

INSPECTION REPORT

Runwell Community Primary School

Runwell, Wickford

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115037

Headteacher: Ken Kies

Reporting inspector: Michael J Cahill
19623

Dates of inspection: 27 – 30 November 2000

Inspection number: 225263
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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Canewdon Gardens Runwell Wickford Essex
Postcode:	SS11 7BJ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sarah Harrison
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Michael Cahill 19623	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Leonard Shipman 14061	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Glenys Bramley 22902	Team inspector	Under-fives Special educational needs Mathematics Geography History	How well is the school led and managed?
Michael Miller 17556	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Information and communication technology Religious education Art and design Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements
Sanchia Pearse 4787	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school has 280 pupils on roll, 139 boys and 141 girls, taught in 10 classes, all of which are mixed-age apart from the reception class for 8 full-time and 20 part-time pupils. At the time of the inspection 21 of the children in the reception class were less than five years of age. There are 54 pupils on the school's register of special educational need; this proportion is close to the national average. The attainment of most pupils on entry to the school is below national expectations. Forty-two pupils are entitled to free school meals, at 15.6 per cent this is close to the national average. Twenty-eight pupils come from the local traveller community and are fully integrated into the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school with many good features. It is successful in raising pupils' levels of achievement and in promoting good behaviour and attitudes to learning. The headteacher provides strong leadership and the quality of teaching is high. Over the last five years the school's national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 have shown a clear upward trend when compared with national averages. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides strong leadership directed towards raising pupils' achievements.
- The early years unit provides children with a very good start to their full time education.
- Teaching is of an overall high quality.
- The school successfully promotes good behaviour and attitudes to school and good relationships.
- The school provides a very good range and quality of extra-curricular activities.
- Standards in science and religious education at the end of Key Stage 2 are above national expectations.
- The school welcomes the involvement of parents and keeps them well informed.

What could be improved

The governing body, headteacher and staff recognise the need to deal urgently with the following matters.

- Standards in information and communication technology and its use in supporting and extending learning in other subjects.
- Planning to make sure that pupils have good, regular learning opportunities in all National Curriculum subjects, including design and technology, geography and music where standards are not high enough, and that all pupils build confidently on what they already know and can do.
- The standards of reading, especially in Key Stage 1.
- The level of support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The quantity and quality of learning resources.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. At that time the standards achieved by pupils and the quality of education provided by the school were judged to be in need of some improvement with nearly a quarter of the lessons observed judged to be less than satisfactory. The school's climate for learning and its management and efficiency were good. Since that time the overall quality of teaching has improved substantially and so have national test results at the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in science. However, there is more to do in some areas, including the use of assessment. Overall improvement has been satisfactory. The developing partnership between the new headteacher, governors, staff and parents provides a good basis for further improvement.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

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

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

Schools are described as similar when they fall into the same band for free school meals, in this case between 8 and 20 per cent, the current figure is around 16 per cent. Over the period 1996 to 2000 the school's results at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved at a better rate than the national average.

Inspection evidence based on the work of the present Year 2 as well as the last one shows that by the end of Key Stage 1 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly in line with national expectations. Standards in reading fell sharply during the period 1996 to 1998 and have shown some improvement since then, although they are still below the national average. Standards in writing have shown an overall improvement over the period 1996 to 2000 and are now in line with the national average. Mathematics standards have remained close to the national average over the same period.

By the end of Key Stage 2 inspection evidence shows that standards in English and mathematics are in line with national expectations. In science, standards are above the national expectation. These judgements match the most recent national test results.

In both key stages, attainment is in line with national expectations in art, history and physical education. In design and technology, geography, information and communication technology and music standards are below national expectations at the end of both key stages. In religious education, standards are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus at the end of Key Stage 1 and exceed these expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. The school sets realistic targets for improving the standard of literacy and numeracy.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to their work. They enter enthusiastically into the opportunities offered including the after school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; pupils behave well in lessons and concentrate on their work. Behaviour around the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Good; pupils work and play well together and enjoy good relationships with the adults in the school. Pupils welcome the opportunity to contribute responsibly to the work of the school.
Attendance	Good; attendance is above the national average and nearly all pupils arrive at school on time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5 - 7 years	aged 7 - 11 years
Lessons seen overall	very good	good	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 standard of teaching was at least satisfactory in 93 per cent of the lessons observed and unsatisfactory or poor in only 7 per cent. Two-thirds of lessons were good or better, of which one-quarter was very good or excellent. This is high quality teaching and is one of the main reasons for pupils' good attitudes to their learning and the progress that they make as they move through the school.

The teaching of mathematics, including the skills of numeracy, was at least good in more than three-quarters of the lessons observed, including one-quarter in which it was very good. The teaching of English, including literacy, was very good in 20 per cent of lessons observed and good in a further 50 per cent.

Particular strengths of the teaching throughout the school include the good relationships between pupils and their teachers and the skilful way in which teachers use questions to help pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding. Teachers go to a lot of trouble to make their lessons interesting and work effectively with other adults to make sure that all pupils are able to take a full part in them.

From the time that they enter the school children are very effectively encouraged to work together and, where it is appropriate, to work independently. Most pupils respond positively to encouragement to do their best and to take pride in their work, often concentrating for a long time and sometimes welcoming the chance to continue the work at home. Progress is satisfactory over time, often good in individual lessons. All pupils are helped to become confident about their ability to learn. The quality of pupils' learning is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good in the early years unit. The school teaches all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education in Key Stages 1 and 2. There is a very good range and quality of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The existing provision is of good quality but is not enough to meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and in this respect is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good; the school actively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development through assemblies, lessons, the behaviour code and good encouragement and opportunities for working and playing together. There is satisfactory provision for cultural development but, within this, the multi-cultural aspect is the weak link.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a safe and caring community where members of staff know the children and their families well and are effective in promoting good attendance and attitudes to work. There are satisfactory procedures for keeping track of pupils' progress.

Most parents have very positive views about the school. The school actively, and with increasing success, tries to involve parents in its work

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher provides strong leadership directed towards raising levels of achievement through improving the quality of education provided. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher, who sets a very high standard as a class teacher, and by other teachers with subject responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is supportive of the school and committed to its development. It fully meets its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has good monitoring and evaluation procedures and has accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources	Existing resources are used well to improve standards and the school actively seeks to obtain best value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, although there are deficiencies in resources for teaching and learning in some subject areas. The particular strengths of the leadership and management of the school are the vision, drive and commitment of the headteacher and the good and developing partnership between him, the staff and the governing body.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of the 74 parents who returned completed questionnaires and of the eight who attended the pre-inspection meeting with members of the inspection team were taken into account.

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. • Teaching is good and the school has high expectations. • Behaviour is good and the school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The school works closely with parents and keeps them well informed about their children's progress. • The school is approachable and well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount and regularity of homework.

The inspection team fully supports the positive views of parents and believes that homework, including reading, is helping to raise standards.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

Foundation Stage

1. Attainment on entry for children in the early years unit is below average overall. However, they make good progress and by the time they have completed the Foundation Stage the children have achieved very well in respect of their personal and social development. Children are confident in the way they communicate and their levels of language and literacy are sound. Their mathematical abilities are satisfactory and their knowledge and understanding of the world are above the levels expected for their age. Children's physical and creative development are also appropriate for their age. By the end of the reception year, the children are well prepared to undertake National Curriculum work in Year 1 (*see paragraphs on Foundation Stage*).

Key Stage 1

2. **Standards in lessons** for pupils in Year 2, at the end of Key Stage 1, are in line with the national expectation in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are also in line with national expectations in art, history and physical education. They are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Standards are below the average expectations for pupils of this age in information and communications technology, design and technology, geography and music.
3. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained in writing, mathematics, science, art, history, physical education and religious education. However, standards have shown a decline in reading, information and communications technology, design and technology, geography and music (*see individual subject paragraphs*).
4. **The 2000 National Curriculum tests results** for seven-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 1 were close to the national average in writing and mathematics. However, the school's performance in reading was below the national average. Comparison with the national average points score, for the past three years, indicates that the school's results are below the national rate of improvement. This is most evident in reading, where the performance of pupils is below the national average for their age group by the equivalent of about a term. It is most marked for boys, who are nearly two terms behind the national average by the age of seven.

Key Stage 2

5. **The inspection evidence** indicates that by the time the pupils leave school at age 11 standards are above average in science, and above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. They are in line with the national average or expectations in English, mathematics, art, history and physical education. Standards are below average in information and communications technology, design and technology, geography and music.
6. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in relation to the national average in English, mathematics and science. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been positive in helping to raise standards. However, there has been a decline in the standards for some other subjects, such as information and communications technology, design and technology, geography and music. Standards have been maintained in art, history, physical education and religious education (*see individual subject paragraphs*).

7. **In the 2000 National Curriculum tests** for 11-year-olds at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment was close to the national average for English and mathematics and above average in science. When all three core subjects are taken together, the school's performance is close to the national average when compared to all primary schools and similar schools. This represents an improvement since the time of the previous inspection when standards were average in English and science but well below average in mathematics. Over the period since the last inspection, in 1996, the school's results at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved at a better rate than the national average.

Literacy and numeracy

8. Overall standards in literacy and numeracy lessons are good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2. However, progress is slower in the Key Stage 1 classes as a result of the high demands on teachers who are planning to make provision for the different ability range within these mixed-age classes.

Literacy

9. There are particular weaknesses in reading at Key Stage 1. There are insufficient opportunities for teachers or support staff to hear pupils read outside of literacy lessons. Pupils do not always fully understand what they are reading and require more guidance and structure in their choice of reading books (*see English paragraph*). There are insufficient opportunities for pupils at both key stages to undertake extended writing across the range of curriculum subjects. There are also too few opportunities for pupils to undertake creative and imaginative writing. The school needs to develop teaching strategies that set greater challenge for pupils in respect of such writing experiences. However, in the Year 2000 tests in English, the headteacher's analysis shows that there was a significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in writing. The school has identified this as an area to target for improvement.

Numeracy

10. The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy and this is having a positive effect on improving standards at both key stages. Progress is now at least satisfactory and was good in nearly two-thirds of the lessons observed at Key Stage 1 and half at Key Stage 2.

Special educational needs

11. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. They receive sound support from their class teachers and, when possible, from learning support assistants, and are enabled to achieve satisfactory standards in line with their abilities.
12. Pupils who come from traveller families constitute some 10 per cent of the school's population. These pupils are well integrated into the life and work of the school. Their attainment is in line with other pupils and they make sound progress.
13. The school has not yet formally identified its pupils who are particularly gifted or talented, but class teachers can usually identify such pupils in their charge. However, a register of these pupils has still to be drawn up in order to ensure that they are appropriately challenged through the curriculum provision and that their achievements are effectively monitored.

