering questions confidently and politely. They show good levels of interest and application to their work and this is an important factor in their good attainment. Most work very well in small literacy groups, even when the teacher's attention is focused on other groups. Children in Years 3 to 6 in particular are mature and responsible, always working hard and doing their best in English lessons. Most enjoy the subject and have developed a love of books and stories.

- 69 At the time of the last inspection teachers were felt to be using good teaching methods and setting interesting work for the children. There was a criticism of the overuse of undemanding worksheets, especially for the younger children. The strengths remain and worksheets are less evident.
- 70 Three English lessons were seen during the inspection. The infants' lesson was satisfactory and the two observed in the juniors' class were good. One of these lessons involved the children studying different forms of written language and in particular the ways in which speech is represented in writing. The lesson began with children reading together an amusing dialogue from a large poster. The dialogue was set out in dramatic form. The teacher led a very good discussion in which children thought about how this format might differ from that of a dialogue reported in a novel. Work was then set for each of the four year groups in the class, well matched to their different ages. Older children had to compose an original dialogue of their own and set it out correctly in play form. Year 5 children rewrote the original poster dialogue as a piece of continuous prose, concentrating on the correct use of speech marks and other punctuation. Children in Year 4 wrote brief lines of dialogue on computers, using a pre-set format to help them. The youngest children were helped by a classroom assistant to write short play scripts of their own. The lesson was taught briskly and clearly. The children knew exactly what they had to do and got on with it very well. Very good planning ensured that children were working at achievable but challenging tasks. The teacher emphasised the importance of neatness and care throughout. This combination of good expectations, good planning and lively teaching results in good progress being made by the children.

MATHEMATICS

- 71 Standards in mathematics were judged to be average at the time of the last inspection. Achievement was not as good in handling data and the application of mathematical skills as there were few opportunities for children to work on problem solving activities. Children with special educational needs lacked appropriate number skills. Current work and national test results indicate that standards have improved

and are now good for children aged seven and 11. The daily mathematics lesson is taught well in both the infants and junior classes. Most children, including those with special educational needs in the junior class, are acquiring a secure knowledge of basic number facts which they can use to solve problems or apply to other areas of the curriculum such as design and technology. Scrutiny of work shows that brighter and older children are working well within the expected levels of the National Curriculum for their age. However, they are not always challenged sufficiently to raise their standard of achievement. Some worksheets in the scrutiny were undemanding and did little to take children's learning forward.

- 72 All aspects of the mathematics curriculum are covered so that children, especially in the juniors, have a broad understanding of shape, measurement, data handling and problem solving. Children aged seven have good knowledge of numbers up to and above 100. They count backwards and forwards quickly in tens and understand how to record accurately amounts of money over one pound. They measure small distances accurately using a ruler.
- 73 At age 11 children do well. Each child is set targets to achieve in mathematics in a short space of time. Children respond well to this and it maintains a good rate of progress. Older children say they like mathematics more than writing, as they feel confident working with numbers. They know and can use the four operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division and apply these well when working with fractions or decimals. For example, children successfully converted measurements from metres to centimetres and kilometres to metres. Additional challenge was built into the task with children having to consider tenths and hundredths as well as whole numbers.
- 74 Except in information technology, mathematics has been incorporated effectively into other areas of the curriculum, especially in Years 3 to 6. Children drew on their knowledge and understanding of rotational and reflective symmetry when designing Tudor tiles. Accurate measurements were needed for the construction of wheeled buggies in design and technology. Graphs have been constructed using computer programmes, but scrutiny of work shows this is not as extensive as it could be.
- 75 Teaching and learning are mostly good in both classes. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and each year group is supported well by teachers and classroom assistants who give good attention to teaching basic skills. Teachers plan work so that it builds on what children know and can do. Lessons have a good structure which means children can take on new knowledge and apply it in practical tasks. For example, children in Years 3 and 4 learned how to estimate distance and check their estimation by accurate measurement. Brief review sessions consolidate what children have learned and prepare them well for future lessons. Work is planned in

accordance with the National Numeracy Strategy and teachers use a wide variety of strategies and resources to enable children to learn. This puts right a weakness identified in the previous inspection. Teachers often intervene to take children forward in their learning, but they do not always push the children on to harder work fast enough if they are finding the work easy.

