

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **THE WEATHERALLS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Soham, Ely

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110769

Headteacher: Mr Trevor Parsons

Reporting inspector: John Messer  
15477

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 May 2002

Inspection number: 242798

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Pratt Street Soham Ely Cambridgeshire
Postcode:	CB7 5BH
Telephone number:	01353 720456
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Joy Dean
Date of previous inspection:	22 September 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15477	John Messer	Registered inspector	Foundation Stage	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
19743	Ann Taylor	Lay inspector		<p>b) How high are standards?</p> <p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
19507	Beulah Andrews	Team inspector	English Geography Music	
17852	Lawrence Moscrop	Team inspector	Mathematics History Physical education Special educational needs	
13805	Lynn Lowery	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Art and design	

17520	David Fisher	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Religious education English as an additional language Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd

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London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This community primary school is bigger than most primary schools with 397 full-time pupils on roll. A further fifty-two children attend the nursery on a part-time basis, either in the morning or afternoon sessions. There are almost equal numbers of boys and girls. Children's attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year but generally it is below average, although the full range of ability is represented. A significant number of children enter the school with poorly developed speaking and social skills. Nearly a quarter of pupils are entered on the school's register of special educational needs because they require extra help with their learning. This proportion is broadly in line with the national average as is the proportion who have statements of special education needs because they have more serious learning difficulties. All pupils are from white European backgrounds and only a very small number speak English as an additional language. A small number of pupils are from travellers' families. Nearly a tenth of pupils is entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average. It is difficult to recruit teachers to schools in this area.

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

This is a good school. The teaching is good and helps pupils to learn effectively. The leadership provided by the headteacher is very good and he is supported well by senior staff. The governing body is effective. Standards have risen significantly since last year when the school's performance in national tests was well below the standards attained in previous years. Across the school most pupils now attain average standards. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Standards in reading, information and communication technology and design and technology are above average and the computer suites are used effectively to support learning across the curriculum.
- The leadership by the headteacher is very good and he provides clear direction for school improvements.
- Relationships throughout the school are good and help pupils to learn in a secure and caring environment.
- The school provides a rich curriculum that is enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teachers are hard working and highly committed to improving the quality of education.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and classroom assistants make a strong contribution to their learning.

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

- The consistency of teaching and learning.
- The quality of provision for pupils in the nursery and reception classes.
- Expectations of the quality of work that pupils produce.
- Attendance.
- The amount of noise that passes from one class to another.

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

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

Since the last inspection in September 1997 the school has passed through a difficult period caused by unexpected changes in staffing. Despite major difficulties there have been good improvements. The quality of teaching has improved significantly. Standards in most subjects have been maintained at least at average levels and in design and technology and in information and communication technology they have improved. The standards that pupils attain in reading have improved. Resources have improved significantly and the addition of a good library and computer suite has had a major impact on the improvement of pupils' skills in research and the standards they attain in information and communication technology. The quality of leadership has improved. The issues raised at the time of the

last inspection have been addressed successfully although there is still work to do in assessing pupils' progress in several non-core subjects of the curriculum.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	C	D	E
mathematics	C	A	E	E
science	D	A	E	E

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

The school was well aware that Year 6 pupils' performance in the national tests in 2001 would be much lower than is normally the case because that particular group of pupils had a long history of problems as a high proportion of them experienced learning difficulties. There is strong evidence to suggest that this year the performance of pupils in Year 6 will be much closer to the standards attained in 2000. The school is well on course to meet its statutory targets of 83 per cent of pupils attaining the national target of Level 4 in English and 88 per cent in mathematics. Pupils attain standards that are as high as might reasonably be expected. On average over the past five years the improvement in the school's performance, as measured by the national tests for pupils in Year 6, has been broadly in line with the improving trend nationally.

Across the school most pupils achieve well in reading and attain standards that are above average. Their achievement in speaking and listening is good; most enter the school with standards that fall below expectations for their age but attain average standards by the end of Year 6. Particularly good work was seen in information and communication technology and in design and technology across the school and standards exceed national expectations. Throughout the school the achievement of most pupils, including those with special educational needs, those from travelling families and those with English as an additional language, is satisfactory and they attain standards in all other subjects that are broadly average except for music where there was insufficient evidence to form judgements. Pupils attain average standards in writing but their work is not always neatly presented and handwriting is often untidy.

The achievement of the children in the nursery and reception classes is satisfactory and most are on course to attain the early learning goals specified in national guidance by the end of the reception year.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn. A good number of them attend after-school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. There is a great deal of good behaviour but in several lessons pupils are easily distracted and they tend to lose concentration quickly.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils and teachers support each other well. The school has a positive, friendly atmosphere.



Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Rates of attendance are below average. Punctuality in the mornings has improved recently.
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A considerable amount of school time is lost when parents take their children on holiday during term time and this adversely affects pupils' achievement. Pupils are very willing to help with jobs around the school, such as manning the school office at lunch-time. The older ones are considerate and help the younger ones sensibly.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	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.*

Overall teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and nearly a fifth of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. The teaching of English is good and pupils' achievement in reading is good. Literacy skills are taught well. The teaching of mathematics is good and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Numeracy skills are taught well. Pupils have not always achieved as well as they might despite the good teaching because in the recent past there have been interruptions in their learning caused by staffing difficulties. There are also inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in teachers' expectations of the quality of work that pupils are capable of producing. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. This was especially evident in the exceptionally good teaching seen in several lessons in information and communication technology. Where teaching is less effective it is mainly because the activities provided lack purpose and fail to capture pupils' imagination. Teachers are aware of the widely differing learning needs of pupils and lesson plans indicate clearly how the needs of all will be met. The needs of all are met particularly well where learning support assistants are available to help specific groups. Pupils learn effectively in most lessons but the noise that passes from one class to another is distracting. This is mainly due to the open-plan design of the building but noise is not always managed well by teachers.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A broad and balanced curriculum is taught. The strength of provision in information and communication technology supports pupils' learning across the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Classroom assistants make a strong contribution to the effectiveness of pupils' learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language are given good support and make good progress in developing English speaking skills. They achieve as well as their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the curriculum, in assemblies and through other school activities and visits.
How well the school cares	Satisfactory. The school provides a secure, caring learning environment.

for its pupils	Systems for encouraging good behaviour have improved although some inconsistencies between classes remain. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' assessments of pupils' learning.
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The school endeavours to work closely with parents but meets with limited success. A small core of highly committed parents offer strong support and help the school by raising funds and by helping in classrooms. The school offers a broad well balanced curriculum that is enriched by a very good range of activities outside lessons. The curriculum offered for the youngest children in the nursery and reception classes follows national guidelines but is nevertheless often interpreted in a narrow way that restricts children's full development, especially in the creative area of learning. Activities in these classes are not always well matched to pupils' learning needs and inappropriate tasks are sometimes set.

## 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 and effective leadership. Key staff and governors make good contributions to ensure that the school is managed well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors work well as a team and ensure that all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses its performance carefully to identify areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The computer suites and the library are used especially well to enhance learning.

The accommodation is adequate but the open-plan design of the classrooms allows a great deal of noise to pass from one room to another. This distracts pupils and teachers. Staffing levels are adequate. Classroom assistants give good support but they are not allocated sufficient time to support children in the reception classes. The school is well aware of the principles of best value and applies them well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' performance.</li> <li>• The school is friendly and approachable.</li> <li>• Pupils are helped to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Their children make good progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for homework.</li> <li>• Information about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• How closely the school works with parents.</li> <li>• The range of activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

The inspection team agree with parents' positive comments. The school has developed good relationships with parents. Inspection findings indicate that arrangements for homework are satisfactory and that information provided for parents about pupils' progress is good. The school endeavours to work closely with parents but response is not always wholehearted. There is a very good range of after-school activities.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

*'Standards', the judgement of how well pupils are doing compared to others of the same age nationally, may be judged from national test results, or against the levels defined in the National Curriculum or the early learning goals as 'expected' at certain ages. The other judgement, 'achievement', is a judgement made against pupils' starting points. The achievement judgement shows whether, in the longer term, enough progress is being made.*

1. Over the last few years, pupils have entered the school with an exceptionally wide range of attainment. Assessments of pupils' attainment at the beginning of the reception year show that standards are below average compared to the national picture. Although the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is similar to the national average the proportion is greater than at the time of the last inspection. From Year 1 to Year 6 pupils attain standards that are at least in line with national expectations in all subjects but for music where insufficient information was available to make judgements about the standards pupils attain. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Despite the recent turbulence in teaching staff, the school has largely maintained standards since the last inspection during a period of increasing demand from national initiatives. Pupils achieve well in reading and by the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 standards are above average. Achievement in information and communication technology and design and technology has been good and pupils across the school attain standards that exceed national expectations in these subjects.
2. As predicted by the school, performance in the national tests in 2001 for pupils in Year 6 showed a sharp drop in English, mathematics and science to the levels that were below the national average in English and well below in mathematics and science. There were a number of reasons for this: there was an unusually high turnover of teachers and a higher proportion of lower attaining pupils in this year group than is usually found. Pupils in the current Year 6 are well on course to meet the challenging targets set by the school for this year's tests. Inspection findings show that pupils are now attaining average standards in English, mathematics and science. When comparing the school's results with those of 'similar' schools the basis of the comparison is the proportion of parents entitled to free school meals. The school has, therefore, been placed in the same category as schools with pupils from very advantaged social backgrounds who tend to achieve better than those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds. In the case of this school the comparison is not justified as can be seen from the assessment of pupils' attainment on entry to the school that indicates generally lower attainment in early learning than would normally be expected. The comparison with 'similar' schools should, therefore, be viewed with caution.
3. In the national tests for pupils in Year 2 the school's performance in reading has over the past three years been consistently average when compared with all schools. When compared with so-called similar schools, however, the school's performance was well below average. Inspection findings indicate that standards are currently above average in reading. This represents good achievement in reading for the group of pupils currently in Year 2 but their achievement in other areas has not been so marked. Standards as measured by the national tests in 2001 were below average in writing when compared with all schools and well below when compared with similar schools. Inspection findings show that the standards that pupils in Year 2 are now attaining in writing are broadly average. In mathematics the school's performance in last year's tests was average when compared with all schools and below average when compared with similar schools. Inspection findings show that the standards that pupils in Year 2 are now attaining in mathematics are average. Teachers' statutory assessments in science indicated that standards last year were well below average. Inspection findings show that now standards in science are broadly average.