Analysis and targeting

14. The school properly undertakes an analysis of its pupils' performance in national tests and their achievement in lessons. The headteacher is starting to make effective use of new computer technology for this purpose. This analysis has, for example, identified some areas for development in respect of investigative work in mathematics and the

issue of standards in boys' writing. As a result of such analysis, the headteacher and governors set realistic targets, which have been agreed with the local authority, in order to raise standards in literacy and numeracy. Strategies for improvement are being developed by the headteacher and the subject co-ordinators concerned.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The attitudes, values and personal development of the pupils are good and have remained so since the previous inspection. The standards of behaviour and values promoted by this school are fully appreciated by an overwhelming number of parents. This was made clear through the questionnaire returns, the pre-inspection parents' evening and the comments of parents interviewed during the inspection.
16. Most pupils arrive at school with their parents in an orderly manner. The pupils are smartly dressed and happily enter the school. There is time and opportunity for parents to discuss issues with staff. For example, one mother explained that her child was tired, a little off colour but wanted to come to school. That parent was reassured that an eye would be kept on her child.
17. Pupils quickly settle into their daily classroom routine either with quiet reading or talking to their class teacher. For example, a pupil apologised for forgetting her completed homework. A positive attitude to learning was consistently evident from the Foundation Stage onwards. There was also a distinct buzz of excitement as pupils eagerly went to their respective 'after school' clubs or extra-curricular activities.
18. Standards of behaviour, courtesy and good manners were a feature throughout the inspection. Doors were held open, adults encouraged to go first or adults were asked if a pupil could join them for lunch. In one instance, a pupil was asked for directions. The pupil spontaneously took hold of the adult's hand and showed where that part of the school was.
19. In the play periods, pupils let off steam without this developing into aggressive or anti-social behaviour. They are well supervised either by staff or mid-day supervisors. Girls and boys played happily together, though with Key Stage 2 pupils boys tended to monopolise the centre ground with ball games. The choice of playtime resources is limited. Pupils with special education needs are well supported and fully integrated within all activities. There have been no recent exclusions. Pupils are not concerned about bullying, being confident that any instance would be dealt with effectively by the staff.
20. Relationships and personal development are good. The staff have high expectations of the standards the pupils should adopt. Mutual respect is shown between the pupils themselves as well as between pupils and adults. Many of the pupils perform tasks in and around the school, for example acting as monitors. A newly reformed school council, consisting of elected pupils, encourages discussion of concerns or areas for improvement. For example, pupils have contributed to the revised behaviour policy. In another area, they identified the need for a water machine instead of the old water fountain. This went to the governing body for consideration and pupils subsequently recognised that the costs were too high.
21. Good citizenship is promoted both in lessons and in assemblies. The absence of any graffiti, litter or damage shows that the pupils respect their school and property. The pupils care for each other. For example, a little boy had his arm around another little boy, who was crying, as they walked off to the first aid point.

22. In class, including the Foundation Stage, pupils collaborate well; they readily share ideas and resources. The high quality teaching has a positive impact on their overall learning by keeping their attention focussed. Good classroom management of the pupils was a feature of almost all lessons. Opportunities for independent learning and the use of reference books for extended research were, however, less evident. The senior management team has discussed the need for new library facilities and is keen to pursue this development.
23. Levels of attendance are good and have remained so for some years. Punctuality was consistently good throughout the inspection with few latecomers. Registration is taken swiftly, with the minimum of delay. This creates a good efficient start to the day and has a positive influence on the pupils' attitudes to learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The overall quality of teaching is high. Of the lessons observed 24 per cent were judged to be very good or excellent, a further 43 per cent were good, 26 per cent were satisfactory and only 7 per cent were unsatisfactory or poor. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection when 17 per cent were very good and the high proportion of 23 per cent were less than satisfactory. The reasons for the improvement include the extra structure provided by the National Strategies in Literacy and Numeracy, the increased emphasis on planning and the effective monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
25. Examples of very good or excellent teaching were observed in all three key stages. In the Foundation Stage, teaching was never less than good and 43 per cent was very good. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the proportions of lessons that were judged to be at least good were 67 and 62 per cent respectively. This overall high quality of teaching makes a substantial contribution towards improving pupils' levels of achievement and to promoting good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs benefit most when there is good extra support; they then often make good progress. However, there is not enough regular support to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1.
26. The teaching of the literacy hour was rarely less than satisfactory. In Key Stage 1, all of the lessons observed were good or very good. In Key Stage 2, 70 per cent were good or better. In mathematics, including the National Numeracy Strategy, teaching was always good or very good in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, teaching was always at least satisfactory, in three-quarters of lessons it was good or better. In total, throughout the school, more than a quarter of lessons in mathematics were very good.

There are a number of features common to the good or better teaching seen during the inspection and these include:

27. Planning which makes clear what is to be taught and learned during the lesson, a good balance of whole class, group and individual work, good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher, a good pace to the lesson and good teamwork with other adults.

There were two other elements that were very evident in the best lessons observed, the management of pupils and the use of questions:

Management of pupils

28. The school as a whole positively encourages good behaviour and the appropriate behaviour code is prominently displayed in all classrooms. The consistency of expectations from classroom to classroom plays an important role in enabling pupils to know what is expected of them. They respond very well to this and have successfully

made the transition to working in different groups, and often with a different teacher, for mathematics.

29. Most teachers have established good classroom routines, based firmly on common sense and consideration for others, which allow the daily work to proceed in a pleasant and purposeful atmosphere. The benefits of this are very obvious in some lessons where teacher and pupils maintain a very good pace, with pupils maintaining a high level of interest and concentration. For example, a mathematics lesson with pupils from Years 1 and 2 started briskly because pupils knew the carpet routine for the introductory session and were keen to guess what shape their teacher was showing them part of. There was no fuss when the teacher moved seamlessly on to the next topic; a pupil distributed number cards in readiness for this. When pupils moved to group and individual work the resources that they needed were readily available and they settled to work quickly. In this lesson work had been prepared to meet the needs of pupils at different stages of their learning and this meant that all were able to do what was set for them. All aspects of the planning and organisation of this lesson promoted good learning.
30. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 have, for the most part, benefited from consistency of treatment and expectations as they have moved up the school and the benefits are often very obvious. For example, in science lessons time is very productively used as pupils are moved from activity to activity and from whole class to group to individual work. Because teachers have been careful to foster good relationships pupils work effectively in any groupings. Pupils have been skilfully led to see that that they can enjoy working with anyone and this facilitates a very positive working atmosphere in which the quality of learning is always at least good, often very good. Where there are high expectations of work and behaviour and teachers positively support pupils through good organisation and well-planned lessons, pupils match these expectations. Where routines are not clearly established or good behaviour is not positively and consistently promoted, pupils lose focus and teachers have to spend too much time managing inattention and low level misbehaviour so that learning and progress are unsatisfactory.

Question and answer

31. A very strong feature of many lessons was the very effective way in which teachers, and often their learning support assistants, used questions throughout the lesson. For example, the introductory parts of most lessons included good revision of what the pupils had learned before through questions that helped everyone to consolidate their learning before moving forward. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 benefited from this when they took part in a rapid mental session on multiples of 100 that add up to 1,000. There was good practice also when one pupil explained, for the benefit of another who had been absent, the work that they had been doing on fractions with cubes.
32. In most lessons teachers are very mobile, moving from group to group or individual to individual to check and challenge through further questions. This positively helps to maintain interest and concentration. It also helps pupils and teachers to receive feedback on how successfully the learning objectives for the lesson are being achieved. Assessment is clearly very important and asking the right questions is obviously crucial. Many teachers use the concluding sessions of lessons very effectively in this respect. Where this is most effective teachers target their questions accurately at pupils whose progress they have been monitoring during the lesson. Through well-focused questions teachers consolidate and extend the learning of all. Where questions are aimed at the whole class or are more general in nature the concluding sessions, although still useful, lack the sharp relationship to the shared learning objectives that distinguish the best practice.

Areas for improvement

33. Where teaching was less stimulating or successful, or occasionally unsatisfactory, the reason was usually the absence of some of the characteristics of very good practice identified above. On more than one occasion the allocation of time either to the lesson as a whole or to sections within it meant that aspects were not covered effectively. In a few lessons the learning objectives were not clear or were not shared with the class and so there was a loss of focus. In some lessons, assessment to identify how well the objectives had been achieved did not form part of the planning. This is the area in which the school has most to do in order to improve its present practice, particularly for meeting the needs of pupils in mixed-age classes. It is obviously important that lesson planning aims to build progressively on what pupils already know, understand and can do. Assessment related directly to what is being taught and recorded in a way that helps subsequent planning for classes and individuals clearly has a vital role in this. The school has moved a long way in this respect since the last inspection but there is still inconsistency between teachers and between subjects in the use of the new procedures.

Learning and progress

34. As a result of the high quality of teaching, pupils have positive attitudes towards themselves as learners and show real interest and enthusiasm for their work. The quality of their learning and the progress that they made was judged to be good or better in well over half of the lessons observed, and very good in 13 per cent of cases.
35. Pupils are good at working on their own or in groups or in taking a full part in whole class sessions. They maintain interest and concentration for extended periods of time and are happy to continue their work at home. Older pupils, through the skilled leadership of their teachers, show maturity when reflecting on what they have learned in lessons or over time.
36. **The quality of marking is often good.** At best there are examples of marking which provide praise and encouragement and, very importantly, pointers as to how further achievement can be achieved. There were few instances where work was merely ticked.
37. **Homework is regularly set** and given high status, particularly in Key Stage 2, and is an accepted part of school life for pupils. It is making a significant contribution to raising standards of achievement and also sometimes provides pupils with more opportunities for independent learning and research. This is an area that the school is keen to develop as a means to further improving the quality of pupils' learning and the progress that they make. For further examples of teaching and learning see paragraphs 95 to 208.

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

38. The curriculum for children under the age of five in the Foundation Stage is very good. Staff provide a rich and varied range of activities which encourage high quality learning across all the recommended areas. (*See paragraphs 95-107 on the areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage.*)
39. The quality and range of learning opportunities in Key Stages 1 and 2 are satisfactory. The school gives appropriate emphasis to the development of literacy and numeracy skills and in science is providing particularly good learning opportunities. The local authority's agreed syllabus for religious education is carefully followed and this develops a good understanding and knowledge base for pupils. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education and there are good transfer arrangements with the local secondary school.

40. The school is in the process of adapting the recent guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in some of the foundation subjects. The school recognises that this will need careful monitoring in order to ensure balance and a common approach to assessment. At present, there is insufficient coverage of the curriculum in information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and music. The present arrangement of alternating geography and history every half-term does not always allow the natural links to be made. The process of adapting and adopting the guidelines is helping to develop the schemes of work, which were lacking in the previous inspection.
41. The last report described music as a strength of the school. This is no longer the case. However, the new headteacher has particular talent here and music already has a higher profile once more, including singing assemblies and choirs. Information and communication technology is a stated priority of the school and it is now being effectively developed in terms of the provision of a suite of computers and designated lessons. The priority now is, appropriately, to use information and communication technology to support and extend learning in other subjects; this aspect is currently underdeveloped.
42. Where focused provision for pupils with special educational needs is made it is of good quality. Support staff work well with pupils on specific targets and are helping them to make sound progress towards the specified targets on the individual education plans. The recent cut in support staffing has meant, however, that some pupils on the special educational needs register in Key Stage 1 are no longer receiving the in-class support which they need. The consequences are particularly felt in the mixed-ability/mixed-age range classes. Although teachers conscientiously plan for the whole range, the lower attaining pupils frequently need more support than one teacher can give. The lack of additional support in class is making it difficult for some of the lower attaining pupils to access the curriculum as well as they might.
43. Pupils from travelling family backgrounds are fully integrated into the curriculum provision. They are well supported by additional staff whom they and their families trust. This is enabling them to take part in all aspects of school life and helping them to make at least sound, often good, progress.
44. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which provide good quality learning opportunities. The clubs vary from sporting activities to more academic ones, such as learning French or Spanish, as well as artistic ones, such as the calligraphy club. Many pupils attend more than one club during the week. The clubs are full and pupils bubble with excitement as they make their way to their chosen venue. These clubs are a strength of the school and are doing much to promote the personal development of the pupils.
45. The school has a policy for equal opportunities. However, this dates back to 1995 prior to the time of the last inspection and appears to have been overlooked as part of the school's four-year review cycle. This policy is very general and requires updating to reflect current, statutory requirements.
46. Typically, equal opportunities considerations are included in school and subject policies more by implication than direct reference. For example, the required statements in the governors' annual report to parents and the school's prospectus are not explicit enough. Neither does equal opportunities appear as a regular feature on the agenda for governors' meetings. The school is satisfactorily committed to equal opportunities, but this is not as overtly stated through its aims and values as is the case in most other schools.