- 76 Children speak up confidently in oral mathematics sessions, keen to show their speed of thought. They settle to work quickly and co-operate well in practical sessions. They work hard and stay on task. However, the presentation of their work is untidy and this means they make mistakes in their working. Calculations are written down in such a way that children make errors recording the place value of a number. Graphs and shapes are drawn inaccurately as rulers are not used.
- 77 Since the previous inspection, a policy has been written clarifying methods teachers use to teach mathematics and assess learning. The programme of work ensures full coverage of the mathematics curriculum and has had a good impact on children's knowledge, skills and understanding. Homework, especially in Years 3 to 6, is used to enhance progress. Parents are concerned that it does not build well on what children have learned in their lessons. Inspection evidence shows that this is the case, as teachers do not build homework tasks into their lessons regularly. The scrutiny of work shows that work is marked, but not consistently. Sometimes, marking is detailed giving children clear explanations about where they have gone wrong and how to get a sum right. On other occasions work is not marked at all and children are unaware of how well they have done.

SCIENCE

- 78 When the school was last inspected, children's attainment in science was judged to be similar to that found in other schools nationally. Teaching in Years 1 and 2 was good. In Years 3 to 6, teaching was satisfactory but provided too little opportunity for more able children to progress as well as they should. The science curriculum as a whole was too heavily dependent on the recording of facts, with too few opportunities for children to learn the skills of investigation and experimentation.
- 79 There has been little improvement since then and this is reflected in national tests. In some regards provision is poorer than in 1996. The quality of teaching in Years 3 to 6 remains satisfactory. Children achieve the standards expected for their age, but they are capable of more. Standards and teaching for children at age seven are unsatisfactory. In both classes, the programme is still weighted too heavily towards the accumulation of information and offers very restricted opportunities for experiment and investigation. Too little time is given to the subject and lessons are too infrequent to allow children to build up their understanding in a well-ordered way. The school does not set targets for children's attainment in science.
- 80 Children reaching the age of seven have learned a little about materials. They can distinguish some natural and man-made materials and know that warm air will change ice to water. They have grown plants from seed and can name the leaves, stems and roots. They recognise several species of insect. They have undertaken little experimental or investigative work. Much of their work is untidy and the tasks set require little thought. Unchallenging worksheets, that require colouring in, hinder their learning.

- 81 By the time they reach the age of 11, most children have learned about light and sound sources and how light and sound are transmitted. They have studied the structures of the eye and ear and know that sound results from vibration. They know about why the position of the sun appears to change during the day and about how this affects day and night. They can name some of the planets of the solar system. They know that the human body is supported and protected by its skeleton and can name many of the bones and organs. While they have had an opportunity to set up a few simple experiments under teacher direction, their skills in this area are underdeveloped. Much of the work is fragmentary and superficial. The present programme is not extending the older or brighter children.
- 82 Two science lessons were seen during the inspection, one in each class. While the Year 3 to 6 lesson was good, that in Years 1 and 2 was unsatisfactory. The older children were learning about the skeleton, as part of a study of the human body. The teacher used a life-sized skeleton to demonstrate, as she discussed with the children the functions of the skeleton and its different component bones. The children then had to apply paper labels to the different parts of the skeleton. Subsequent tasks required the children to mark bones on worksheet outlines and to use information books from the library to find out more. The strength of the lesson was in the use of a skeleton to engage and hold the children's interest very well. The teacher had a good understanding of the factual knowledge she was presenting and did so clearly and enthusiastically. Children with special educational needs received work suited to their abilities. The lesson for children in Years 1 and 2 on materials was not well organised. Older children in particular already knew much of what they were being taught and expectations were too low. This was due to a lack of expertise and skill in teaching the subject. Children's behaviour was unsettled and their concentration weak. Across the school, the possibilities offered by the school's information and communication technology provision for extending work in science have not yet been realised.
- 83 Older children work hard in their science lessons. They become very absorbed in the activities, concentrate well and work sensibly even when the teacher is with other groups. They are keen to answer questions and confident to try new ideas and activities. Their positive attitudes and concentration help them get all they can from their lessons. By contrast, the younger children are restless and easily distracted. In part, this is due to the activities of the children in the foundation stage with whom they share a room, but it also results from weaknesses in lesson organisation. Their written science work is frequently poorly presented and often unmarked.
- 84 There is a sound scheme of work for science and each science topic on the scheme is taught. Time given to the subject is too little to allow learning in depth. In both classes children have only one science lesson a week. In Years 1 and 2 the lesson barely lasts half an hour. The time lag between successive science lessons means that children find it hard to build up their understanding systematically. The school's arrangements for monitoring science teaching have not been effective in detecting and remedying teaching weaknesses and children's underachievement.