4. In religious education pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they attain standards by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6 that are in line with the expectations described in the locally agreed syllabus.
5. Clearly standards across the school have improved in recent months. This is largely due to the good teaching that pupils receive in most lessons. In the longer term, however, pupils' achievement is not as good as it could be. There are several reasons for this. The staffing difficulties that the school has faced over the past two years have interrupted the continuity of pupils' learning and have constrained achievement. It is clear that there are gaps in pupils' prior learning caused by these interruptions. Also it is clear from discussions with teachers and the scrutiny of pupils' work that the good teaching has not yet been sustained over a long enough period to have had a major impact on achievement. The school is, however, well placed to make substantial further advances in pupils' achievement and the standards that they attain.
6. The satisfactory teaching in the nursery and reception classes promotes satisfactory achievement. Most children are on course to meet the early learning goals in each area of learning specified in national guidance by the end of the reception year. Most speak confidently. Children take an increasing interest in books and enjoy browsing sessions in the school library. Most write their name legibly and they enjoy the daily sessions where they learn the sounds that letters make. They have a good sense of number though find counting the number of children present at registration time very challenging. They have a particularly good understanding of life processes such as the life cycles of butterflies and frogs. Their physical development is satisfactory but the outdoor area is not well developed to provide challenging experiences. They paint bold self-portraits and move imaginatively in response to music. Resources to develop their imagination, such as the role-play areas, are underdeveloped and the children do not always achieve as well in their creative development as they could.
7. Reading is a strength. This is because an interest in stories and in finding information from books is stimulated well in the nursery. This interest is fostered well in Years 1 and 2 and supported by the systematic teaching of basic skills, such as the link between groups of letters and the sounds they make as well as training in the immediate recognition of common words on sight. Pupils' interest in reading is enhanced in several classes where the class studies the work of a particular author. In Year 4, for example, there is a good display of books by Anne Fine and here the pupils talk knowledgeably about the characters and plots in her novels. By Year 6 pupils' interest has broadened and the works of Tolkien, Philip Pullman's 'Dark Materials' trilogy, and Jacqueline Wilson's books are popular whilst several pupils cited books by Enid Blyton as well-liked. Here the teacher's enthusiasm for literature is infectious and at the time of the inspection pupils were particularly enthusiastic about 'The Great Pyramid Robbery' by Katherine Roberts. Most attain standards that are above average. The well resourced library supports learning effectively and pupils are adept at finding information from books and from the Internet. Great emphasis is placed on developing basic skills in literacy and pupils use their reading and writing skills well in other subjects such as history and religious education.
8. Throughout the school pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Their understanding of number is sound but there are too few opportunities to use their skills to conduct purposeful investigations. In science achievement is satisfactory and pupils' have a sound understanding of the various strands of the subject. The understanding of pupils in Years 1 and 2 of life and living processes is particularly well developed because the teaching incorporates interesting activities such as studying the development of tadpoles and chicks that are brought into school. In Years 3 to 6 pupils develop a good understanding of how to conduct investigations but opportunities to do so are limited.
9. Pupils' achievement is good and pupils attain high standards in information and communication technology because the school is well resourced, there has been a good programme of in-service training and teachers have themselves developed good skills and good knowledge of the subject. In a lesson in Year 5, for example, one feature of the excellent teaching was the teacher's exceptionally good knowledge of the subject. He had high expectations of pupils' ability to understand how to use a program based on graphics to design an ideal classroom. They were able to manipulate and adjust scale, size and the orientation of features with apparent ease and

produced particularly good pieces of work. In Year 4 they are able to use spreadsheets to produce different types of graph to illustrate data. In these lessons pupils used and consolidated their numeracy skills well.

10. The school has responded well to the finding at the time of the last inspection that standards in design and technology were not as high as they should be. Now pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 attain standards that exceed national expectations.
11. The school does well with the lower attaining pupils. Those with special educational needs are identified quickly and given individual support. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs are set clear and appropriate targets and make steady progress towards meeting them. Their achievement is satisfactory in relation to their prior attainment. They make steady progress in lessons where support is provided and when teachers provide different approaches, methods or activities to promote their learning. Small achievable targets are set, which pupils and parents know about, and skilled staff work as a very effective team both in and out of the classroom, to ensure that pupils reach their targets. Pupils are given particular support in literacy and numeracy in order for them to achieve success.
12. Although the highest attaining pupils, including gifted and talented pupils, achieve satisfactorily they do not always achieve as well as they should. There are a number of reasons for this. Gifted and talented pupils are not formally identified and although the school has improved its curricular planning for these pupils, this is not yet having a full impact on the progressive development of their knowledge and skills. Their homework is not always modified to challenge them enough. The school is aware of the need to extend provision for these pupils and is taking steps to monitor, evaluate and improve provision. Pupils from travelling families and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as their classmates.
13. There is evidence that the achievement of those pupils who are absent from school during term time, when their parents take them out of school for family holidays, is adversely affected.

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

14. Pupils have good attitudes to school and relationships in the school are positive. Both these aspects have been consistently maintained since the previous inspection. The quality of behaviour is satisfactory overall and in several classes it is very good but there are inconsistencies. In several classes pupils are restless and easily distracted.
15. Pupils enjoy school and parents agree this is the case. They like lessons and are enthusiastic about their work. These good attitudes were exemplified in a religious education lesson where the oldest pupils were learning about Sikhism. They had to design a special meeting place for a group of people with a strong unified interest, whilst taking into account the fact that the beliefs of the group needed to be reflected in the place chosen. Pupils gave confident presentations in front of the class and, because of the teacher's careful prompting, were able to explain the code to which members of their chosen group subscribed. Pupils were very sensible, very well behaved and were ready and willing to accept challenges. They were desperately keen to finish their work off and asked to be allowed to do so, readily agreeing when the teacher joked that they should come to school early the next day. Pupils with special educational needs demonstrate positive attitudes to the school. They are keen to learn and generally behave well in lessons.
16. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. This judgement embraces a considerable amount of very good behaviour within the school, such as that reflected in the lesson described above. Where lessons are of good quality, well matched to pupils' needs and where the teacher has established high expectations and familiar routines, behaviour is usually good. Pupils are polite, friendly, hold doors open for visitors and are keen to be of help.
17. Although in a large number of lessons, behaviour was judged as satisfactory, there was an element of unsatisfactory behaviour in most age groups. Pupils have been through some unsettling times in the past, mainly because of difficulties in attracting permanent teachers. A

large proportion of classes have had a succession of short-term temporary teachers, which has adversely affected them; they have not been able to follow established and regular routines and consistent ways of behaving during lessons. Behaviour deteriorated in lessons when teaching failed to capture pupils' interest. There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of how pupils should behave and a number of different methods are used to manage behaviour in different classes. Due largely to the open-plan design of the school, pupils' concentration was disturbed in several lessons by noise from the class next door. Behaviour sometimes deteriorated in the lessons that started straight after lunch, when pupils returned to their class in a lively and excitable mood.

18. The number of exclusions over the past school year has been low, involving two pupils. Pupils are happy that teachers take any incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour seriously. They are not so confident that lunchtime disputes are always dealt with fairly. Pupils greatly appreciate the 'Let's talk it out' policy, where they are given the opportunity to discuss areas of disagreement together and ways of overcoming them. This works well during most of the school day and has proved a successful way of resolving differences. Pupils would like this option to be extended so that it is also available for resolving lunchtime disagreements.
19. Relationships in the school are good. Pupils like and respect adults in the school and get on well with each other. The atmosphere in school is friendly and supportive. The levels of maturity and confidence displayed by pupils and the good range of ideas they have for improving the school, such as displaying lunchtime menus each day, bode very well for the formation of a school council, which the school is planning to initiate. When given responsibilities, they carry them out with pride and care. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy carrying out general office duties at lunchtimes. They help others in the computer suites and library. Younger pupils all have jobs in the classroom, some as 'helping hands' whilst the youngest go in pairs to take the dinner money to the office.
20. Pupils' attendance for the last academic year was unsatisfactory as it was well below the national average. It has fallen compared to the rate at the time of the previous inspection. The number of families taking holidays during term time, mentioned as a trend at the time of the previous inspection, continues to grow, despite the school advising against this. It accounts for a significant percentage of the schools' authorised absence figure. Unauthorised absence is broadly in line with national averages as the school refuses to authorise absences in some cases. The school has been successful in encouraging and improving pupils' punctuality when arriving at school in the mornings.

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

21. Overall the quality of teaching is good. In nearly a fifth of lessons it is very good and occasionally excellent. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is now a much higher proportion of very good teaching and now there is no unsatisfactory teaching, whereas in 1997 nearly a tenth of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching in the nursery and reception classes is satisfactory and it is good in the classes for pupils in Years 1 to 6. The good teaching is not always reflected in pupils' achievement, however, which is largely satisfactory. There are several reasons for this. Firstly pupils' learning has been interrupted over a long period of time by teachers' absence through illness and by major unexpected changes in teaching staff, often among staff in key positions. This affected the continuity of teaching and learning and created gaps in the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. The previous headteacher initiated a series of lesson observations designed to identify areas for development in teaching. This initiative could not be sustained due to staff shortages. For a long period teachers had less guidance on how to improve their practice in the classroom, although some monitoring of teaching was carried out and in-service training continued strongly, especially in information and communication technology. Good support and guidance on teaching in the classroom are now in place again and the quality has improved but the good teaching has not been consistent over a long enough period of time to have had a major impact on improving achievement across the school.