47. However, in practice, there are no major equal opportunities problems or issues arising out of the daily life of the school. Minority groups are very well integrated and there is no discrimination. The school's results and achievements are appropriately analysed by equal opportunities criteria. Boys and girls are given equal access to the curriculum and to the opportunities provided by after school clubs. The headteacher has started to track pupil involvement, for example, girls taking up the opportunity to play football or boys involved in gymnastics. Pupils are able to benefit, according to need, from what the school provides.
48. Personal, social, and health education is another good feature of the school. There is a healthy school policy, which has a holistic overview. Pupils benefit from specific personal and social education lessons that include sex education and drug awareness raising. These lessons are sensitively handled by class teachers and provide good learning opportunities for pupils in a safe and secure atmosphere.
49. Daily acts of collective worship, religious education lessons and the sensitive use of circle time all help pupils' good spiritual development. Pupils are given proper time to reflect and to consider issues relating to their own lives. During some of the best lessons, pupils expressed wonder at the world around them, for example, when looking at historical artefacts and considering how old they are.
50. Provision for moral development is also good. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 are given opportunities to handle old toys and books with care, showing respect for other people's property and valuing old things for the stories they have to tell. In Key Stage 2, pupils are encouraged to express opinions about moral dilemmas, for example, in their circle time when daily events are shared or when studying literature, such as *Macbeth*. Agreed codes of conduct and a good behaviour policy help reinforce pupils' understanding of right and wrong. All members of staff award stickers for praise and there is an established and understood system of sanctions.
51. There is good provision for social development through the extra-curricular activities, group work in lessons, through assemblies which value individuals and groups for their achievements, and through class award times, such as *golden time* and *star of the week* sessions. Residential visits for pupils in Key Stage 2 also provide very good opportunities for social development. The school council is another good feature, which promotes responsibility and a sense of involvement in the decision-making of the school.
52. There is a sound range of activities and educational visits, including visits to museums and art galleries, and these promote pupils' cultural development. Visitors to the school, such as the science theatre group (see paragraph 153) and an archaeologist, also build on cultural development. Nevertheless, there is still scope for more attention to a wider range of cultures.
53. Overall, the school is providing a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities, with some good and very good features. However, the curriculum is not appropriately balanced at present because of shortcomings in information and communication technology, design and technology, geography and music. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development continues to be a strength of the school. The school still needs, however, to deal more completely with the issues relating to life in a multi-cultural society.

The school is providing:

- a very good start to children's education in the Foundation Stage
- a very good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities
- particularly good learning opportunities in religious education and science
- good opportunities for spiritual, moral, and social development.

The school needs to improve:

- planning to meet the needs of all pupils in mixed-age classes
- planning to ensure a good balance of learning opportunities, especially in design and technology, geography and music
- the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum
- the amount of provision for pupils with special educational needs
- provision for developing the multi-cultural dimension to the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

54. The school has continued to provide a caring and supportive learning environment since the last inspection. Most staff know the pupils and their families well. As a result, teachers can use appropriately different strategies to keep individual pupils focused on their work class and make them feel valued. Parents have expressed their satisfaction with the quality of care their children receive.
55. Procedures for child protection are sound and the headteacher is the designated member of staff. The school has adopted locally agreed procedures and there is shortly to be whole staff training. Support from the relevant outside agencies is on hand if the need arises.
56. Procedures for health and safety, including first aid, are good. A member of staff has been appointed to promote health and safety within the school. Pupils are encouraged to adopt good health and safety routines, for example, by identifying the potential hazards of the drinking fountain. They are made aware of issues relating to a healthy lifestyle, for example, by being offered healthy options on the menu at lunchtime. The building is maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
57. The governing body and one parent have expressed concerns regarding overall security. However, on balance, the school has taken all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of both the children and staff.
58. Procedures to monitor and promote good attendance are satisfactory; any absence is checked and follow-up enquiries made. There is an award system to encourage full attendance. There is very good liaison with the education welfare officers who have developed relationships of trust with both the children and their families. The newly appointed headteacher also closely monitors the registers. Class teachers retain their registers in case of evacuation. However, this would be ineffective if an emergency or need for evacuation occurred at break or lunch-time.
59. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour are good. The pupils' school council has contributed to improving the whole-school policy. In a Key Stage 2 class, the class teacher uses the 'worry box' effectively to help pupils discuss how their behaviour can have an impact on the feelings of others. Behaviour in class is good as result of high quality teaching and very good management of pupils. For example, in a Key Stage 1 lesson, two boys who are known to have the potential to be disruptive were kept on task and at the end of the lesson they were invited to exhibit their completed work. This motivation has a positive affect on their learning and sense of achievement.

60. Pupils are well supervised at playtime and the school behaviour policy is consistently implemented. Teaching staff support the mid-day supervisors in managing discipline and eliminating bullying or aggressive behaviour. Poor behaviour is tracked and monitored.
61. Personal and social development for all the pupils is good. The school council members take on their role in a responsible manner and they wear their 'badge' with pride. In the reception area, awards for good work are celebrated and recognised. In the newsletters sent to parents, pupils who make good progress or achieve well in a given area are recognised. Personal development is actively monitored and promoted; each pupil has a profile covering both academic and social progress. Pupils behave sensibly and develop good social manners while eating their lunches. A magnificent whole school singing session, led by the headteacher and building on previous assemblies, fully promoted social interaction and a sense of belonging for the whole school.
62. The thorough baseline assessment undertaken in the Foundation Stage provides a very good tool for planning to cater for individual strengths and weaknesses in Key Stage 1. It is effectively used to identify pupils in need of additional support; there are now clear criteria for the identification of pupils with special educational needs. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Class teachers are clear about the criteria and individual education plans have specific targets that are regularly reviewed. The format of the register for special educational needs, however, is not conducive to analysing overall trends. For example, there is no quick way of knowing if the particular initiatives, such as the additional literacy strategy, are enabling pupils to come off the register. The individual assessment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, although, at present, there is a strong emphasis on literacy targets, with rare references to numeracy or social targets.
63. The school is making satisfactory use of information from statutory tests. For example, the recent focus on writing in English sprang from concern over national test results in previous years.
64. Simplifying assessment and planning to ensure that they inform the next steps of teaching and learning was a key issue from the last inspection. Co-ordinators have worked on this and there is marked improvement in English, mathematics, and science. Within each of these core subjects, teachers now use the same system but apart from this there is a lack of consistency from subject to subject. The school now needs to establish a whole-school policy for assessment, including a common system for the foundation subjects. With the school's modifications for Curriculum 2000, teachers recognise the need to ensure that assessment is clearly included in the new planning format.
65. **In summary:**
- The school has good procedures for promoting good behaviour and these are having a positive effect on pupils' learning.
 - The school monitors and rewards pupils for achievements related to personal development and for good attendance.
 - Assessment and planning has improved since the last inspection but there is still a lack of a consistent whole-school policy across the entire curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

66. The parents hold very positive views of the school. This is evident from the questionnaires, written comments, the parents' evening and random sample interviews. Links with parents have improved since the last inspection. A few parents felt that there were inconsistencies in homework. However, inspection evidence does not support that view. Homework is set appropriately and has a positive impact in promoting learning, especially in literacy and numeracy.
67. Within the school complex, an established independent pre-school group called Peter Pan is held daily. This gives parents and very young children their first introduction to this school. For parents seeking placements for their children, either in the Foundation Stage or older, there is a 'five session' induction process. This provides confidence for the children and gives each parent a real insight into the school.
68. The home-school diaries are a regular and very useful link between parents and school. Parents make comments and the teachers respond to these comments. The school re-introduced its own questionnaire system after a parents' evening. As a result the homework procedures were altered. Regular parents' evenings are held and parents, by appointment, are welcome to discuss their children's work at any time.
69. Parents help in and around school in a number of ways. Many help within class, such as with reading or numeracy. This does help raise levels of attainment and improve the quality of education provided. For example, one mother worked with a pupil who was struggling with some aspects of numeracy. After some one-to-one sessions, the pupil's understanding improved and she has since made very good progress. In other ways parents provide resources, such as donating carpet tiles and another parent helping lay those tiles.
70. The quality of information to the parents is good. Newsletters are very informative and celebrate the achievements of children who have performed well over the last week. The recently appointed headteacher kept parents well informed before introducing a pilot scheme to improve attainment in numeracy. Parents clearly understood why this was being done and one parent felt that there was already improvement in her child's work. The annual progress report is handwritten and is clearly specific to each child. Both parents and children can make comments and targets for improvement are set. Social and personal development is strongly featured and reports give parents a clear picture of how their children are progressing. For those parents whose children have special educational needs, all appropriate information regarding reviews is made available.
71. Parents support the school in raising the levels of achievement by ensuring homework is completed. Parents feel very welcome in school and many commented upon the warm and friendly atmosphere within the building. The headteacher and other members of staff are visibly on hand should a parent wish to discuss a concern.
72. The large and enthusiastic *Friends of Runwell School Association* holds a number of activities and events to promote the school, the parents and the whole community. The committee works closely with both the staff and the governing body. Substantial sums of money are raised and have provided extra resources, such as library books or software for the computers. The new headteacher would like to improve information and communication technology to meet the demands of the future. The *Friends* have been asked to contribute towards this, as a project with a specific aim in mind.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

73. The new headteacher took up his post in September 2000, some 12 weeks before the inspection. Since his appointment he has made significant improvements in many areas and has clearly established priorities for development. He has a very clear vision of how the school needs to move forward and is providing strong leadership.
74. The headteacher has rightly instigated a programme of lesson observation with the deputy headteacher. Procedures have also been introduced to monitor pupils' work in the core subjects. With the support of the staff he has introduced a wide variety of extra-curricular activities.
75. The deputy headteacher, who provides an excellent example as a class teacher, has led the staff in updating the school's behaviour policy. This school is successfully maintaining a good level of pupil conduct. The headteacher recognises the need for significant improvements in the school environment. In the light of the school's budgetary constraints he and a team of helpers have worked to improve the internal decorative state.
76. Further priorities identified by the headteacher include improvement in the use of information and communication technology and the updating and development of schemes of work. In addition, agreed planning formats need to be consistently used; some lesson planning does not acknowledge fully the needs of all pupils in mixed-age classes. Inspectors' findings support the view that these are the right priorities.
77. The governing body is supportive of the school and many governors play an increasingly active role within the school. Governors have an appropriate management structure and most governors are effective in their designated committees. However, some governors are less aware of the school's position in areas beyond their committee remit.
78. There are named governors for areas such as literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. In discussion with members of the inspection team, governors showed themselves to be committed to the school and keen to assist in its future development. The headteacher and the relatively new chair of governors work closely together. There is, therefore, a good opportunity for the governing body to become more closely involved in the monitoring of the school's progress.
79. Governors meet their statutory requirements including those with regard to pupils with special educational needs. Support is organised by a part-time special educational needs co-ordinator and pupils receive additional support from learning assistants. Provision is however limited and this has an adverse effect on some pupils' progress. The previous inspection found that the system for recognising pupils who might have special educational needs was not effective and there was no consistent screening process. A comprehensive assessment programme has been introduced and is used regularly in the reception class to identify individual needs and attainments. Pupils' progress is monitored as they move through the school. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection. Pupils from travelling backgrounds are fully included in the life of the school and the local education authority provides some support for these pupils.
80. The current school improvement plan is comprehensive, detailed and prioritised. It is prefaced by detailed information on its background and a discussion document on organisational options within a restricted budget. The plan is featured as an agenda item for each governing body and committee meeting. The headteacher has updated the plan to include his report on this term's monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