**ART, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY,
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND MUSIC**

- 85 At the time of the previous inspection there was not enough evidence to make judgements about standards of achievement in these subjects. Comments on these subjects were grouped into one paragraph. Provision did not meet statutory requirements and there was no systematic development of children's knowledge skills and understanding in these subjects. Since then standards have improved so that judgements can be made and statutory requirements are met. Standards of work are similar to those in other schools in art and design and technology but below average in information and communication technology. In music, standards are similar to other schools for children aged 11, but below for children aged seven.
- 86 In art, the work the school has done with visiting artists has paid dividends so that there are some examples of good work. Children have learned how to observe carefully and to draw accurately. For example, during the inspection, children used pastels to illustrate the patterns inside fruits such as oranges, lemons, kiwi fruit and sweet peppers. They chose the colours carefully to match those of the fruits and knew how to use the pastels, such as smudge them to combine colours, to get the colour and effect they wanted. Teachers underestimate the achievement of some children. For example, Years 3 and 4 were given a different task, to cut out shapes of a skeleton to re-arrange, while the older children drew the fruit. Children's skills in cutting were already well developed and so the task lacked challenge and interest. Except in the infants' class, where children have drawn pictures of castles on the computer, there were few examples of computer-generated images. Similarly, some work has been inspired by the work of 'Monet' but generally there is little reference to the work of famous artists from historical or modern times.
- 87 The school took up the challenge from the last inspection to enable children to use their initiative well. Mathematics and design and technology skills were incorporated into a project to make clay tiles based on designs from Tudor times. Drawing on their knowledge of Tudor designs, such as Tudor roses, the children designed their individual tile on squared paper, using their understanding of rotational and reflective symmetry. As each child made their own tile, they learned much about the properties of clay and the problems of turning two dimensional designs into three dimensional objects. Children's work shows that they also express their ideas imaginatively in three dimensions using paper. There are good examples of imaginative work in sewing, weaving and collage.
- 88 Teachers have successfully incorporated learning in science into design and technology. Children in Years 3 to 6 designed and made a variety of wheeled vehicles. They included a simple circuit to power the vehicle or provide lights. Each vehicle was original and finished items demonstrate children's imaginative ideas and care and attention to detail. Children in Years 1 and 2 made models of different buildings, including houses and a church for a village. The children used their cutting and sticking skills well to cover boxes with paper, painting them and adding details to show the nature of the building. There was little evidence to show attention to design.
- 89 Music standards have improved in the juniors. Standards are lower in Years 1 and 2. Children sing the songs they know cheerfully and with enthusiasm. Infants know

simple rhythms that they can tap or clap following the guidance of the teacher. They know that rhymes such as 'The Grand Old Duke of York' and 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush' have different rhythms. Children in Years 3 to 6 play untuned percussion instruments in time to simple notation such as crotchets and quavers. Parents report that the children sing and play instruments well at Christmas performances.

- 90 The governors have supported the school fully in its drive to improve standards in information and communication technology. Resources have only recently been improved to a very good standard and the time is now right to increase and improve teachers' expertise and curriculum planning according to the national initiative in information and communication technology, and extend children's skills. Children are confident and bring skills from home. At the present time the school is not doing enough to build on these skills nor is it using information and communication technology effectively across the curriculum especially in the foundation stage and Years 1 and 2. Younger children know how to use the mouse to help them to play simple mathematics games and increase their number skills. They know how to programme a simple toy to give it instructions to move it in different directions. Older children can find information on the Internet or CD-ROM and print it, although they do not yet analyse it carefully to see if it contains the information that they really want. They have drawn simple graphs and designed posters, changing the shape and colour of the text. However, too little time is set aside for the subject and teachers do not plan for its frequent use within lessons. Younger children with special educational needs are withdrawn for additional literacy during times set aside for information and communication technology. Parental concerns about this subject are fully justified.
- 91 In all subjects children's attitudes are very good. In art and design and technology children show care in finishing tasks so that they are proud of them. They settle quickly to work, concentrate hard and do their best. In a brief information and communication technology session, children worked sensibly without the constant supervision of the teacher. They co-operated well and helped each other when they did not know what to do to find the information they wanted.
- 92 Teaching in the two art lessons observed was satisfactory. Teachers gave very clear instructions and in discussion with children helped them to refine and improve their work. They provided tasks which allowed children to use their initiative, express their ideas and learn about and explore the properties of different materials. In one case this was pastels and the other, different papers to make three-dimensional pictures. The lack of time for information and communication technology means children are not taken forward at a fast enough pace in their learning. One task that was observed was for Years 5 and 6. It was an appropriate activity, enabling children to find information about the Aztecs or human body on the Internet or CD-ROM. However, it did little to take children's learning forward in both historical or science research skills or use of computers to find varied information quickly and interpret it.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