22. Staffing problems also led to the abandonment of planned support for lower attaining pupils, such as 'booster classes' in literacy and numeracy for pupils in Years 5 and 6 for example. Staffing difficulties have caused major upheavals that adversely affected the quality of teaching that the school was able to provide. The school is now has a much more stable staff but is relying on temporary teachers in several classes.
23. Teaching across the school in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and information and communication technology is good. Teaching is satisfactory in art and design, geography and physical education. Too few lessons were seen and there was insufficient evidence available to form judgements about the quality of teaching in history and music.
24. Several excellent lessons were seen in information and communication technology. In these lessons teachers demonstrated high levels of knowledge and had well developed computer skills. Relationships were of a high order and one pupil, for example, felt able to suggest an even quicker way to perform an operation. In one of these lessons for pupils in Year 4, the class was being introduced to spreadsheets. The lesson moved at a brisk pace and learning was highly effective. Processes were explained clearly and children were reminded about precisely what was expected of them before they commenced independent working. The lesson was exceptionally well planned and prepared. The teacher demonstrated the process clearly using data that she had prepared earlier. The teacher used good questioning strategies that challenged pupils' thinking: 'What is Celsius? Why didn't I say temperature in litres?' Pupils concentrated hard and were learning new skills and developing greater understanding at a fast pace. When producing a colourful three-dimensional pie chart one pupil exclaimed in wonder, 'Oh, it looks just like a birthday cake'. The teacher was well supported by a technician and a highly skilled voluntary helper. The teacher moved energetically between the two computer suites managing both simultaneously. During the excellent review session towards the end of the lesson the children explained clearly what they had achieved. They sensibly evaluated the relative merits of pie charts, line graphs and block graphs to illustrate their data. The teacher then led a discussion on possible applications of the skills they had learned. They left the lesson excited by the prospect of collecting data for homework on the amount of television they watched so that they could use their skills in the next lesson to determine and illustrate clearly on which days they watched most.
25. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. All teachers plan lessons thoroughly but teaching is more effective where the learning intention is clearly defined and communicated clearly to the pupils. In one lesson the learning intention was vague, 'To respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, touch and feel,' and as a result there was no clear focus and learning was slow. Where teachers describe precisely what they expect pupils to learn in each session, such as 'Pupils will know that equivalent points are the same distance from the line of symmetry', then learning is more focused and pupils achieve well. On several occasions teachers described in their planning what pupils were going to do rather than what the pupils were expected to learn as a result of the activity. There are inconsistencies in the management of behaviour. In most classes teachers adopt positive methods of managing behaviour, such as through offering praise and awards, and these methods are generally effective. In one class the teacher was less positive in her management of behaviour and relied on a more confrontational approach. This proved less effective. Several teachers speak quietly and promote a quiet orderly working environment whilst others speak at full volume. The noise generated by teachers in one class often distracts those working in an adjacent class because there are no walls separating the classrooms. There are also inconsistencies in the quality of work that teachers expect pupils to produce. In several classes untidy and poorly presented work was accepted whilst in others teachers have greater expectations pupils' ability to produce work of high quality. The school is working towards the development of a teaching and learning policy designed to promote greater consistency of teaching across the school.
26. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. The support that they receive is guided by well-written individual education plans. Pupils are well integrated into the life and work of their class groups and teachers adapt their class work to ensure that pupils are able to achieve success. Pupils with statements of special educational need are well supported by classroom

assistants specifically assigned to them. Teachers' planning often indicates a clear recognition of the needs of higher attaining pupils but in practice little time is devoted to them in lessons.

27. There is considerable scope for improving the quality of teaching in the nursery and reception classes. Whilst all the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and there were several strong features, much of the teaching lacks a sufficiently exciting focus to capture children's imagination and encourage purposeful activities. Too much of the work in the reception classes was based on the filling in of undemanding worksheets rather than on more meaningful tasks.
28. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well and teachers have a good knowledge of these areas of learning. Pupils have good opportunities to practise their literacy skills when reading and writing in geography or religious education for example. Good links are occasionally made between different subjects as in a geography lesson for pupils in Year 2 where a story book based on life in the Hebridean Isle of Coll was used to study the similarities and differences between life on an island and the children's understanding of their local area. In this lesson the Internet was used well to research for information about the author of the book and the Isle of Coll. In one exceptionally good religious education lesson for pupils in Year 3, pupils used their knowledge of number well when they considered how long it would have taken Mary Jones to walk 25 miles to seek a Bible written in Welsh. They estimated that it would take only 25 minutes to drive that distance in a car but they calculated that it would have taken Mary the best part of a day to walk that far. Numeracy skills are also consolidated effectively in lessons in information and communication technology where pupils collect data to use with spreadsheets.
29. Resources are generally used well but computers in classrooms are not often used to best effect. Where classroom assistants and voluntary helpers are available they make a good contribution to the quality of teaching provided. There are, however, fewer assistants in this school than in most schools of similar size.
30. Most teachers mark pupils' work carefully and discuss work with pupils in great detail. They offer good advice on how pupils might improve the standards that they attain. In several classes pupils have clear targets set out in their own personal booklet but this good practice is not used throughout the school. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend pupils' learning and in most classes a reasonable amount is set though there are inconsistencies.
31. The mostly good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the generally good relationships that are developed between pupils and their teachers help to promote effective learning.

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

32. The quality of the curriculum is good. Pupils of all ages and abilities are provided with a broad and relevant curriculum that meets statutory requirements for all National Curriculum subjects and the agreed syllabus for religious education. The school policies for equal opportunities and inclusion are applied to all aspects of school life and are fully reflected in practice.
33. A significant strength of the curriculum has been the effective development of information and communication technology. Pupils have access to very good range of resources, are well taught, and as a result, achieve standards that exceed national expectations. Good links are established with other subjects during lessons in the two computer suites. These links are not as well developed in classroom-based lessons.
34. The national literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully implemented and are having a positive effect on improving the quality of teaching and standards achieved by pupils. Teachers' planning is good and has successfully addressed the issue from the previous inspection of ensuring curriculum continuity throughout the school. There is a whole school curricular framework that ensures appropriate time is allocated to each subject and that each



strand of the National Curriculum is taught. A weakness in the mathematics curriculum is the lack of emphasis and time given to developing pupils' use and application of their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

35. The curriculum for children in the nursery and reception classes is based on national guidance. All areas of learning are taught and there is particular attention paid to developing children's skills in literacy and numeracy. National guidance is not interpreted imaginatively, however, and as a result lessons lack interest and excitement. The creative area of learning is not well developed, especially in the reception classes.
36. The curriculum includes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. The few pupils from travelling families are effectively supported with the additional support of an advisory teacher who liaises with class teachers to ensure pupils are fully integrated into all aspects of the curriculum and school life. There is no specific provision for gifted and talented pupils. Their particular needs are not always clearly identified. The curriculum is not always sufficiently modified to meet their specific needs.
37. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for pupils' personal, social and health education and successfully incorporates sex and drugs education. These aspects of the curriculum are effectively developed in science and in personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils are valued and their opinions are considered through a system whereby class representatives take the views of the class to teachers and the headteacher. Pupils are encouraged to recognise that they are an important part of the community and that effort and achievement will be celebrated in lessons and assemblies.
38. Regular times are set aside to deal with any incidents involving problems relating to behaviour or bullying. These incidents are investigated and acted upon immediately. A weakness of pupils' personal development is related to the lack of opportunity for pupils to develop independent learning skills during lessons or at other times during the day.
39. The school has successfully established homework agreements with parents and pupils. Homework includes spelling, reading and worksheets. However, there are inconsistencies between classes in the amount of work set, teachers' expectations of the time homework should take and the use of homework and reading diaries.
40. A very good range of extra-curricular activities enhance the curriculum and reflect the commitment of staff in ensuring pupils' learning extends beyond the formal lessons of the day. Pupils benefit from opportunities to improve skills in sport, information technology, music, crafts and gymnastics. There are also after-school writing and mathematics clubs for those pupils who are particularly interested in these subjects. The deputy headteacher also runs a popular model making club. All activities are well attended and popular with pupils of all ages and abilities. Parents are well informed of the extra-curricular programme. Some parents expressed concern that there were too few extra-curricular opportunities offered by the school. Inspectors disagree with this view and found the number and range of activities to be a strength of the school.
41. Day and residential visits are used effectively to enrich the curriculum. They also make a significant contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. In Years 4 and 6, pupils have the opportunity to participate in residential visits. Visits are organised to the British Museum, Buckden Towers, the Imperial War Museum and Cambridge Buddhist Centre in relation to science, history and religious education projects.
42. Visitors are welcomed to share their expertise, interests and memories with pupils and successfully broaden understanding. The vicar of St. Andrew's is a regular visitor and makes a significant contribution to assemblies. The police, firemen, caretaker and lolly-pop lady explain their work to pupils and successfully broaden pupils' understanding of social interdependence. The school successfully develops pupils' cultural awareness by welcoming Russian dancers and West Indian musicians. There are satisfactory links with the community. The school has good links with the parish church and the local retirement homes. Services are held in the church and

the choir provides entertainment for the senior citizens that help to promote children's personal development. The local Brownie, Guide and Scout groups are encouraged to use the computer suites to allow their members to achieve awards. There are no significant links with local industry and commerce.