81. The school improvement plan and its priorities reflect the stated aims of the school. These, in summary, are a commitment to providing experiences and opportunities to enable pupils to become responsible and well balanced members of society. Parents support these aims and agree with the attitudes and values that are promoted by the school. They appreciate the regular communication through the newly introduced *Runwell News*.
82. At present the school's management team consists of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who meet weekly. The impending departure of the deputy headteacher and other staff changes will necessitate the formulation of a new management team. This should be constituted to have a shared vision for raising standards and to plan strategically for the school's improvement.
83. The quality of curriculum leadership is variable. Only co-ordinators for literacy and numeracy have been given opportunities to observe lessons throughout the school in order to monitor teaching and learning. Other co-ordinators advise and support staff informally and in staff meetings. Monitoring of planning and pupils' work now needs to be developed to make sure that lesson planning builds securely on what has already been taught and learned. This was identified as an area for improvement at the time of the last inspection.
84. There has been a good level of improvement in most of the areas identified as key issues in the previous report and in the quality of teaching. In particular, attainment in mathematics in the 2000 National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 has risen to the national average and assessment procedures are now satisfactory, although not consistently used. There are challenges to be faced in the light of staffing changes and financial constraints.
85. Financial planning is satisfactory and is used effectively to support educational developments. The financial committee of the governing body oversees budget spending and has a satisfactory knowledge of the school's income, spending and costs of resourcing. It is provided with detailed financial information upon which decisions can be made. The school operates within a very tight budget and has recently moved from a deficit situation to a forecast break-even in the current school year. It actively seeks to obtain best value for money. Grants for specific purposes are used appropriately.
86. The school has good procedures for financial control and administration. Budget monitoring is carried out by the local education authority, although there has been no recent audit. Day-to-day office management and administration is friendly and efficient and makes an important contribution to the smooth running of the school. The *Friends of Runwell* provide further useful funding for educational resources.
87. The school has an appropriate number of teachers, with a good range of experience, qualifications and subject knowledge. The teaching staff are supported well by classroom assistants, parent helpers, administration and caretaking personnel. The latter make an important contribution to the welcoming atmosphere of the school. There is a good team approach to improving the quality of education provided. All staff have regular and structured appraisal and are encouraged to attend courses. A recently appointed member of staff has responsibility for health and safety for the staff. The school is well on the way to achieving *Investors in People* status and there are good systems for inducting and mentoring new members of staff.
88. Recent and current staff departures have caused some concern to parents. However, the governing body and the newly appointed headteacher have interviewed and appointed experienced replacements.

89. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and enables the full curriculum to be taught effectively. The governing body has experienced some uncertainties as to financial approval for major building work but that has now been resolved and work is due to start in the near future. Walls have been decorated with murals and words from children's classics. For example, pictures from *The Jungle Book* or *Winnie the Pooh*, together with poems or short excerpts, make the visitor stop and read. This also has a positive effect on standards of literacy.
90. Classrooms are airy and spacious. The setting allows for ease of supervision by the class teachers or support staff. The walls are used effectively for displays that celebrate pupils' work. Corridors are free of clutter and allow ease of movement. There is, however, inadequate library provision. At present there is no central place where a class or group of pupils can practise library or research skills.
91. The school is also used for lettings to the local community. These include the Peter Pan playgroup and the after school club. The latter provides a valuable benefit and resource for both parents and children alike. For example, children practise designing and making decorations for Christmas, which exercises their skills in art or design technology. In addition, the extra income goes to improving the quality of education as a whole.
92. The spacious grounds are well protected by fencing; there is a wildlife area to promote science exploration. The playground is spacious and allows for ease of supervision by staff.
93. Resources to support teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in some respects, especially as regards new technology and music. The governing body and the senior management team are aware of this. Whiteboards have recently been introduced and double up as screens for overhead projectors. The quality of books and day-to-day resources such as work sheets are satisfactory. The quality and range of resources in the Foundation Stage are also satisfactory. Playground resources at lunch-time are limited.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

94. **To further improve the quality of education and raise standards of achievement, the governing body, with the headteacher and staff, should:**

raise standards of attainment in information and communication technology and promote its use in supporting and extending learning in other subjects by:

- energetically pursuing their plans for increasing the stock of up-to-date computers;
 - arranging appropriate training for staff;
 - actively investigating ways in which information and communication technology can be used to support and extend learning in other subjects;
- (see paragraphs 181 – 185)

improve curriculum planning, progress and attainment by:

- allocating adequate time for pupils to have good, regular and progressive learning opportunities in all National Curriculum subjects, including design and technology, geography and music where standards are not high enough;
 - developing schemes of work that take appropriate account of government recommendations and meet the needs of pupils;
 - making sure that it is clear what pupils are expected to know, understand and be able to do by the end of their time in each year group;
- (see paragraphs 37 – 49, 163 – 166, 173, 180)

improve the standards of reading, especially in Key Stage 1, by:

- adopting a more structured approach to teaching and learning, with more guidance to pupils over their choice of books;
 - having a sharper focus in the guided reading sessions;
 - planning the development of reading and comprehension skills across the curriculum.
- (see paragraphs 9, 103 – 122)

In addition, the governing body should indicate in its action plan how it intends to improve the level of support for pupils with special educational needs and the quantity and quality of learning resources where necessary.

(see paragraphs 41, 105, 122 and 88, 165, 188, 198)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3.0	20.9	43.3	25.4	6.0	1.4	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	YR-Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	261
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR-Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	53
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0

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	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.1
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	21	38

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	12	15	15
	Girls	18	18	20
	Total	30	33	35
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	79 (80)	87 (91)	92 (89)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	14	15	16
	Girls	18	15	21
	Total	32	30	37
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	84 (87)	79 (89)	97 (91)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	21	19	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	21
	Girls	15	16	15
	Total	30	31	36
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	75 (60)	78 (42)	91 (62)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	15
	Girls	15	14	14
	Total	27	26	29
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	68 (59)	65 (57)	73 (54)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	252
Any other minority ethnic group	4

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR-Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.6
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR-Y6

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	112

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	2	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.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	563,656
Total expenditure	543,679
Expenditure per pupil	1,928
Balance brought forward from previous year	-4,737
Balance carried forward to next year	15,240

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 28%

Number of questionnaires sent out	280
Number of questionnaires returned	78

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	59	38	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	37	58	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	60	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	62	19	0	0
The teaching is good.	43	55	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	41	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	28	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	38	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	46	53	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	40	49	4	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	47	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	82	18	0	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

Parents wanted to stress that the children are happy at school and that the atmosphere is right. Others emphasised that the school is a very good community, the behaviour is good and children want to learn and enjoy doing so.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

95. The previous inspection identified the provision for the youngest children as a strength of the school. The present inspection team confirms that judgement. The provision for children under the age of five is very good and provides a firm basis for future learning.
96. The school provides part-time and full-time education in its reception class for children who are under five years of age. At the time of the inspection there were 20 part-time and eight full-time children, 21 of whom were less than five years of age. Most children arrive with a range of social and early learning skills that are below those expected for children of their age. By the time that they are six most children have made good progress and are well prepared for work at the early levels of attainment in the National Curriculum.

Personal, social and emotional development

97. Children behave very well. Most are confident and show respect for others when working and playing happily with their friends. They respond well to adults and enjoy the wide range of activities offered. Children with special educational needs are effectively supported where possible but there is currently a shortfall in provision in this respect. Children from travelling backgrounds are effectively integrated into the reception class. Children's personal, social and emotional development is promoted very effectively through all the work of the early years unit. As a result, children gain in confidence and see themselves as successful learners. For further examples of their development in this respect see the following sections.

Communication, language and literacy

98. The school gives a high priority to the development of speaking and listening skills. Children listen carefully and respond well to questions. They confidently ask questions and communicate their ideas and feelings. Their vocabulary is developing well through the well-structured language programme planned for them. They know many stories, such as the *Elmer* stories and know that David McKee is the author. They also know a good range of songs and rhymes. The imaginative planning of role-play, such as the post office, encourages them to make up their own stories. Their early reading skills are developed by sharing books and reading together with the class teacher. They relish familiar phrases and rhyming words – one little girl rhymes *duck* with *luck*. They enjoy alliteration in the text. They know how books are organised and tell their own versions of stories, using pictures to help them. Many recognise and sound out individual letters of the alphabet and most recognise their own name and some familiar words. A few read simple sentences from the books they share.
99. The children in the reception class develop early writing through activities that enable them to form letters and some copy their own name or write it freehand. Many children successfully copy their teacher's script to put chosen sentences to pictures that they have drawn.

Mathematical development

100. Children are introduced to an appropriate range of mathematical activities that provide opportunities for sorting, matching, counting and making sets. They recognise numbers to 10 and are familiar with larger numbers. Some children count in twos from 0 to 10 using a number crocodile and some respond correctly when the teacher gives them a simple problem to solve. For example, when she asked "*I had three, the crocodile ate one, how many are there now?*" They use the correct mathematical language to talk

about size, shape and position. The majority make good progress in learning number rhymes and songs and use number games and activities to support their learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

101. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is fostered through a range of activities that help them to appreciate aspects of the curriculum related to science, history, geography and technological subjects. They are attaining levels that exceed those expected for their ages and they make good progress. They are encouraged to explore their immediate environment and take an interest in the world around them. Through their topic *Me* they begin to develop an understanding of the passage of time and talk about past events in their lives. They explore growth and change through their own development from babyhood and make *All about Me* books.
102. Children enjoy being scientists when they carry out a simple investigation in chromatography using coloured sweets. They use a pipette correctly. Children are encouraged to make observations and deduce where the colour came from. Literacy skills are developed through the one-to-one conversation with the teacher or the assistant, both of whom question effectively to encourage children's explanations. Children know the dropper is a pipette and they know the names of the relevant colours.

Physical development

103. Children have a good awareness of space when moving around in the playground. In their physical education lessons, they use travelling movements and begin to build a sequence of movements. These achievements are promoted well through the praise, support and encouragement that they receive. They are developing secure physical control and co-ordination when using a range of tools such as pencils, paintbrushes and scissors. Most children are developing dexterity with small tools and construction equipment. Children use tools sensibly for cutting and sticking and they enjoy the opportunities to play imaginatively with sand, water and dough.
104. There are few wheeled toys for outside play and there is no sheltered area for outdoor use in wet weather. The outdoor play area is safe and secure but small. Physical development is at least as expected by the time the children are six and some exceed expectations.

Creative development

105. By the time the children are six they have made good progress and reached an appropriate level for their age. They use the opportunities provided to explore colour and texture well and children demonstrate imagination in their work and play. They paint pictures of *Elmer* and many express their ideas with confidence. Children are beginning to sing simple songs tunefully with a satisfactory awareness of rhythm. They have already acquired a repertoire of favourite songs and rhymes. Displays of children's work reflect the wide range of tasks undertaken and help to stimulate further learning.
106. The effective partnership between home and school provides a firm basis for children's learning. Parents are informed about their children's progress at regular intervals both informally and formally. Parents have the opportunity to meet with the teacher to discuss on-going targets. The home-school diary is an effective means of communication. Planning and record keeping are very good and the well-organised assessment system is used very effectively. The entry assessments are repeated each term.