- 93 At the time of the last inspection standards were satisfactory in geography for children at age seven and eleven. There was not enough information to judge standards in history. Over the past two years the school has been correctly focusing its curricular efforts on literacy and numeracy. During this period it has quite properly devoted less time than previously to geography and history. As the newly revised National Curriculum programmes of study come into play this term these subjects are receiving fuller attention. Only one geography lesson and no history lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from teachers' planning, work on display and a scrutiny of last year's work indicates that children by the age of 11, reach the standard expected for their age in these subjects, but that standards at age seven are lower than average for children of that age.
- 94 By the age of seven, most children can draw a simple plan of their route to school. They can explain some of the features they pass on the way and translate the plan into simple oral instructions. In history they have been learning about 'Florence Nightingale'. They have produced paintings and simple pieces of writing about her. In both subjects, however, the work is superficial and fragmented.
- 95 At the age of 11, most children have a sound knowledge of plans, charts, maps and aerial photographs. They understand the importance of compass bearings and grid references and they recognise many conventional map symbols. After a very effective trip to a local river, they learned about how river systems develop and about processes such as erosion and deposition. Recent history studies have focused on the Tudor period. The children have learned about the main events of the period, about courtly costume and behaviour and about how Tudor times differed from the present day. After visiting Wimpole Hall, they know a lot about how people lived their daily lives in Tudor times. They can identify many differences between the reigns of the Queen Elizabeth I and II. They have some understanding of the order of historical events, but have insufficient experience of comparing and evaluating sources of historical evidence. The productive use of visits and field trips is a strong feature of work in Years 3 to 6 in geography and history.
- 96 The geography and history work of the more able children in each year group differs little from that of the less able. Many of the children are not challenged enough by the low level of difficulty of the tasks set for them. The work indicates that children, especially in Years 1 and 2, spend little time acquiring specific historical or geographical skills and this stems from lack of confidence in the teaching.
- 97 The single geography lesson seen was with the Year 3 to 6 children. It was part of a series of lessons extending children's mapwork skills. The lesson was a satisfactory one and opened with a lively and well-informed discussion of the types of maps children knew and their particular uses. The class then moved to another room to watch an excellent video showing children in a village school learning how aerial photographs are taken and used. The school has aerial photographs of its own site and these will form the basis of further lessons. The lesson was successful in large part because the choice of the video was highly appropriate and the children were very engaged by it. There was audible disappointment when the lesson ended. A small group of children with special educational needs was withdrawn from class at the beginning and returned as the video finished. Since this is the week's only geography lesson, these children lose access to the subject.
- 98 In the single lesson observed the children were very well behaved. Initially slow to respond to questions, they became increasingly interested in the activity, concentrated hard and put forward their own points of view confidently.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 99 The school provides a very extensive physical education programme which covers all aspects of the statutory curriculum in the subject. Dance, gymnastics and small games activities are timetabled weekly. In addition, the school joins others in its local cluster for swimming and games. Swimming is held at a local pool and all children in the school go, each week for the whole year. The small school cluster also provides collaborative games lessons each week, using different school sites as occasion demands. Parents provide transport to take children from school to school. In addition to the curricular games provision made, the cluster also provides extra-curricular games practice opportunities and enters combined teams in local sports competitions. Cluster activity extends enormously the range of physical activity available to children in this very small school. However, physical education provision, together with travelling time, takes up considerably more of the total teaching time available during each week than is usual in primary schools.
- 100 At the end of both Year 2 and Year 6, children reach the standards above those expected for their age. This is an improvement since 1996 when standards were similar to those found in other schools. Qualified instructors provide teaching and coaching in swimming. By the end of Year 6 all children swim beyond the 25 metres nationally expected and many have become very confident swimmers. In games lessons in the school hall, children at age seven show levels of skill that are expected for their age. They move well into empty space and follow instructions carefully. They work well in small groups, throwing and catching a ball accurately and holding their balance well in doing so. They show good levels of physical co-ordination and improve their performance through practice.
- 101 In games, children aged 11 have learned to play football, netball, cricket and rounders in teams, working well with each other. The necessity of playing alongside and getting to know, team members from other schools in the cluster is an excellent spur to children's social development. In addition to learning to participate in teams, the children have mastered many of the skills common to team sports.
- 102 One physical education lesson in the school hall, with the infants' class, was seen. A games lesson for children in Years 3 to 6 on the school field, involving children from two of the cluster schools, was interrupted by rain. Both lessons were good. In the infants' lesson, the teacher kept children alert to the safety factors involved in the work. She gave the children clear instructions and kept them physically active throughout the lesson. She occasionally stopped the lesson to use one group's particularly good work as an example to the others. Her interventions during the lessons helped the children improve their performance. The outdoor juniors' lesson, taught by the same teacher began with a well-planned series of warm-up activities. These were suitably strenuous and called for sustained physical effort from the children. Subsequent passing and catching activities were well chosen and the teacher provided valuable coaching hints to pairs of children while they worked. The games, which would have completed the lesson, were postponed because of rain.
- 103 In the lessons seen, the children showed their enthusiasm for their work by the effort they put into it. They participated very keenly, listen to instructions very carefully and try hard to improve their own performance. They work particularly well in pairs and

teams, especially when playing alongside children from other cluster schools.