43. A significant strength of the curriculum is the development of relationships with partner institutions. Very good liaison has been established between the Soham schools to monitor and review the curriculum. Links with the Community College are very good. Teachers from the college have taught alongside staff and have contributed effectively to the monitoring of literacy and numeracy. The school identified the need to develop the investigative aspect of the science curriculum and has benefited from in-service training provided by a specialist teacher from the college.
44. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This aspect of the curriculum has been maintained as a strength since the previous inspection. The provision of a policy for sex education, a key issue at the time of the last inspection, has been tackled successfully.
45. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are helped to gain knowledge and insight into their own, and other peoples, values and beliefs. They are constantly encouraged to respect and value feelings and opinions of others. The school's ethos and aims continue to promote attitudes of respect and consideration for one another. The daily acts of collective worship contribute successfully to pupils' spiritual development. During the inspection, the headteacher praised pupils' achievement and emphasised that every person in the school contributed to making the school a success. Pupils recognised that they should be proud of themselves and sang with feeling a song entitled 'What have you done today?' Pupils recognise the wonders of God's world. They show awe and wonder when studying the life cycle of frogs and chickens. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their thoughts and opinions. Good use is made of an environmental area in which pupils can sit quietly and reflect.
46. Provision for moral development is good. As well as providing good role models, the headteacher and staff regularly remind pupils of the correct forms of behaviour and of rules they have created themselves. Pupils are encouraged to develop a clear understanding of right and wrong, and to treat staff, visitors and other pupils with courtesy. They respect the school building and handle resources with care. Moral issues are considered in lessons. In religious education, pupils discuss how Buddhists learn to be truthful and promise not to harm any living thing. Most teachers deal firmly but sensitively with any incidents of misbehaviour. The headteacher maintains a high profile around school. He knows pupils well and has their full respect. They show genuine regret if he has to reprimand them.
47. Provision for social development is good. Pupils enjoy being monitors around the school and in classes. They are aware of the needs of others and relate well to one another. They enjoy working co-operatively in lessons and are willing to support each other in their learning. Very good examples were observed in information and communication technology lessons when pupils who had a good knowledge of particular programs provided excellent support for those who were less confident. The system of class representatives has ensured that pupils discuss school issues. They have debated how playtimes and the outside environment could be improved. The residential visits enhance pupils' social development. The very good range of extra-curricular activities also contributes positively to pupils' social development.
48. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have opportunities to learn about life in the past by visiting local places of interest. The school has a collection of artefacts relating to each major religion. These are used effectively to develop pupils' knowledge of other faiths. Pupils are encouraged to gain an appreciation of cultures other than their own. Teachers invite visitors to speak to pupils about their customs and beliefs. Through lessons in geography, pupils explore the nature of life in distant environments, such as India, and compare life in that country to life in Soham. In religious education, they develop an understanding of the festivals and ceremonies in other cultures. The school prepares pupils satisfactorily for life in our diverse multi-

cultural society. Pupils are made aware of the works of famous artists and can describe the work of Monet and William Morris. However, they have little knowledge of composers and their work. Pupils make effective use of a good selection of reference books in the school library and the Internet to research information.

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

49. The school continues to provide good levels of guidance and care for pupils, as it did at the time of the previous inspection. The school is a happy, friendly place, where there is a good balance between pastoral care and the aim of attaining high academic standards.
50. Procedures for child protection are good. There are two people trained in child protection and staff are well aware of their responsibilities. Health and safety procedures are appropriate and regular checks are made of the grounds and premises. A governors' committee effectively oversees health and safety issues.
51. There are good systems to encourage pupils to behave well and improving behaviour has been a recent focus for the whole school. The positive behaviour management policy has been reviewed and new codes introduced. These were produced in consultation with pupils, parents and governors and explain the way pupils should behave in certain areas of the school such as the dining room, at lunchtimes and when learning in class. When interviewed by inspectors who asked them about different aspects of school life, pupils were unanimous in agreeing that behaviour has improved in recent months. Most parents are pleased with behaviour in the school and confirm their children are well cared for.
52. The quality of pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The good systems in place are still bedding down but there is a lack of consistency in applying them. Some teachers are very skilled in managing behaviour and individual strategies, such as rewarding pupils by allowing them to choose activities during 'golden time', are working well. This is a system where pupils earn marbles placed in a jar and, when the jar is full, have a special period when they choose their own activities.
53. Noise from adjoining classes in open-plan classrooms means it is sometimes difficult for teachers to establish a quiet working atmosphere. The noise encourages pupils to chat when they should be working and disturbs their concentration. The difficulties in attracting teachers and the resulting succession of temporary staff in recent months have had an unsettling effect on pupils, especially younger ones, who have missed out on the establishment of good work habits.
54. Pupils are more restless after they come in from their lunchtime play, and this is often when behaviour deteriorates. There is some good quality outdoor climbing equipment, but this still leaves many pupils who have nothing constructive to do. Lunchtime staff have not received the same degree of training in managing positive behaviour as other staff. They have, however, already expressed their interest in receiving training so they can help pupils to play more productively. The provision of board games and quieter activities is useful for those pupils who cannot cope well with the hurly burly of playtimes, although currently only on offer to certain pupils with specific needs. The school has already recognised that improving the quality of pupils' play and management of behaviour at lunchtimes is an area to develop.
55. The school's 'Children's Code', which has been drawn up in consultation with pupils, explains their wish to 'feel safe and happy so that they can enjoy their work and make good progress'. It lists ways they can help achieve this by being kind and considerate to each other and stresses the need to tell an adult if they need help. The school has good procedures to deal with any incidents of bullying and pupils are happy that teachers deal with it to their satisfaction. They told of incidents involving friends that had been resolved as soon as an adult was informed. Older pupils feel the school could do more to resolve conflict at lunchtimes.
56. Procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance are unsatisfactory and is a key issue for the school to address, especially considering the attendance rate has fallen since the previous

inspection. The school's attendance policy is out of date and in need of review. Staff do not mark attendance registers at a consistent time during the afternoon and some are left unmarked. As well as being contrary to legal requirements, it is a concern with regard to safety should the building needed evacuating. Using the most recent data available for the last academic year, the attendance rate is well below national averages.

57. Lateness in the mornings, which had become more widespread, has been successfully monitored and has improved. The figure, as reported in the March newsletter, now stands at nine pupils late per week, a reduction from seventeen. The school does remind parents in newsletters of the inadvisability of taking holidays during term time. Despite this, the trend reported on in the previous inspection continues to be a concern and now accounts for a significant proportion of the school's authorised absences.
58. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. They have been significantly developed since the previous inspection. The school has established a wide range of assessments in English, mathematics and science. Assessment results are analysed and used effectively by staff to set individual learning targets for pupils. Assessment procedures have been developed in information and communication technology and religious education but are not consistently applied in all classes.
59. Assessment procedures in the nursery and reception classes are broadly satisfactory but there are inconsistencies. In the nursery good practice was seen where teachers, the nursery nurse, students and parent helpers had check sheets on which they noted children's response to the activities that they were supervising. The teachers collate this information and use it to build a picture of children's attainment and progress as well as to plan further activities that match children's learning needs. In the reception classes such on-going assessments were not evident. In both the reception classes and the nursery a record of each individual's progress through the 'stepping stones' towards the early learning goals is maintained. However, this is not always dated and so cannot be used readily to assess rates of progress. It is filled in infrequently and is not used actively to inform lesson plans on a regular basis.
60. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is satisfactory. Target setting has been established throughout the school. Assessment is used to match targets to the needs of pupils. However, there is inconsistency in the way targets are monitored. In Year 3, each pupil is given clear guidance on how they can improve. Their targets and achievements are recorded in a very efficient way. This is a very good model.
61. Teachers analyse any misconceptions and plan to address these in their future planning. In Year 5, pupils had difficulty in converting fractions and additional time was planned to reinforce learning. This proved successful with pupils showing greater confidence in following lessons. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not ensure that work is accurately matched to pupils' learning needs. In Year 3, pupils were asked to write a formal letter but did not have the writing and spelling skills required to complete the task satisfactorily.
62. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. In several classes it is cursory and does not give clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work. There is also inconsistency in the use of reading diaries. In some classes pupils' progress is diligently recorded but in other classes, pupils receive little feedback on their reading.
63. There are good procedures in place for identifying and monitoring pupils with special educational needs. There is effective liaison with external agencies and with parents of pupils with special educational needs. There are appropriate education plans to help each child overcome their difficulties and these are carefully monitored by the class teachers in consultation with the special needs co-ordinator. The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The co-ordinator maintains an accurate record of all pupils on the special needs register and individual class teachers are fully aware of the needs of these pupils. Additional support is also provided by the local education authority on a regular and well-focused basis. Pupils are given a range of interesting and appropriate work to do. Particularly good support is given to pupils with

statements of special educational need. These pupils are well integrated into the school and considerable effort is made to see that their needs are met. A current limitation to the provision is the amount of time which class teachers can give to other pupils who have specific identified needs. The school is currently considering the level of classroom assistant support that is provided. The school is inclusive and provides equality of access and opportunity to all pupils.