Teaching and organisation

107. The quality of teaching is very good. It is based on secure knowledge and understanding of young children's development and individual needs. The staff have high expectations and very good relationships with the children who feel secure and valued. The adults

work well as a team and use their knowledge and skills very effectively to teach and encourage the children. All activities are linked appropriately to the six areas of learning. The staff are continually grasping opportunities to stimulate language and personal development.

ENGLISH

National test results

108. Standards in English are in line with national averages for writing at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The 2000 national tests showed reading standards are below national averages at Key Stage 1. However, by the end of Key Stage 2 standards in reading are in line with national averages. The school is aware of the need to improve reading skills and has some strategies in place. These include providing extra support for the lowest attainers through the early reading recovery pilot scheme in Key Stage 1 and running additional literacy groups in Key Stage 2. The recently introduced guided reading sessions throughout both key stages are also designed to improve standards in reading. It is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Standards and progress

109. On entering the school, pupils' skills in English are below national expectations. During the Foundation Stage, they gain a good grounding in speaking and listening and pre-reading and writing skills. This good start, combined with the strong focus on spelling and writing skills in Key Stage 1, has helped to improve writing skills. Pupils, therefore, make sound progress throughout the two key stages in speaking and listening and writing. They make unsatisfactory progress in reading at Key Stage 1, but satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2 where they are receiving extra support through the additional literacy strategy.
110. The lowest attaining pupils are making sound progress because they receive good additional support. However, there is a group of pupils identified at Stage 1 on the special educational needs register who are no longer supported during the literacy hour. These pupils are not making satisfactory progress. After a dip in standards following the last inspection, standards are now at the same levels as previously reported, which shows sound progress overall.

Speaking and listening

111. In Key Stage 1, pupils express their ideas clearly and listen well to each other and the teachers. They do not always use grammatically correct structures but they do speak with confidence. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 described how they would change the story they were reading. This involved them working in pairs, agreeing certain changes and reporting back to the class. In history, they thought of a range of ways to describe how they knew that toys were old. They showed that they were listening carefully by building on each other's ideas. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils express their opinions fluently and give extended answers. For example, in one Years 5 and 6 class, the pupils enjoyed guessing the meaning of words and justifying their opinions. In a parallel class, they showed insight into the finer moral issues raised in *Macbeth*, such as suggesting that the dagger symbolises Macbeth's conscience.

Reading

112. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils read simple texts accurately and the higher attainers begin to read with expression. They enjoy reading stories together from 'big books'. Individuals who have not reached the desired standards by the end of the Foundation Stage benefit from a structured programme that helps to improve their recognition of letters and sounds. Pupils sound out words and use the pictures to help them but they do not always fully understand what they are reading. This may be on an

individual word level, such as 'palm' as in the palm of the hand, or when literary phrases are used such as 'like a vessel in full sail'. There is too little guidance and structure provided when they choose their reading books.

113. In early Key Stage 2, many pupils need further reinforcement of basic reading skills. Lower attaining pupils in the early years of Key Stage 2 are really benefiting from the additional literacy strategy. These sessions build confidence in knowing sounds and blending them together. The small group work helps develop confidence. Pupils enjoy this work, which is delivered with a sense of pleasure and at a good, lively, pace. A few pupils are very well supported by individual attention. However, there are insufficient staff to help all pupils who would benefit from additional reading and writing support.
114. By the time they leave the school, most pupils read fluently and with understanding. They are establishing good habits of reading daily at home and in school. There is some improvement in the reading of non-fiction books since the previous inspection and the higher attaining pupils are now practising the reading skills of information retrieval, skimming and scanning.

Writing

115. Pupils are benefiting from structured handwriting and spelling lessons. These are helping to improve basic writing skills. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils are writing independently and express their ideas in simple sentences. There is a tendency still to write as they speak, for example ' We done some droring'. However, some higher attaining pupils are starting to explore the use of more descriptive language and are beginning to write several sentences for each piece of work.
116. In lower Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils manage to write more complex sentences such as, "Once in a deep dark hole in the middle of the woods lay a small prickly hedgehog. Leaves rustle down the hole while she was asleep and woke her up". This shows enjoyment of language and experimentation with description. There is an awareness of correct spelling and punctuation. These skills need highlighting and developing more systematically throughout Key Stage 2 in order to extend the gifted and talented pupils further. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are writing in a variety of styles, including newspaper reports, diary entries, play scripts, biography, and poetry. There is some good writing in history. For example, pupils have written, with empathy, about life for a sailor on a Tudor ship. There is a need for more extended writing opportunities across the curriculum.

Pupils and English

117. In the majority of lessons, pupils concentrate well and are keen to take part in the activities. They listen carefully during whole class sessions and work independently in groups. Behaviour is good overall and pupils show appreciation of each other's efforts when they share work at the end of lessons.

Teaching

118. Teaching is good overall, being good or better in 7 out of 10 lessons. All other lessons are satisfactory with one unsatisfactory exception. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection where it was deemed satisfactory.
119. Teachers have welcomed the National Literacy Strategy and worked hard to implement the changes. This has helped improve planning. The good or better teaching has a strong focus for each lesson, which is shared with the pupils and constantly checked for clear understanding.

120. Teaching is at least good in Key Stage 1. Teachers make sure that the pupils understand what they are doing and why; and regularly check that they fully understand what is required. They show good knowledge of teaching the basic skills and motivate pupils well. They are aware of the need to improve reading skills and are beginning to reinforce these skills at every opportunity. They use a good variety of tasks. However, matching work to the levels and age of the pupils in a mixed-ability and mixed-age group is very challenging. Good teachers, in both the key stages, are aware that they do not always meet the needs of all pupils as they are currently arranged into class groups.
121. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is more variable. Just over half of the lessons are good or better with one unsatisfactory lesson observed. Where teaching is good or better, teachers identify exactly what they want to teach and why. This leads to a tight focus on clear learning outcomes. Suitable work is set for the different levels in the class. In the best lessons, teachers consolidate learning points well. Where teaching is satisfactory, the aims are less clear or not fully realised during the lesson. In the small minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, the tasks are not sufficiently demanding. This leads to pupils fidgeting and unsatisfactory rates of learning.
122. All teachers ensure that the children from travelling families are fully included in all aspects of English work. They plan and work well with the additional teacher and learning assistant who support the children in the classrooms. Although the teachers know the pupils' backgrounds well, it is not possible, without reference to individual records, to identify children from travelling families. This is a success for the school's efforts to be inclusive.
123. Although class teachers work well with the special educational needs support staff and are aware of individual education plans, class teachers do not always make enough use of the individual plans in their daily planning. At present, these individual education plans tend to be used predominantly by the support staff.
124. Teachers are aware of the need to develop the use of information and communication technology in teaching literacy. They also acknowledge that guided reading sessions and reading across the curriculum need to focus more sharply on understanding, especially at Key Stage 1, and on the higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 2. There is still a need to emphasise the higher order reading skills of skimming, scanning and information retrieval with all pupils, especially at the end of Key Stage 2.
125. The co-ordinator has begun effective monitoring of teaching and this is helping to improve planning and assessment, as well as encouraging the spread of good practice.

Assessment

126. Home-school diaries are a useful means for parents and pupils to communicate with teachers about reading. Many diaries show a good dialogue between the teacher and the parents in relation to reading and other homework. Work is marked regularly with constructive comments. There are regular tests, such as the unaided writing tests, which teachers moderate to assess pupils' levels of attainment. Teachers set individual targets that, in the best practice, are agreed with pupils. Pupils are using these targets to help improve their standards.

In summary

127. The school is successfully implementing the National Literacy Strategy and is developing good practice. In order to raise standards further there is a need to:
- analyse the impact of the organisation of the mixed-ability/mixed-age range classes on standards in English and consider alternative strategies;

- improve the standards of reading, especially at Key Stage 1, through a more structured approach, more tightly focussed use of the guided reading sessions and more development of reading and comprehension skills across the curriculum;
- increase the amount of support given to those pupils on Stage 1 of the special educational needs register;
- focus on higher order skills in order to extend the learning of the higher attaining pupils;
- make more use of information and communication technology;
- consciously reinforce literacy skills across the curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

National test results

128. The results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2000 indicate that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 and above was in line with the national average. The results at the end of Key Stage 2 show that attainment was close to the national average. The results at both key stages were also in line with the average attained by schools in a similar context.
129. At the time of the last inspection in 1996 attainment was judged to be in line with national averages at the end of Key Stage 1, but well below at the end of Key Stage 2. From 1996 to 2000 results at the end of Key Stage 2 improved, reaching the national average in 2000 with a good proportion of pupils achieving the higher than expected Level 5.

Standards and progress

130. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations, discussions with pupils and an examination of pupils' work, indicates that attainment is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. This represents an overall improvement in attainment at Key Stage 2 since the last inspection. The school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy successfully and carefully analyses the National Curriculum test results. The school regroups pupils for mathematics to ensure that they build upon prior learning. This and the high level of teaching quality in both key stages is having a positive effect. Information and communication technology, however, is not used effectively to support learning in the subject.
131. Pupils made good progress in 64 per cent of the lessons observed in Key Stage 1 and in 50 per cent of those observed in Key Stage 2. Progress in the remainder was never less than satisfactory. Good progress was often evident when pupils were made aware of their learning targets and worked hard to achieve them. For example, in a very good lesson in Key Stage 1, pupils built upon their knowledge of doubles and near doubles to make mental calculations. They carried out practical and oral work to record what they were learning in addition sums. There is good use of apparatus and imaginative games to support adding and subtracting and evidence of care being taken to ensure a natural move over to written work. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress over time and in individual lessons, particularly when classroom assistants support them.

Mathematics in Key Stage 1

132. Most pupils enter Key Stage 1 well prepared to work within the National Curriculum. They make satisfactory progress in numerical calculations and in learning about shape, space and measures. Many count accurately in fives, twos and tens and some recall such number facts quickly.
133. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand and use multiplication. For example, in a well-taught lesson pupils made equal sets to reinforce their understanding of multiplication as repeated addition. Pupils responded enthusiastically to the practical

nature of their tasks and the teacher assessed their learning effectively in the final part of the session. In another well planned and taught lesson, pupils were challenged to use their understanding of doubles and additions in calculations within a given period of time. Pupils made good progress in this lesson as a result of the teacher carefully matching tasks to the needs of pupils with differing abilities and the consistent focus throughout the lesson on what the pupils were expected to learn.

134. Lower attaining pupils benefit from extra adult support and patient teaching. They make sound progress in learning addition facts to five and using numerals and signs to record the addition. Pupils use bar charts to communicate findings, for example in Years 1 and 2 where pupils' birthdays are recorded.

Mathematics in Key Stage 2

135. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 develop their knowledge of space, shape and measures. Most of the work in pupils' books is accurate and covers an appropriate range of activities. Recorded number work develops multiplication and division skills involving three and seven times tables. Some average and higher attaining pupils show an understanding of inverse operations. These pupils add 100 and 1000 to numbers correctly. Lower attaining pupils make less satisfactory progress. Their recorded work is less well matched to their needs and their work is sometimes incomplete and poorly presented.
136. Pupils in the higher attaining set make satisfactory and, for some, good progress in their understanding of fractions during a lesson on this topic. They shade correctly two-fifths and three-fifths of a circle and measure and draw the other quarter or fifths when a diagram has been started. Most identify simple pairs of fractions which together make a whole number. The teaching is carefully planned and the tasks, which are matched to pupils' needs, lead to sound progress. In a similar lesson on fractions, lower attaining pupils make good progress as a result of well-planned and appropriate work, coupled with additional adult support.
137. Most pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 classes make good progress over time and particularly in lessons where sharply focused teaching and high expectations involve pupils in their own learning. Higher attaining pupils, for example, make good progress in adding and subtracting decimals. They label correctly units, tenths and hundredths and refer correctly to 'zero point zero nine'. They achieve a high level of accuracy. Meticulous planning and stimulating teaching help lower attaining pupils to understand the process of 'rounding up' to the nearest £1 to solve problems involving money. These pupils' progress is helped by the use of itemised bills and realistic prices. Work in pupils' books includes many tasks that have been accurately completed. These include, for example, division involving remainders, place value, axes and planes of symmetry.

Pupils and mathematics

138. Pupils respond positively and enjoy their mathematics lessons, especially those of a practical nature. Many clearly enjoy the challenge of mental number work. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils co-operate well with each other. In all the lessons observed, teachers gave regular encouragement and feedback to reinforce good work and behaviour.

139. **The quality of teaching overall is good and is never less than satisfactory. Important features of the better teaching, which leads to pupils making good progress, are:**
- well established routines and high expectations of work and behaviour;
 - clear identification of what pupils are intended to learn and sharing this with the pupils in their lessons;
 - secure subject knowledge;
 - work well matched to pupils' needs and abilities.
140. **Where teaching is less effective this is because:**
- work is less well matched to pupils' needs;
 - basic classroom routines are not well established.
141. **Strengths of the subject:**
- overall good quality of teaching;
 - effective monitoring of teaching and learning;
 - analysis of test results to identify areas of weakness;
 - improved standards of numeracy in Key Stage 2;
 - successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy;
 - introduction of setting;
 - individual target setting and targets in pupils' books;
 - assessment procedures.
142. **What could be improved:**
- the quality of marking - there is no agreed whole-school approach which outlines areas for improvement consistent with pupils' individual targets;
 - planning which clearly indicates targets for pupils in different age groups;
 - the development and use of information and communication technology skills to support learning.

SCIENCE

National test results

143. The 2000 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments show attainment to be above the national average for all schools as well as for similar schools. A well above average proportion, 38 per cent, achieved the higher than expected Level 3. Attainment was particularly good in experimental and investigative science and in knowledge of materials and their properties.
144. The national test results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000 show that attainment was above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher than nationally expected Level 5, 45 per cent, was also above the national average for all schools and for similar schools. The overall trend over the last five years has been upwards in comparison with the rising national average. An important contributory factor in the improvement in standards has been the work of the co-ordinator in identifying the weaker areas in pupils' knowledge and understanding, and working with colleagues to improve learning and attainment in these aspects.

Standards and progress

145. At the time of the last inspection, standards of attainment were judged to be in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. On the evidence of the lessons observed, examination of pupils' work and discussions with them, it is now judged that attainment is broadly in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1. In some respects, including experimental work and materials and their properties, the

attainment of many pupils continues to be above expectations. There was little evidence available of recent work in the other parts of the science curriculum. It is, therefore, not possible to judge how well the standards achieved in last year's assessments are being maintained. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is judged to be above national expectations.

146. Literacy and numeracy skills are effectively promoted and used in science lessons, although there are areas for possible improvement. In Key Stage 1, for example, there is inconsistency between parallel classes in the expectations of pupils using their own words to record their observations. At best, however, at the end of Key Stage 2 a pupil records his observation on natural habitats when he comes to the whiteboard and writes, "In the winter the tree discards its leaves and they decompose". The positive encouragement of this level of literary and scientific accuracy promotes very good learning.
147. There is at present little direct planned connection made between the mathematical skills that are needed in science work and what is taught in numeracy lessons. Information and communication technology is not much used to support and extend learning in science.
148. Science is taught throughout the school to mixed-age classes and the curriculum is effectively planned on a two-year cycle to meet this need. Progress over time is variable, although never less than satisfactory. The school recognises the need to identify carefully what knowledge, skills and understanding are to be developed by the end of each year group and built on subsequently. In the lessons observed during the inspection, progress and the quality of learning were good in all of the lessons in Key Stage 2, very good in one of the lessons in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in the other.

Science in Key Stage 1

149. Pupils in the current Years 1 and 2 classes correctly distinguish between those materials that occur naturally and those that do not and identify items made of wood, metal, plastic, sand, rubber and paper. They make predictions, "I think the ice on the radiator will melt first", and make their own records of the actual time to melt under different conditions. This work provides a good basis for their own experimental work.
150. The transition to conducting experimental work was very well managed in a lesson where some of the pupils were set the task of finding out which materials are waterproof. The teacher very effectively prepared the group for the practical task through focused discussion. As a result, pupils were skilfully led to revisit their learning about fair tests and to anticipate what might happen when they dropped the same amount of water onto the different materials stretched across the top of a jam jar. They suggested that the water might run off, soak through, make a puddle or go straight through. By attaching the materials to the jars, the teacher ensured that the pupils' energies were directed to the investigation rather than to the preparation for it. The discussion rehearsed the vocabulary that pupils would need when they wrote about what happened on a prepared recording sheet. This was very good practice, which made sure that these higher attaining pupils were suitably challenged by their work and made good progress.
151. Work in this lesson was carefully matched to pupils' learning needs and the learning objectives for each of three groups were made clear. Other groups made good progress in sorting materials and in finding out which of the papers provided was most suitable for wrapping a present. The teacher used the final session of the lesson very effectively to extend the learning of each group through well-directed questions and for each group to learn something of what others have done. Very well focused teaching promoted very good progress and learning and very positive attitudes to the subject.

Science in Key Stage 2

152. Pupils in the Years 3 and 4 classes have a sound knowledge and understanding of the properties of marble, granite, limestone and chalk and what they are used for – “chalk is used for writing because it is soft and leaves itself behind”. Their experimental and recording skills have improved when they explore how water passes through soils of different types. Their books show that they have learned about appropriate areas of the science curriculum.
153. During the weeks leading up to the inspection, pupils in the three classes for this age group had been studying solids, liquids and gases. Their work was well supported by classroom displays and was brought to a conclusion during the inspection by a theatre group which performed *Materials or The Big Drip*. One teacher prepared her class for this experience through a quick revision session before the personal, social and health education lesson on the previous day. She used questions very well to help pupils to confirm their knowledge and to clarify, for example, the difference between a compound and a mixture.
154. The visit was followed up effectively in another class where the teacher extended pupils’ learning by helping them to understand the effect of heat on the ‘bonds’ when a liquid changes to a gas. She also helped pupils to remember that a liquid takes up the shape of its container. Pupils knew that there was oxygen in the air around them and that they took in oxygen and gave out carbon dioxide. The performance by the theatre group had been thoroughly prepared for and followed up and so made a good contribution to pupils’ learning about solids, liquids and gases.
155. The books of pupils in the Years 5 and 6 classes show good progress in developing scientific knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils use the correct scientific vocabulary when writing an extended account of an experiment to test whether condensation would occur when cold air and hot air meet. The work in their books on evaporation and condensation is presented neatly and provides evidence of thorough, systematic teaching. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, give good accounts of the water cycle, correctly using words such as *precipitation* and *transpiration*. Pupils know the functions of flowers, leaves, stems and roots. They use their skills in information and communication technology to produce clear, labelled diagrams to illustrate their work on photosynthesis. This is very good, but overall the use of information and communication technology to support and extend learning in science is underdeveloped.
156. During the inspection, pupils from Years 5 and 6 were studying plant and animal classification, using the immediate locality of the school grounds as a stimulus and focus. In one lesson, the teacher helped pupils to think about the characteristics of living things through very good questioning, building up the relevant vocabulary on the whiteboard and consolidating their learning through work in pairs. This very effectively met the needs of pupils in both year groups. Pupils then very quickly and confidently suggested a list of 12 living things in the school locality. The work in this lesson was sharply focused on the learning objectives that were shared with the pupils. In response to the challenge of classifying the animals that they had suggested, pupils offered habitats, *air, underground, water, and insect, mammal or reptile*.
157. In the other lesson with pupils at the end of the key stage, the teacher made very effective use of a short trip to look at the habitats offered by an oak tree – leaves, branches, bark and woodland floor. Through his very skilful questioning pupils revisited earlier learning and consolidated and extended it, using words such as *parasite* and *decompose* correctly. Their teacher is highly skilled at providing pupils with cues that help them to recall what they already know or focus them on subsequent learning. Resources downloaded from the Internet were very appropriate and helped pupils to

identify whether their creature is mammal, insect, arachnid, mollusc, bird, myriapod or segmented worm. Pupils' progress and the quality of their learning, based on very good planning and high expectations of a brisk pace, were very good. The next task required all the pupils with, for example insects, to identify three common features. The organisation and management of the pupils positively encouraged collaborative work and the development of very good attitudes to learning in science.

158. When pupils reported back to the class they did so very clearly with completely accurate use of scientific language, for example *nocturnal* and *hibernate*. They have an above average understanding and knowledge of the characteristics and attributes of living things and their classification.

Pupils and science

159. Pupils throughout the school quite clearly enjoy their science lessons, particularly when they are required to carry out practical tasks, for example on waterproofing, or to work together to improve their knowledge and understanding as in the lessons on habitats described above. Their attitudes and behaviour are usually good or very good in response to the good classroom routines and organisation that have been established by their teachers. They take care with the presentation of their work and behave sensibly and co-operatively when carrying out practical tasks. As pupils move up the school they take increasing responsibility for their own note taking and diagrams.

Teaching

160. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory. In fact 80 per cent of lessons were good or better, of which 60 per cent were very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, plan their lessons very thoroughly and teach with enthusiasm. Other strong features of the best teaching that make important contributions to good learning and progress include:
- very good questioning skills that help pupils to confirm and extend their learning;
 - high expectations of work and behaviour that lead to a good brisk pace;
 - encouragement of a practical and investigative approach from the early years onwards;
 - planned development of the correct use of scientific language throughout the school;
 - a very good balance of whole class, group and individual work with frequent changes of activity to maintain interest and concentration.

ART AND DESIGN

161. There has been satisfactory progress in the development of art since the last inspection. Overall, standards have been maintained and continue to be in line with national expectations. A new co-ordinator was appointed to lead the subject at the start of the current academic year and a thorough review of the subject is currently being undertaken. Some aspects identified as requiring improvement at the last inspection have been singled out for further development. For example, subject documentation was lacking. The national model scheme of work, designed to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum 2000, has now been adopted. Whilst units of work are still being adapted to meet the specific requirements of the pupils currently at the school, this has ensured appropriate planning for continuity in learning and skills development. The introduction, and application, of the new National Curriculum levels for art, by which pupil attainment is assessed, has been identified as an area for whole staff training.
162. Sketchbooks have also been recently introduced for all pupils. However, these are not yet being consistently used in the way the National Curriculum intends. Their potential for drafting, experimentation, the development of creative ideas and the collection of image

resources has yet to be fully realised. Whilst there are now more opportunities for pupils to study the art from non-European cultures, library resources to support independent research in this area require improvement. However, the school is making good use of its newly acquired computer resources to support artwork in all year groups.