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

64. There is a good relationship between the school and parents. The positive picture seen during the previous inspection is still in existence.
65. It has been hard to establish parents' feelings about the school. The response to the pre-inspection questionnaire for parents was very low and similar to the low return at the time of the last inspection. The numbers attending the pre-inspection meeting for parents did not reflect the fact that the school is a particularly large primary school. All those parents spoken to during the inspection expressed positive opinions. Overall, results show that parents have a satisfactory view of the school. They are concerned about the staffing difficulties and the consequent effects on their children but are pleased with the new library and the computer suites.
66. Information from the pre-inspection questionnaire shows that parents are particularly pleased that the school expects their child to work hard. They feel comfortable in approaching the school if there is a problem and are pleased with the attitudes and values the school promotes and the good progress their children are making. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. A significant minority of parents who replied are concerned about the arrangements for homework (almost one third of replies), the range of activities provided outside lessons, the extent to which the school works closely with parents and the information they receive about progress. However, inspection findings show that the arrangements for homework are satisfactory overall and similar to that seen in many primary schools. In several classes there are examples of good practice in setting homework. The school reviewed its provision for homework, in response to concerns expressed by parents and governors some time ago. They have introduced homework diaries for older pupils and taken steps to ensure that there is more consistency. They acknowledge that this is an area they still need to work on. Many parents are not yet signing the diaries to confirm their involvement, nor are they using them to convey messages or concerns. The school is in the process of organising a curriculum information evening for parents where they plan to cover homework in more depth.
67. Inspectors do not agree with those parents who feel the school does not have an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, some of which take place in the lunch hour. These include clubs for writing, mathematics, model making, computer, gymnastics, choir and a wide range of sporting activities.
68. The quality of information available for parents about their child's progress is good and inspectors do not support the concerns some parents expressed. There are three opportunities for parents to meet with teachers plus meetings at other times, at parents' request. Annual reports contain a good amount of comment about progress balanced with information about the pupils' character and attitudes towards learning. Some of the targets on reports are useful, such as 'concentrate on making your letters a consistent size' whilst others, like 'continue to work at a consistently high standard' are not. The space for parents to comment was removed when only a handful of parents replied.
69. There are some effective links with parents. Newsletters are regular and help to convey the school's pride in pupils' achievements, for example, offering congratulations for swimming awards received, as well as informing parents of events and reminding them of procedures. The web-site, to which a good number of parents have access, contains helpful information, including details of curricular plans that are updated regularly. There are also termly letters from year group teams, telling parents what areas of learning will be covered and specific information, such as days when physical education kit is needed. The school has no formal way of finding out parents' views.

They were asked for their opinions on the new behaviour codes, but response was limited. Governors recognise the need to be creative in finding out this information, in view of the apparent lack of success with questionnaires.

70. Parents provide a good level of support for the school. There are a significant number of parents on the school's register of volunteers, almost sixty, and many of these help in class regularly and others on an occasional basis. This is making a significant difference to the quality of education provided, especially in classes where there are currently no support assistants employed. The Home and School Association comprises of a small but dedicated group of parents who work hard to raise money by organising a range of different events such as the Jubilee children's disco. There has been a good response from parents to attending class assemblies, an initiative that was introduced in February. Parents who are governors play a very active role in the management of the school.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. The school is emerging from a particularly difficult period caused mainly by staff illness and teachers being promoted to other posts elsewhere. Difficulties in recruiting new teachers as well as difficulties in finding temporary teachers needed to stand in for long and short-term absences have compounded the problem. At the beginning of the last school year the previous headteacher took early retirement. In spite of the best efforts of the deputy head, who took on the role of acting headteacher and who was well supported by the acting deputy, the arrangements caused gaps in provision, mainly due to staff shortages. This caused considerable disruption to the continuity of pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 6 who took the national tests in 2001 were adversely affected and this contributed to the school's performance in those tests which was well below the standards attained in previous years. The new headteacher took over at the beginning of this academic year but again the school has been dogged by difficulties caused by staff absences through illness and difficulties over recruitment. This has been managed as well as possible by the headteacher and governors but has had a detrimental impact on the quality of education that the school has been able to provide.
72. The new headteacher provides very good leadership. Although he and his curriculum leaders have identified many areas for development they have, quite rightly, concentrated firstly on improving standards in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics as well as on improving the quality of teaching. The new headteacher has been highly successful in encouraging teaching and support staff to form a united team bent on improving standards and pursuing excellence. The school recognises that there is a great deal of work ahead if they are to achieve their ambitions. Although new to this post the headteacher is very experienced and has been highly successful in improving other schools. He has a clear vision for future developments and, with the able assistance of his deputy and curricular leaders and the strong support of the governing body, a clear course towards major improvements is being carefully plotted. Early indications are that standards as measured by the national tests have already risen significantly. The school is looking forward to the next academic year which promises to be more stable in terms of staffing. Good foundations have been laid for substantial further improvement.
73. Responsibilities for curricular development have been delegated appropriately to teachers. Each subject leader has conducted a thorough audit of provision in their particular area of responsibility. They have identified developments to date and have evaluated the impact of developments on the quality of education that the school provides. As a result of these thorough evaluations they have all identified future areas for development. The subject leaders are each in one of three curricular teams, each with a team leader, who work together to explore the best way to improve standards. The teams all have clear terms of reference to guide their work and are charged with reporting on their progress to the senior management team each term. The school is preparing to formulate action plans designed to tackle the areas that have been identified for development and the action plans will form the basis of a new school improvement plan that will be finalised towards the end of this term in preparation for the new school year. This good structure is designed to include all members of the teaching staff in the decision making process; it is already proving effective and has generated an enthusiasm for effecting changes and improvements.
74. Governors are strongly associated with the school and each brings useful expertise to the governing body. They contribute substantially to the effectiveness of the school. They are ably led by the chair of governors who works in close liaison with the headteacher. Each governor has been allocated an area of the curriculum to take a particular interest in. This involves working in association with the relevant curriculum co-ordinators to gain an overview of provision. In this way governors have gained a good insight into the working of the school and the standards that pupils attain. As a result they make well informed decisions regarding proposed changes and budgetary allocations. They are open to new ideas and adapt quickly. This enables them to seize opportunities when they arise, such as bidding for additional funding for projects such as the creation of the new library and computer suite. The parents' association contributed to this project by raising substantial sums of money to match the additional funding so that the scheme could be completed successfully. This is a prime example of how the good teamwork between

the school, governors and parents has substantially enhanced the quality of resources and pupils' learning opportunities.

75. The minutes of the governing body and discussions with governors show that they frequently reflect on the service that the school provides and consider how they can make the service more effective. They compare the performance of the school with that of similar schools and question whether the school promotes standards that are high enough. The curriculum committee, for example, considers the analysis of statutory national test results as well as the non-statutory tests for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5, and considers areas of particular strength and weakness. They challenge themselves to consider how changes, such as the establishment of two computer suites, help to improve standards across the curriculum. Governors are prepared to consult with parents and other interested parties at their annual general meeting, to which all parents and carers are invited. The attendance by parents at this meeting is poor; only two attended this year so this method of consulting with parents has proved to be ineffective. The governing body monitors finances carefully. Governors consider alternative means of acquiring goods and services and invite tenders for large items of expenditure. They sought advice, for example, on whether better value would be achieved by leasing or by purchasing new computers. All allocations of money, such as the money to support pupils with special educational needs, are spent on the areas for which they are designated. Overall, when making decisions the governing body applies the principles of best value well.
76. The headteacher and curricular leaders monitor teaching through the study of the work that pupils produce and by observing lessons. In this way they are beginning to develop a picture of teachers' strengths as well as areas for development. There is scope for developing procedures to promote more effective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching. The school is working towards the formulation of a teaching and learning policy that defines the school's approach. At present, although there are criteria against which teaching and learning are evaluated, there is a lack of clarity about exactly what is expected of teachers. This has led to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and in classroom management. Inconsistencies in approach result in variations in the patterns of pupils' learning between classes. This is evident in inspection findings that showed variations in the quality of work produced by pupils in different classes in the same year group and the quality of teaching which varied from excellent to satisfactory. The headteacher and the teaching staff are committed to taking further steps to improve the pace and quality of teaching and learning.
77. Provision for pupils with special education needs is generally managed well. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has a very clear understanding of her area of responsibility and is keen to ensure that staff are well-prepared and trained in the implementation of early intervention strategies as well as supporting pupils already on the special needs register.
78. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors collaborate to write a good annual report for parents. Parents are invited to the governors' annual meeting for parents so that they have an opportunity to hear about the work of the school and to raise any concerns they may have. The governing body have worked hard to ensure that the key issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been tackled successfully. The school's aims are clearly defined and described in the school prospectus and the school is largely successful in achieving its aims.
79. The day-to-day running of the school's administrative procedures are organised efficiently by the school bursar and the secretary. They work in close liaison and are committed to ensuring that the headteacher is not burdened with any unnecessary administrative tasks. This enables him to concentrate on curricular matters such as teaching and learning. All school accounts are kept meticulously and audited regularly.
80. The governing body ensures that there are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning. Staffing and accommodation are adequate although there is scope for increasing the number of learning support assistants, especially in the classes for the youngest children. Currently the school employs fewer than in most similar schools. There has also been a lack of investment in the nursery and reception classes. The school has recognised this shortcoming. Governors have begun to take action to improve provision in these year groups and a new 'foundation stage' co-



ordinator has just taken up post. Curricular provision for the 'foundation stage' has not kept pace with improvements in other areas of the school and this has contributed to an element of underachievement in the nursery and reception classes, compounded by disruption in the continuity of learning caused by staff absences. Accommodation since the time of the last inspection has improved with the provision of a good library and two good computer suites. However, there are problems regarding the open-plan design of the accommodation. As was identified in the last inspection report, excessive noise passes from one class to another. This distracts pupils and makes it more difficult for teachers to maintain a quiet, purposeful working atmosphere. In one lesson two classes walked through the classroom in which another class was being taught. This contributes to the restlessness observed in several classes.

81. In view of the improving standards, the good teaching and the governing body's good understanding of applying the principles of best value, the school provides good value for money.

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

82. In order to improve standards further the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

(1) Improve the consistency of teaching by:

- adopting an agreed teaching and learning policy that details the criteria which promote high quality teaching;
- monitoring and evaluating teaching against these criteria;
- developing common approaches to the classroom management, such as the approach to managing behaviour, assessments of achievement and the marking of pupils' work. \*  
(paragraphs 17,25,62,76, 85,109,135,201.)

(2) Improve the quality of provision in the nursery and reception classes by:

- providing more resources, including classroom assistants, to support teaching and learning in the nursery and reception classes;
- developing closer links between the classes to promote greater consistency in teaching and learning;
- introducing more imaginative activities based on interesting themes;
- reducing the use of worksheets in the reception classes;
- developing the outside area as a learning resource. \*  
(paragraphs 6,27,29,35,80,83,84,91,92,94,101.)

(3) Raise expectations of the quality of work that pupils are capable of producing by:

- providing examples of high quality work;
- teaching presentation skills so that pupils develop a better understanding of how to set out their work attractively;
- providing good models of handwriting and teaching this aspect of writing according to agreed procedures from the nursery to Year 6. (paragraphs 25,110,133,161,195.)

(4) Improve pupils' attendance by:

- reviewing the school's attendance policy;
- making renewed efforts to discourage parents from taking their children out of school for holidays during term time;
- monitoring absence in order to identify how better attendance can be encouraged.  
(paragraphs 20,57.)

(5) Reduce the noise that passes from one class to another. \*  
(paragraphs 17,25,53,80,147,201.)

**Other less significant areas for development:**

- Train midday supervisors to encourage and reward good behaviour and to engage pupils in purposeful activities during the lunch break in order to promote a more orderly start to the afternoon teaching session. \* (paragraphs 17,18,54,55.)
- Ensure that attendance registers are marked according to regulations. (paragraph 56)

\* The school has already identified these as areas for improvement and they feature in the school's development planning.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	96
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	15	44	35	0	0	0
Percentage	2	16	46	36	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	26	397
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	38

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	95

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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*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 (Year 2)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2001	37	24	61

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	30	35
	Girls	22	21	23
	Total	48	51	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (78)	84 (75)	95 (88)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	32	30
	Girls	22	23	21
	Total	52	58	51
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	85 (78)	95 (88)	84 (85)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	38	40	78

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	15	23
	Girls	34	30	37
	Total	52	45	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (83)	58 (81)	77(90)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	16	24
	Girls	34	31	36
	Total	50	47	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (75)	60 (81)	77 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	348
Any other minority ethnic group	2

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	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.*

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.7
Average class size	26.5

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

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	288

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26
Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25
Number of pupils per FTE adult	13

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	881 964
Total expenditure	868 058
Expenditure per pupil	1 933
Balance brought forward from previous year	31 580
Balance carried forward to next year	45 486

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.4

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

423

Number of questionnaires returned

75

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

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	33	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	36	7	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	60	8	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	41	17	11	7
The teaching is good.	28	53	7	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	43	15	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	41	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	40	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	21	55	20	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	35	44	8	1	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	60	1	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	45	21	8	4

### **Other issues raised by parents**

The amount of homework is an issue for a significant minority of parents; some feel that there is too much and others that there is too little. Parents believe that the open-plan design of the school causes distractions.



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

*Since the previous inspection a revised curriculum that follows national guidance has been introduced for children in the nursery and reception classes. National guidance recommends six areas of learning and these are:*

- *personal, social and emotional development;*
- *communication, language and literacy;*
- *mathematical development;*
- *knowledge and understanding of the world;*
- *physical development; and*
- *creative development.*

*The curriculum details 'stepping stones' in each area of learning that lead to 'early learning goals' for each area.*

83. The teaching in the lessons seen in the nursery and reception classes was always satisfactory and in just over a third of lessons teaching was good. Two part-time teachers, one of whom has just been appointed in a temporary capacity, share the teaching in the nursery. A very experienced nursery nurse supports teaching well in the nursery but there is insufficient classroom assistance in the reception classes. The foundation stage co-ordinator, who has only recently taken up her post in this school, has only been teaching one of the reception classes for a few weeks. It is not possible to make direct comparisons with any improvements in provision and standards since the time of the last inspection since there have been changes in national guidance on the curriculum for pupils in the nursery and reception classes. However, evidence suggests that the picture is much the same as at the time of the last inspection although teaching is not as consistent.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

84. In the nursery children learn to share and to take turns. They share the task of peeling and chopping up fruit for the class to eat before playtime. They take it in turns to distribute bowls of fruit to each group who then politely offer it around the table. This snack time is a pleasant social event where courtesy is established and reinforced so that most children are beginning to understand when to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Such social skills are not always evident, however, and in one reception class children's social development falls below the standard normally expected. In a reception class, for example, a child refused to pick up the top from a glue stick because it was not his and he had not dropped it. In this class children were not willing to help one another and displayed anti-social traits. One child blew into the face of another in a deliberately provocative way. There is a general restlessness in the reception classes partly because the tasks that are set are not always sufficiently stimulating and partly because the good foundations laid in the nursery are not built upon consistently. This is to a large extent due to recent changes in staffing in both the nursery and reception classes.
85. There is a lack of consistency in teaching styles and in the way that children's behaviour is managed. This lack of as consistent approach has contributed to the poor listening skills demonstrated by a significant minority of children. Many do not listen and are easily distracted. One group, for example, became interested in playing with paper clips rather than listening to the teacher as they were requested to. Many find it difficult to work independently and their attention wanders as they chat with one another about all manner of things that have no connection with the task in hand. Class routines have not been firmly established in the reception classes. In the

nursery the skilled and very experienced nursery nurse helps to maintain continuity but such support is not always available in the reception classes.

86. Most children have a good understanding of how their actions affect others. Children in the nursery walk through the reception classes in absolute silence, for example, when they are on the way to the hall or the music room. In one lesson the teacher focused specifically on teaching children to work as a group, to take turns and to share fairly. She played a board game with groups of children who responded well and learned how to play sensibly. In another group four girls squabbled with one another as they learned how to assert themselves in a group situation. Occasionally a few children still throw tantrums when thwarted. Most look after equipment well and handle books carefully. One group of boys in the nursery, however, threw rails from a railway track violently into the box to see who could make the most noise. Children in the reception classes do not always clear away their equipment willingly and try to avoid such chores.
87. In one good lesson on personal development in a reception class, the children were encouraged to think about what was particularly special. They sat in a circle and took it in turns to speak. They understood that it was their turn when they were given 'Elmer the Elephant' to hold and they respected this convention, most allowing the speakers to explain themselves without interruption. The teacher had to work hard to maintain control, however, because several pupils were prone to shout out and disrupt the session. Most offered sensitive responses such as, 'What is special is my mum', or 'Friends are special to me cos they are always kind and they listen to me'. The teacher showed great patience and was good at encouraging the children to explain why they thought that certain things were special. They found this very challenging and many could get no further than replying with such comments as, 'My Power Rangers are special because they are.'
88. Most children can dress and undress themselves for physical activities. Many children in the nursery, especially boys, find difficulty in putting on their socks, but most persevere. One found it impossible to put his shoe on until the teacher pointed out that he was struggling to put on somebody else's almost identical shoe that was far too small.
89. It is significant that the assessment of children's attainment soon after they enter the reception classes reveals that since the tests began five years ago the children's performance in the personal and social development aspect of the assessments has always been significantly below the county and national averages. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers work hard on this area of learning so that most children achieve well. Children's achievement has, however, been adversely affected by a lack of consistency in their learning caused by major changes in staffing. Nevertheless, as staffing difficulties in the reception classes have recently been resolved and children are entering a more settled period in their schooling, most children are on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception. Many, however, are unlikely to meet each goal, especially that which concerns children's ability to maintain attention, to concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. Most are confident and have a sound appreciation of what is right and what is wrong. They are not so good at working and playing independently without close adult supervision. There was little evidence of how teachers develop children's understanding that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs that need to be treated with respect.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

90. The teachers' assessments of children's attainment soon after they commence school in the nursery indicates that many have poorly developed speaking skills and that many find difficulty in expressing themselves clearly. This is confirmed by the statutory assessments of pupils soon after they start the reception year. These show that speaking and listening skills, early writing development and aspects of early reading development are below county and national averages. These findings were confirmed during the inspection. Many pupils experience difficulty in finding the words they need to express themselves. One group had no idea what the word 'mop' meant and none in another group could name a pepper. Many could not name the fruits that they eat at snack time. The assessments show that children enjoy stories, recognise their names and like looking at books. An area of weakness revealed in the assessments is children's understanding

of the correspondence between letters and the sounds they make. This has impeded the development of reading and writing.