163. Attainment of pupils at the end of each key stage, in Year 2 and Year 6, is in line with national expectations. Pupils in all year groups show a sound understanding of colour. This can be seen in work being undertaken involving pattern, collage and computer generated artwork based, for example, on the work of Mondrian. Pupils in the Key Stage 1 classes know the colour circle and can identify primary and secondary colours. Some good discussion, in a lesson looking at book illustrations, showed sound development of their observational skills and the ability to describe and comment on an artist's work. The colour effects studied were subsequently used to good effect in their own work. However, skills in other areas, such as brushwork techniques, remain underdeveloped in all year groups. This detracts from the overall quality of finished paintings.
164. In lower Key Stage 2, there was some sound work arising out of the theme of 'relationships'. A class display showed good proportion in drawings of human figures. These were reproduced in a variety of media, including cut-outs, silhouettes and charcoal as well as paint. Art is also used satisfactorily to support other subjects, as in another display for religious education illustrating Joseph's coat of many colours. Here, transparent watercolour powder paint was used effectively on wet tissue to experiment with colour bleeding and blending. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 are satisfactorily developing drawing techniques. Sketchwork skills were being properly emphasised in a lesson exploring ideas for headwear, to be developed as a three-dimensional project later in the term. Some good, detailed and well-observed work was also being undertaken when 'writing' (see *religious education paragraph*) icons.
165. The quality of teaching and learning in art is satisfactory. In Key Stage 1 they are sometimes good and in Key Stage 2 very good with individual class teachers. In only one lesson observed in Key Stage 1 were teaching and learning unsatisfactory. Here art was being used as a 'fill-in' for half a class whilst the rest were working in the new computer suite. The teacher was basically trying to teach two lessons at once and, although the computer work was satisfactory, support for the art group suffered.
166. In the majority of classes, secure working relationships are established between teachers and pupils. Objectives for each lesson are clearly set out and shared with pupils. Achievements are sound because pupils know what is expected of them. However, although never less than satisfactory, teaching skills involving questioning and discussion vary. There is some very good practice where a more open approach provides greater challenge to pupils in thinking for themselves and expressing personal opinions, for example, when discussing the work of major artists such as Van Gogh. This more astute questioning strategy also allows teachers to better assess pupils' knowledge and understanding.
167. At times, there was a little too much emphasis on what was 'wrong' with artwork, rather than what was not working quite as well as the pupils intended and how it could be improved. However, teachers' approach to artwork is mainly positive and where they are prepared to take risks, or have the personal skills and confidence to demonstrate, the pupils' learning is significantly enhanced. Pupils' attitudes to art are, consequently, sound and sometimes good or very good. They co-operate and work well together and show a positive interest in each other's work. In one of the best lessons at the end of Key Stage 2, when pupils were studying icons, religious music was also used to great effect to create a very productive, working atmosphere.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

168. At the time of the last inspection, attainment was judged to be in line with national, age-related standards at the end of both key stages. Since that time the subject has had a lower profile in the school and pupils currently do not follow a course that progressively develops their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. Standards at the end of both key stages are below national expectations.
169. There are examples of satisfactory practice throughout the school. Pupils in Key Stage 1 have gained valuable early experience in the design process and in practical skill development in their *Spiders* project. In lower Key Stage 2, pupils from Years 3 and 4 successfully designed, made and evaluated sandwiches. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 were involved in designing and making an outdoor shelter. Work on display shows an understanding of the design process, although practical skills are mostly below the level expected for their age.
170. The weakest aspect of design and technology in the school is the making and this is directly linked to lack of teacher confidence in teaching the practical aspects and to the lack of adequate resources, including tools and materials. No lessons in design and technology were observed during the inspection and there was little evidence of work that demonstrated a secure progress in learning from age group to age group.
171. The co-ordinator fully recognises the deficiencies in provision for the subject and feels that Curriculum 2000 is bringing a new clarity into the school's thinking about this subject. The school urgently needs to develop a scheme of work that clearly identifies what skills, knowledge and understanding are to be developed in each year group and built on subsequently. The school also needs to consider the amount of time given to teaching the subject. Firstly, there needs to be adequate time in total allocated to the subject and, secondly, the actual time slots needs to be sufficient for solid progress to be made in the course of a lesson or session.

GEOGRAPHY

172. Geography is taught as a block of lessons at different times of the school year rather than as regular weekly lessons. During the inspection it was not being taught in Key Stage 1. From scrutiny of planning, pupils' work, discussion with pupils and the number of lessons observed, it is judged that pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is below that expected for their ages. In the previous inspection, pupils in both key stages attained standards in line with the national expectations at that time.
173. At Key Stage 1, pupils in the mixed-age Years 1 and 2 classes learn that ways of life may be different elsewhere and the differences include transport and landscape. They make simple comparisons between life on the Isle of Struay in Scotland and their own in Runwell. Pupils are beginning to understand how to make and use maps by drawing the island and placing particular features. They correctly identify fields, bridges, a jetty and a boggy area. Some pupils know the names of the countries comprising the British Isles. The story of *Granny's Island Home* and the pupils' collage of the island make effective links with literacy and art and reinforce pupils' learning. However, there is no indication in the school's planning and little evidence from pupils' work of how they build on their geographical skills, knowledge and understanding from year to year in order to make appropriate progress.
174. In Years 3 and 4, following a visit to a local shopping area, pupils describe how litter and noise can affect the environment. Higher attaining pupils distinguish between materials that are recyclable and those that are not. These pupils offer solutions to improve the

environment. Most pupils are positive in their approach to the issue, but they are not encouraged to evaluate the conflicts presented by environmental issues. Pupils' progress and attainment in the lessons observed are adversely affected by a lack of rigour in teaching. Tasks and questions fail to challenge or stimulate pupils who then become bored, lose concentration and fail to make the expected progress.

175. In Years 5 and 6 pupils study water. They learn how water moves naturally and know that rivers, lakes and waterfalls are features of the landscape. Pupils study Ordnance Survey maps to locate areas where water is identified. Some fieldwork around the school enables pupils to observe gutters, drainpipes, slopes and drains. They are beginning to understand how water moves naturally and how man moves it for different purposes. Pupils use plans of the school and devise simple keys. They enjoy the more practical nature of their work and co-operate well when necessary. In both lessons observed, teachers used good questioning to consolidate and extend pupils' learning and in these lessons pupils made sound progress. In the one lesson observed where they had additional adult support, pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress. Good use is made of the local environment and pupils' learning is sometimes enhanced by a visiting speaker. Pupils have an outline understanding of some of the world environments such as deserts, rainforests and oceans. Most pupils find directions on a map, but fewer recognise countries or major rivers of the world. It is not clear, for example, how the various skills of making, interpreting and using maps are established across the key stages.
176. The quality of teaching ranges from good in one of the lessons observed to unsatisfactory in the other. In the better lesson, work was matched to the different needs of the pupils. The whole class introduction and final session provided opportunities for pupils to recall previous and new learning. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher was not sufficiently demanding of the pupils in their written work and there was a lack of detailed planning which led to a slow pace of learning.
177. Work is marked regularly, but is not clearly assessed against the acquisition of geographical skills. Information and communication technology is insufficiently used to support learning in geography.
178. The subject is temporarily co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher. National Curriculum units based on national guidance have replaced the previous set of guidelines. These are intended to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled within the restricted time available for the subject. These guidelines provide a curriculum framework. They are a useful basis for the development of a much-needed scheme of work on which to base planning and ensure the systematic development of pupils' geographical skills.
179. Standards have declined since the last inspection partly because greater emphasis has been placed on teaching literacy and numeracy skills and less time has been devoted to teaching geography. In addition the lack of a scheme of work has hindered planning and progress.

HISTORY

180. At the end of both key stages, pupils achieve standards in their knowledge, skills and understanding which meet the expectations for their age. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop a sense of now and the past through topics such as new and old toys. They make careful observations by handling actual toys and talking about old and new features. They start using research skills, for example, taking home a questionnaire for parents and

grandparents and discussing the results. They learn about famous people, such as Florence Nightingale, and remember some of the stories associated with them.

181. Key Stage 2 pupils are keen to talk about the wide range of experience they have had during their history studies. They have handled artefacts, including Roman pottery which an archaeologist brought into the school. They remember discussing how it was made and what it was used for. Likewise, they vividly recall dressing up in Victorian costume and visiting a Victorian classroom. They talk with empathy about the harder life experienced by some Victorian children. They retell with enthusiasm the stories of Tudor times and how the Ancient Egyptians lived. The role-play and writing undertaken help imprint the key ideas. They are aware of the issue of bias in evidence, giving an example of Rowanoak Island. During this topic, they also cover issues related to colonisation. Through their varied experiences, they develop knowledge and skills that help them when they move on to the next stage in their education.
182. Younger pupils take pleasure in handling and talking about old toys that belong to their teachers or members of their own family. They show interest in history and ask good questions. Older pupils show a keen interest and have clearly enjoyed the visits and visitors that help make history come alive.
183. It was only possible to see two lessons in Key Stage 1 and none in Key Stage 2 during the inspection. Teaching was at least sound in these lessons and the range of work seen through pupils' work and talking to pupils indicate that teachers work hard at both key stages to make history relevant and teach specific historical skills. There is good evidence of the use of literacy skills in recording history. For example, pupils write about the good characteristics of Francis Drake as emphasised by his followers and the bad features highlighted by his enemies. There is regular informal assessment, but a lack of consistent formal assessment.
184. Teachers are beginning to use the limited amount of resources to encourage pupils to use computers. Pupils are aware of the useful aspects of the Internet and know how to download information by the time that they are in Key Stage 2.
185. There is no permanent co-ordinator at present. However, teachers are beginning to adapt their planning to meet the requirements of the Curriculum 2000. A temporary co-ordinator is matching resources to the new needs and has made sure that short term planning is in place. There is a need for further subject leadership to:
 - develop medium and long term planning;
 - develop assessment further;
 - increase resources;
 - monitor teaching to ensure consistency and share good practice.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

186. At the last inspection, in 1996, standards in information and communication technology were average and in line with national expectations. Since then, the school has not kept pace with the need for continual investment in computer hardware and software resources. Consequently, it has not kept up with the pace of developments required by the information and communications technology curriculum. Standards are now largely below national expectations and in this the school has made unsatisfactory progress. However, over the past few months, the staff and governors have recognised this weakness in provision and have started to address it effectively. Applications for funding have been made to enable the school to become part of the National Grid for Learning and for teachers to undertake training to upgrade their teaching skills in the subject. Reconditioned computers have been purchased and a networked, information and

communication technology suite has been in operation since October 2000. Classes are now timetabled for weekly lessons in this new suite. However, there are currently only sufficient computers to teach half a class and additional equipment is still required. Laptop computers have been bought for each classroom. These are to replace existing stand-alone computers with ageing operating systems that will not run modern software.