91. The school has responded well to its analyses of such assessments and has recently introduced a good system for teaching letter sounds. This involves actions, such as looking from left to right as if watching tennis whilst repeating the 't' sound or rubbing their tummies as they make the 'm' sound. Different actions are associated with each letter and help the children to remember their sounds. A short session using this system is taught in the nursery and reception classes each day. Parents are also asked to consolidate learning by helping the children to learn new actions and their associated sounds at home. Already this system is improving pupils' understanding of letter sounds and is having a positive impact on their reading and writing. One child in the reception class wrote a recognisable sentence, 'te 3 bas ran atr goldlks'. Many are beginning to read independently. When reading a book together as a class they show a good understanding of expression and when the size of the font is large they read in big gruff voices, like Father Bear, and when it is small they read in tiny squeaky voices like Baby Bear. Teaching is satisfactory but there is insufficient emphasis on encouraging children to write independently. In one lesson, for example, children were required to cut words from a worksheet and stick them in the correct order rather than being encouraged to write their own words. Generally there is an over-reliance on worksheets in the reception classes. The use of these worksheets clearly restricted opportunities for reading and writing purposefully and presented insufficient challenge. The worksheets also contributed to children's lack of interest in activities and to the restlessness that was evident in many lessons. There are too few exciting, imaginatively presented activities. Most children hold pencils correctly and form recognisable letters. Nearly all write their names legibly.
92. The role-play areas in each classroom are under-developed and poorly equipped. Children enjoy playing in them on occasions but they are not imaginatively structured to provide stimulating, purposeful activities designed to extend speaking and listening skills. Similarly the sand and water activities are not well structured and do not include appropriate challenges designed to extend children's learning. Play activities lack purpose and opportunities to interest the children are missed. When looking at porridge to extend children's ability to describe texture, for example, the porridge was made for the children rather than allowing the children to make it for themselves. As it was in one big bowl rather than many smaller ones only a few children had the opportunity to stir the porridge and most had to describe what they had seen rather than what they had experienced. The outside play areas have not been developed imaginatively to encourage role-play and the extension of speaking, listening, writing and reading skills.
93. A good lesson in the nursery centred around snack time. Here speaking and listening skills were extended well as the children took it in turns to peel and cut up nectarines, tangerines, cucumbers and kiwi fruits. They were encouraged to describe the shape and texture of the fruits. Before eating the fruit they sat in small groups, each with an adult, and were encouraged to recall and relate what they had been doing during the morning activity session. In this lesson the teacher asked challenging questions that encouraged children to make deductions. She asked, for example, how the children knew that it was night-time in the story they were reading. In one particularly good session the nursery nurse took small groups outside to study an old tortoise. The discussion generated was of a high quality. The children touched different parts of the tortoise and compared the rough scaly skin on its legs and neck with the smooth patterns on the underside of its shell. This generated great interest and a barrage of questions as well as a sense of awe.
94. Children have a good sense of rhyme and enjoy singing a song about a butterfly who 'lays eggs in a cluster, yellow as a duster.' The children love listening to stories and concentrate well during story times. Children visit the school library. In one session in the library a group of children sat comfortably on cushions with the nursery nurse and thoroughly enjoyed browsing through a selection of books before selecting some to take back to the classroom. They understood that one type of book tells a story whilst another type is full of information. In the reception classes children take books home regularly in order to extend and consolidate learning. There are an adequate number of reading books but many are of poor quality and are becoming dog-eared. The reading scheme used by children in other parts of the school is not the same as the one

used in the nursery and reception classes and this does little to develop continuity in learning. Most pupils are well on course to attain most of the early learning goals by the end of the reception year though there is little evidence of developing pupils' independent use of non-fiction texts for research and to answer questions about where, who, why and how.

## Mathematical development

95. Teaching is satisfactory and most children are well on course to attain the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. In the nursery children develop a good understanding of shape, space and measures. They toured the school in a search for shapes and found tyres that were circular, drain covers that were square and bricks that were rectangular. They played a good game where they had to feel in the bag for a shape and describe its characteristics, such as 'It has three points and three straight sides,' whilst the class guessed the name of the shape. Several found it difficult to remember the names and one, for example, named a circle as 'a roundy one'. They used ribbons cut to the correct size to compare their length when they were born with their heights now. They showed a good understanding of how to exchange coins for goods in the 'Caterpillar Garden Centre'. They sang songs and rhymes to develop their counting skills and most used the correct number of fingers to represent the numbers. Through rhymes such as 'Five little speckled frogs sat on a speckled log', they gain an understanding of subtraction as one by one the frogs hop away. They understand that a butterfly's wings are symmetrical and use mirrors to define lines of symmetry. Learning is often purposeful, as when counting the number of children in their groups before collecting the right number of spoons, mugs and bowls at snack time.
96. In the reception classes pupils closed their eyes and listened carefully as marbles were dropped into a large plastic jar. They counted the number and wrote it on their whiteboards. They found this extremely challenging and when 17 marbles were dropped around a quarter of the children wrote an inaccurate answer. In one lesson the teacher had ten plastic dinosaurs in a box. The children had to calculate how many were left if, say, four escaped. This added an element of enjoyment and led to calculations involving simple algebra such as  $? - 4 = 10$ . Most children have a good understanding of the mathematical symbols for addition, subtraction and equals and many explain that  $6 + 4 = 10$  as does  $4 + 6$ . Most children achieve satisfactorily but there is a lack of any clear purpose in many of the activities and insufficient emphasis on using number skills in realistic situations. Much of the work is recorded on uninteresting worksheets and there was little evidence of encouraging children to develop mathematical ideas to solve practical problems.

## Knowledge and understanding of the world

97. In the nursery there are good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world. The story of the 'Very Hungry Caterpillar' was used well to illustrate the life cycle of a butterfly and children's understanding of life cycles is consolidated as children watched their tadpoles turning into frogs. They planted sunflower seeds and watched their plants grow taller day by day. Children have a good understanding of past events and the passage of time. They have assembled a good display of photographs that show their development from ultra-sound scans of themselves before they were born, photographs of themselves as babies, as toddlers and very recent photographs. A local clergyman visited the school to conduct a 'Christening' in the classroom to give children a deeper understanding of religious ceremonies. They are interested in information and communication technology. They were, for example, fascinated by the optical reader that 'read' the bar codes on the books they were taking out of the school library and presented the information on screen before storing the details for future reference.
98. There is little evidence of computers being used purposefully in classrooms but the computer suite is used well by children in the reception classes and here their learning advances rapidly. In one lesson, for example, the teacher, a parent helper and the computer technician worked well together as they instructed children in the use of a painting program. After their third visit to the computer suite children were able to select icons to 'spray' colour or use 'brushes' of different thickness, to select different colours, change the background colour, rub out and draw a detailed picture of a house. On completion of the session they saved their work. For homework they find out about the numbering of houses in their road, write their names and addresses on envelopes and draw labelled diagrams of their houses. This extends their learning well. Teaching is

satisfactory and most pupils are on course to reach the early learning goals by the end of the reception year.

### **Physical development**

99. Teaching is satisfactory and most children are on course to meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Children used scissors, paintbrushes, spatulas and pencils skilfully. Those whose skills are less advanced and who experience difficulties are taught to use tools through repeated clear demonstrations. They used hand lenses well to observe how buds open and grow. They moulded malleable material to make snakes and worms in play dough. In the nursery, they push themselves around the playground on a variety of vehicles that require different skills. The outside play area is spacious but has not been developed fully as a learning resource. There is little evidence that it is used purposefully as part of the teaching and learning themes. Children visit the school's activity room for music and movement lessons and the hall for physical education. They have a good awareness of space and run around without bumping into each other. They have a good awareness of healthy eating and this is reinforced at snack time when children discuss their diets. They understand the need to wash their hands after touching the tortoise and before they eat their snacks.

### **Creative development**

100. Teaching is satisfactory and most children are on course to meet the early learning goals by the end of the reception year. Children learn basic techniques in the nursery that enable them to use and control materials effectively. They hold brushes correctly and apply paint to paper with confidence. Children mixed paint to achieve different colours. They have painted bold self-portraits. They enjoyed painting freely with their fingers. Many of the drawings show great attention to features of plants and close observations of lilacs and bluebells brought into the classroom were carefully recorded in good paintings. They have studied Monet's 'Water Lilies' that provided inspiration for their own very good paintings, where they mixed thick powder paint and applied it with sponges and brushes. Good links are made between painting and work on shape, as when children created colourful symmetrical butterflies by using a folding technique to make symmetrical prints. In the nursery children carefully printed patterns with vegetables such as peppers, kiwi fruit, tomatoes and oranges. They made good models of frogs with salt dough. In the reception classes they used computer programs competently to form the shapes of snails and coloured them carefully using infill techniques.
101. Children enjoy singing and dancing. In the activity room children from the nursery moved well to Dvorak's 'New World' symphony. They curled up tightly like a seed and listened sensitively to the music; as they 'heard' the sun rising they uncurled and slowly stretched upwards like a plant growing taller. The teacher used a metronome well to illustrate fast and slow beats and children ran to the accompaniment of fast drum beats and walked slowly when the beat slowed. In the reception classes they have made and carefully painted houses from recycled boxes. However, the classrooms are not well structured to fire children's imagination. Resources to develop their imagination, such as the role-play areas, are poorly organised and the children do not always achieve as well in this aspect of the creative area of learning as they should.

## **ENGLISH**

102. By the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are broadly average. This is similar to the findings at the time of the last inspection but there is evidence that standards in reading have improved. Because there are variations each year in the attainment of children on entry to the school, together with the additional impact of unavoidable staff changes, results in national tests are not consistent from year to year. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils' achievement is generally satisfactory and there are examples of good achievement in speaking and listening and in reading. There are no significant variations in

attainment between boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress towards the targets they are set.