187. Staff and pupils are gradually learning the skills necessary to operate the new computers. The school has adopted the national model scheme of work for information and communications technology. Planning is now in place that will, eventually, enable the school to meet the National Curriculum 2000 requirements for the subject. The inspection finds good evidence to show that, although standards in the subject require improvement, the school has come a long way in a very few weeks and the needs of the pupils are starting to be properly met.
188. The attainment of pupils at the end of each key stage, in Year 2 and Year 6, is below national expectations. Basic skills are not yet sufficiently well developed, or applied, to support work in information and communication technology across the range of curriculum subjects. Since setting up the new computer room, the school has concentrated on providing pupils with 'hands-on' experience to familiarise themselves with the equipment. To achieve this, effective use is being made of artwork programs. However, pupils do not yet have information and communication technology files in which to record their work or keep copies of printouts. Overall, the school's approach is starting to bring out the pupils' potential as key skills are learnt and confidence developed. For example, the school has recently set up a website and pupils are being encouraged to interact with this through weekly competitions.
189. In the best lessons observed, pupils in Key Stage 1 log-on to the network, load a program and talk about, and use, an appropriate range of tools using the main menu bar. However, in one lower Key Stage 2 class, pupils still had to be told by the teacher how to save files. In the older classes in Key Stage 2, satisfactory skills involving 'cut and paste' are being developed. However, across all year groups, although pupils are developing computer skills for communicating visual information, there has been insufficient time to develop communication through, for example, word-processing, sound or data handling and gathering or e-mail. Neither have controlling, monitoring or modelling activities yet been effectively introduced into the curriculum, although planning is in place to do this.
190. Learning opportunities for the pupils are improving steadily and securely along with teaching expertise in the subject. However, the historical lack of resources and the underdeveloped curriculum have meant that the quality of learning for pupils in both key stages is currently unsatisfactory. The majority of teachers have fully grasped the opportunity provided by the provision of updated computer equipment to develop their personal knowledge and understanding of the subject. As a consequence, teaching in the lessons observed, and pupils' response to the subject, were mainly satisfactory at both key stages. However, in one lower junior class, teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes were poor. Here, the teaching showed insecure command of the subject, objectives were not made clear, there was weak discipline, expectations were not high enough and the majority of pupils made little or no progress. This was the exception as in all other lessons a secure teaching and learning partnership was established with appropriate strategies properly aimed at enabling achievement and allowing pupils to take pride in their work. Pupils are slowly but steadily starting to acquire the skills necessary to use computers as working tools.

MUSIC

191. Since the last inspection, when music was seen as a strength of the school, there appears to have been a change of approach which has subsequently led to a lowering in standards. There have also been staff changes which resulted in the post of music co-ordinator becoming vacant. The new headteacher has taken on this role, recognised that standards need to be raised and set about restoring the status of music at the school with professionalism and some considerable enthusiasm. New schemes of work have been introduced. A pupils' choir has been established as part of the school's new programme of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for learning keyboard skills, through a school club, have been provided for all who wish to participate. A school rock band has been started for a small but dedicated group of pupils.
192. There is a thorough understanding, in the leadership of the subject, that a balance needs to be achieved between classical and contemporary approaches to music in order that music may be relevant to all pupils. Music is seen as vital to the spiritual as well as cultural development of the pupils. This was seen, for example, in complementary approaches to an upper Key Stage 2 religious education and art lesson, and the whole school singing assembly. In the Years 5 and 6 lesson, a CD of religious music and chants performed by the community at Taisé, in France, was used extremely well to create a very effective, quiet and reflective atmosphere for learning. In the assembly, the level of enjoyment, pupil involvement and shared social interaction between staff and pupils, through a rendition of songs such as *Winter Wonderland* and *Rocking around the Christmas Tree*, were excellent. The assembly, led by the headteacher who played a guitar, was effectively a whole school singing lesson.
193. These instances confirmed the potential for music at the school. However, such approaches are not yet being consistently applied through the music curriculum. The emphasis in lessons is mainly on listening and appraising skills. Whilst these are being satisfactorily developed, pupils' skills in creating, composing and performing music themselves are underdeveloped and, consequently, their overall attainment at both key stages is below expectations. There are some inadequacies in resourcing for the subject that contribute to this situation. The school owns only one keyboard. Those available to the keyboard club belong either to the pupils themselves or the visiting tutor. The range of non-tuned instruments requires augmenting, particularly in respect of multi-cultural instruments. Although there are some tuned percussion instruments, most teachers do not have the skills or confidence to make full use of them. Music workbooks are not available in all classes to enable pupils to properly record their work in the subject.
194. Discussion with groups of older pupils indicates a 'woolliness' and uncertainty about their use of musical instruments in the past. Few are able to correctly name an expected range of instruments or describe the sounds they make. In a Key Stage 1 class, for example, pupils showed more confidence in the use of vocal than instrumental sounds when illustrating a story. In classes in both key stages, the instruments the pupils chose were not always appropriate and the level of confidence in playing them uncertain.
195. In spite of these problems, teaching, learning and pupils' response in the lessons observed, at both key stages, were mainly satisfactory. In only one lower Key Stage 2 lesson were they unsatisfactory. Here, the pace of the lesson was slow resulting in some pupil disinterest and discipline was not well established. In an upper Key Stage 2 lesson, when exploring lyrics and melody, the choice of *Eleanor Rigby* to explore the way lyrics reflect society and social conditions was excellent. However, the music itself was hardly mentioned. The result was a rather splendid English poetry lesson. However, in another upper junior class, the musical theory concerning how songs are constructed was well illustrated using pieces by Oasis and from a 1930s musical. As a result of the teaching

approach, pupils were able to satisfactorily identify and record the structure of the songs in terms of a 'code' representing instrumental, verse and chorus sections. They shared their interpretations productively in class discussion. By the end of the lesson, pupils had learnt to 'listen' to music more carefully and in a more informed manner.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

196. At the last inspection standards of attainment and progress were judged to be in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages with a significant number of pupils achieving high standards in dance at the end of Key Stage 2. Current inspection findings entirely confirm that judgement. Pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their skills in gymnastics and games and many make very good progress at the end of Key Stage 2 in developing their dance skills. Almost all pupils achieve the target of swimming 25 metres unaided.
197. Pupils benefit from good facilities in terms of two halls and a sizeable playground area. Pupils from Year 5 also benefit from opportunities to use the facilities of an outdoor centre for adventurous activities. The development of cricket is supported well through coaching by staff from the county club. The recent introduction of gymnastic clubs is already having a positive effect on the interest of pupils and on the standards they achieve. There is at least satisfactory skill development across the physical education curriculum and pupils are good at making positive evaluations of each other's performance. The overall weakness is that there have been too few opportunities for practising skills in the context of competitive games. The indications are that this is now changing.
198. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory. Of the lessons observed, 50 per cent were good or better and one lesson, developing a dance with pupils from a Years 5 and 6 class, was excellent. Teachers make sure that pupils warm up and cool down properly; older pupils initiated their own warm up when they reach the hall before their teacher. They showed that they understood the purpose of warming and stretching muscles. Most teachers set a good example by dressing appropriately themselves. This helps pupils to recognise that physical education is an important subject in the curriculum and also contributes to raising standards.
199. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 demonstrate a sound level of ball control and most successfully pass a ball to each other. Most have at least satisfactory co-ordination and maintain control of the ball while moving with it. In a gymnastics lesson with pupils from Years 3 and 4, there was good learning and progress in terms of controlled movement and sequencing. The lesson was well paced and long enough for the teacher's clear expectations of progress to be achieved. Strong features of the lesson included the increasing challenge that the teacher introduced and the good feedback that she gave to pupils to help them to improve.
200. Pupils from Years 5 and 6 benefited from highly skilled teaching, based on very good subject knowledge, very high expectations and very good management of pupils. They made very good progress and enjoyed high quality learning as they built a dance to a well-chosen piece of music. Initially, pupils demonstrated very good individual responses to the music, having been very well prepared by the teacher to choose whether to follow the piano or the strings. They confidently identified many aspects of their performance, including stretching at different levels, jumping and landing, travelling and using different strides and gestures. They showed a very good understanding of these components as well as moving very expressively to the varying stimulus of the music.
201. The teacher in this lesson continually pushed for improvement in pupils' responses, modelling aspects of the required performance, giving excellent feedback and

commenting that he did not view arms and legs separately but as part of a whole body movement. He prepared them very well for the next phase of the lesson, working in pairs, emphasising the importance of eye contact. During individual work most were completely lost in what they were doing; their behaviour and attitude throughout the lesson was exemplary.

202. The class teacher was very effective in moving from pair to pair, making well-focused suggestions for development, doing this in such a way that pupils retained complete ownership of their responses. When pupils moved to the group work stage of the lesson for the first time they performed together particularly well. Pupils' comments on the dance of one group showed that they had recognised *eye contact, mirroring, level changes, individuals having their own movements, they moved around each other, their movements were big and bold*. These pupils have acquired the language and vocabulary of dance to a high degree as well as achieving controlled, expressive and aesthetically pleasing responses to a musical stimulus. This is a very good illustration of what pupils in the school are capable of in their physical and artistic education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

203. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in the development of religious education. This continues to be a strength of the school, especially in Key Stage 2. A new co-ordinator has taken over the management of the subject since the time of the previous inspection. A great deal of hard work has subsequently been undertaken, particularly in respect of planning. A new scheme of work has been put in place to meet both the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and the demands of the new National Curriculum 2000. Curriculum time for the subject has improved and now meets the recommendations of the locally agreed syllabus. Assembly time no longer has to be used to teach religious education, but it continues to be used well to support the subject. For example, during the inspection, teaching about the meaning and symbolism of the Christian season of Advent, as a preparation for Christmas, was effectively explained. There is a sound collection of resources to support the teaching; artefact boxes, and materials relating to the faiths studied, are particularly well used. However, some of these are beginning to suffer from continued service and require replacement. Overall, the subject is well poised for further development, particularly in respect of its planning to make use of the school's new computer facilities, but the subject lacks the necessary CD-ROM resources. The co-ordinator recognises the potential of the Internet for pupils to explore and research the major world faiths.
204. Attainment of pupils in Year 2, at the end of Key Stage 1, is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. For pupils in Year 6, at the end of Key Stage 2, it is above those expectations. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 know about the gifts brought to Jesus. There is good recognition that giving and receiving are equally important and pupils are properly enabled to consider the feelings and values of others. In discussion, one pupil suggested that an appropriate present for the infant Jesus was a 'cuddle' or 'love'. Another suggested a bouncy ball so that the Christ child could "play with the angels"! A third recognised the symbolism of the gold, not in terms of kingship, but in terms of charitable giving.
205. In Key Stage 2, younger pupils know that Bethlehem was the place where Jesus was born and can suggest reasons why Christians might want to make a 'special journey' or 'pilgrimage' there. Sound links were made with geography map-work in locating Israel in relation to Essex. Pupils can explain, in their own words, what a 'pilgrim' is. However, there was a missed opportunity, through the teaching, to extend pupils' learning through reference to religions other than Christianity for whom pilgrimage to the Middle East is important.

206. Some very good work was being undertaken in a lesson with pupils from Years 5 and 6 exploring how artists express religious belief through icons. This was very well linked to literacy development in the study of different spellings of the word 'icon' (ikon and eikōn). Through the teaching, pupils were also enabled to understand the concept of icon 'writing' (see *art paragraph*), as opposed to 'painting'. One pupil was able to suggest the concept of writing in terms of focusing the mind of the artist in telling a religious 'story'. Such discussion led to a secure understanding of the symbolism and importance of icons in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.
207. However, at the time of the inspection, only units of work on Christianity were being taught. Whilst discussion with pupils indicates satisfactory coverage of the other faiths required by the locally agreed syllabus, there is a marked lack of written work to support this. Pupils do not have religious education workbooks in which to record their studies and this is a weakness in enabling the monitoring and assessment of their attainment and progress.
208. Teaching, learning and pupils' attitudes to the subject are satisfactory in Key Stage 1. They are good in Key Stage 2. In the lesson with pupils from Years 5 and 6 described above, they were very good. Teachers communicate well and directly with the pupils, who are encouraged to contribute to class discussions and express their personal thoughts and opinions. For example, as a result of one teacher being prepared to explain her own 'special journey' to her father's grave, pupils were enabled to explore the idea of pilgrimage and the concept of 'remembrance' more effectively. Resources are used well, for example, in the lesson on icons where the teacher had downloaded examples of such artwork from the Internet and had also obtained the loan of a genuine icon. These enabled pupils to properly reflect on matters of religious belief and to wonder at the images. Pupils respond well to such opportunities, which further support the development of key religious education skills involving their ability to see the world through the eyes of others and develop their power of imagination.