103. Many pupils enter school with speaking and listening skills that are below national expectations but by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6 most have developed skills that are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well from Year 1 through to Year 6 as a result of good teaching that promotes effective learning. Improvement in teaching has been promoted through good leadership and management. The subject co-ordinator has skilfully identified ways in which teaching and learning can be improved to ensure that pupils make the best progress possible. Since the autumn term teachers have planned work that will improve speaking and listening skills and, given that literacy lessons offer opportunities every day to engage in discussions and because teachers ask a wide range of pupils to answer questions, standards of speaking in Year 2 and Year 6 are similar to those found in other schools.
104. Pupils in Year 6 confidently explain how they access the Internet to research information and talk with excited anticipation about their forthcoming residential visit to Torquay. Similarly, in Year 2 pupils are at ease as they pass round a wooden carving from Kenya, observing and making comments such as 'The man who carved that was intelligent'. At the end of a lesson, pupils speak in clear voices as they read out their own nonsense poems written in the style of Spike Milligan. However, many pupils throughout the school respond to questions using a limited vocabulary and teachers have to work hard to extract unusual and exciting words during a discussion. They correctly praise pupils who offer interesting words, for example 'fascinating' from a Year 2 pupil referring to hair braiding, which encourages others to 'have a go'.
105. The pupils generally listen well. Attitudes in English are positive and pupils, in the main, behave well. They only become restless when tasks are too easy, too hard or too long. Pupils work together, effectively helping each other to improve their work. The good relationships between pupils and between teachers and pupils create a secure and caring environment in which pupils can learn successfully.
106. Standards in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are good. The school recognises the importance of teaching basic skills, such as phonics on a daily basis and this is contributing to the improved standards in reading. The pupils in Year 2 have a good knowledge of letter sounds and they use this well to read unknown words, recognising the initial sound even when the rest of the word is difficult to decipher. The pupils in Year 1 and slower readers in Year 2 read words that match pictures and the context of a sentence. More advanced pupils read with expression, especially when speech is indicated and most pupils read fluently and accurately. Some pupils use a reading journal in which they record the books they read and their comments. The class teachers keep satisfactory records of the books pupils read in guided reading sessions. However there is no consistent policy about reading diaries. Some classes have them but not all.
107. The pupils talk freely about their enjoyment of reading and about favourite books and authors, Jacqueline Wilson, J. K. Rowling and J. R. Tolkein being particular favourites in Year 6. They regularly read in groups as part of the literacy lesson. Pupils have positive attitudes towards reading and a majority of pupils in Years 2 and 6 read fluently at the level appropriate for their ability. The pupils are eager to challenge themselves, with 'The Lord of the Rings' and 'The Hobbit', being successfully tackled by more advanced readers in Year 6. The lower attaining pupils in the year group have simpler books that they read accurately.
108. At the time of the last inspection the school's own stock of books was judged to be inadequate and book corners were not sufficiently inviting. The library is now very well stocked and the school has plans to develop book corners further, making available to each class a range of group reading books. There is a computerised system of recording and monitoring library stock that tracks borrowing and provides information about the number and age of books in school. The able librarians work with class teachers to ensure that all pupils are regularly tutored in library skills. The majority of pupils can explain how to find a particular book using the library numbering system and most know the purpose of *contents* and *index* pages. The school has been

successful in its aim of 'providing an atmosphere in which private study, quiet relaxation and independent learning can flourish together'.

109. Good use has been made of assessment systems to identify that writing is a relative weakness in English. In response, time has been made available each week for the completion of extended pieces of writing and this is helping pupils in Years 3 to 6, to produce lengthier pieces of work. The school has also initiated target setting and target tracking programmes that highlight for each pupil features that need to be improved and the progress they are making towards their personal goals. Targets are regularly reviewed and at times referred to in marking. There is evidence in workbooks that pupils' work is marked, sometimes giving helpful advice about how to improve. The school is aware that marking is inconsistent and teachers are being helped to work to a common framework that is explicit in the school's recently agreed expectations and guidance for marking in English.
110. Standards of writing at present are average across the school but, within this there is a wide range of attainment. A significant minority of higher attaining pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 are likely to attain standards in the forthcoming national tests that exceed the national expectation. The more advanced pupils write competently and occasionally use evocative phrases such as 'the rare lapwings are sinking at an alarming rate'. Technically, the higher attaining pupils and those of average ability write competently with due attention to punctuation. Spelling of familiar words is usually sound. Less confident pupils struggle with spellings. By the time they are in Year 2 pupils generally display satisfactory standards of handwriting and some are beginning to join letters. However, the quality of handwriting varies widely across the school and in several classes pupils pay insufficient attention to producing neat handwriting. Again this has been clearly identified as an area for improvement and teachers regularly plan lessons in which handwriting skills are taught and practised.
111. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of basic punctuation and remember to use it in their writing. They write about a range of subjects such as descriptions of the adults who help around school and character studies of animals in stories. In their writing they retell well known stories, recount historical events and list items of clothing they would need on a visit to the Antarctic. A higher attaining pupil demonstrated an effective use of persuasive writing when advertising a book about the blue whale. Pupils write persuasively when in Year 3 they compose letters to the headteacher justifying the reasons for funding new playground equipment. The development of pupils' skills of persuasion and citizenship were demonstrated as Year 5 composed letters to Llandudno County Council, setting out their arguments against a planned development on Bodafon Fields. Pupils in Year 6 write in a variety of styles. They describe the Shakespearean character, Banquo, the one time friend of Macbeth, then creatively portray a present day Banquo. They learn to use journalistic jargon for effect as they write newspaper headings such as 'Rudolph Ran over a Kid'. Proof reading skills are developed as the pupils read a story, analyse the text and suggest ways in which the writing can be improved.
112. The well equipped computer suites are used effectively to enable pupils to access the Internet and develop their research skills. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are able to develop their writing talents further by attending the after-school writing club, where they locate resources and extract information from books and the Internet in order to develop their writing skills.
113. The work of many pupils is neatly written and imaginatively presented but this is not general throughout the school. Spelling is an area that the school is working to improve and for a regular time each day teachers in Years 1 and 2 help pupils to learn sounds and combinations that form words. In daily sessions pupils in Years 3 to 6 pupils concentrate on developing their spelling and writing skills, by working towards specific spelling goals.
114. Teaching overall is good and often it is very good. In Years 1 and 2 it is satisfactory. In Years 3 to 6 it was always at least satisfactory, it was good in a third of lessons and very good in nearly a half. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use resources well, such as overhead projectors, writing frames and individual whiteboards. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. In a lesson in Year 4, for example,



pupils were challenged to identify an issue for discussion based on three stories recently read by the class. In the very good lessons pupils' interest was captured and their behaviour was managed exceptionally well. In less effective lessons work is not sufficiently challenging for the higher attaining pupils and behaviour is not so well managed.

115. The teachers do not always use the review session towards the end of a lesson to take learning forwards. Often it is used for pupils to report on what they have done, without advice as how to improve or develop their work. In a Year 5 lesson it was used well to examine pupils' work and suggest ways in which it could be improved. This also reinforced the need for re-drafting. The pupils are taught to plan their writing work throughout the school and the older ones know what re-drafting involves but there was little evidence in books of this happening. There is high quality work on display that has been produced on a word-processor. Computers are used well in the computer suite but there is little evidence to suggest that they are used effectively to support literacy in the classroom. Work in other subjects is supporting literacy satisfactorily. In geography pupils in Year 2 write about Katie Morag and her two grandmothers, on the imaginary Isle of Struay. There are good examples of writing in history as when pupils wrote about the Great Fire of London. Work is often completed at home and this is contributing well to learning.
116. The management of English and literacy is very good because pupils' needs have been carefully analysed and programmes introduced to raise standards. The subject co-ordinator is very clear about the priorities for development in literacy. The national literacy strategy has been implemented effectively and provides a good framework to guide teachers' planning. Two skilled and highly committed librarians work with classroom teachers in order to help pupils in developing skills in information retrieval and critical thinking. The co-ordinator monitors teaching and learning and pupils' work to check on progress and identify ways in which standards in the subject can be improved. Resources are good and there are plans to further increase the number of reading books available for group reading. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those from travelling families are supported well and make satisfactory progress. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

## **MATHEMATICS**

117. By the ends of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6, most pupils attain average standards. This maintains the position reported at the time of the last inspection. These findings concur with last year's national test results for pupils in Year 2 but are greatly at variance with the performance of pupils in Year 6. The school's performance in the tests for pupils in Year 2 in 2001 was average when compared with all schools although below average when compared with schools that have pupils from similar social backgrounds. In the tests for pupils in Year 6, the school's performance in 2001 was well below average both when compared with all schools and when compared to similar schools. The school's own very thorough and detailed analysis of the test results for pupils in Year 6 in 2001 clearly demonstrates that the results were unusual. There are clear indications that the results of the national tests for 2002 will show a marked improvement.
118. Analysis of pupils' work during the inspection shows that there are significant proportions of pupils in different year groups who are achieving at levels that are above average. There are clear indications that the efforts that the school has made to improve the consistency of teaching across the school and to raise standards are beginning to have a positive effect.
119. Higher attaining pupils are reaching standards that are above average by the end of Year 6. A small minority of pupils are well on course to attain especially high standards. There are no significant variations in attainment between boys and girls, and pupils with special educational needs make appropriate progress towards the targets they are set.
120. Pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory in all aspects of mathematics. In Year 1, pupils' work is linked well to other subjects. For example, work about Italy led to a shopping list of Italian foods which they then used to practise simple addition of money. Many pupils are able

to work out the change from 20p. A small minority of pupils are less confident in knowledge of number facts to 10 and as a result, they cannot work out change from 10p.

121. A scrutiny of pupils' work shows that, by the end of Year 2, most pupils are able to use a good range of strategies to support their work in numeracy. For example number lines are used effectively to aid work in addition and subtraction. Pupils are confident in their understanding that subtraction is the inverse or opposite of addition and are able to use different ways to record addition and related subtraction facts. Pupils are challenged to explain their ways of working to each other and to the whole class, making good use of the correct mathematical language.
122. In their workbooks, there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that their work covers all aspects of mathematics. For example, they know the names and properties of two-dimensional shapes and they understand that right angles can be found in a door and a window but not in an apple or a flowerpot. They can measure in standard units, such as centimetres, and have an understanding of time.
123. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory. By Year 4, pupils are able to calculate mentally the difference between a given number and 100. They can confidently explain the strategies which they use. In their work on position and movement, they can transform two-dimensional shapes using, translation and reflection along horizontal, vertical and diagonal axes.
124. In Year 5, pupils carry out detailed analysis of data and understand the availability of the wide range of data in their everyday lives. They appreciate that there are different interpretations to data and recognise the need for fairness when interpreting it. A significant minority of pupils in Year 5 do not fully understand the work they are given in calculating the differences between numbers that include decimals.
125. By Year 6, most pupils have a good understanding of place value and use this knowledge when working with numbers to two and three decimal places. Some pupils are not confident in transferring their knowledge from whole numbers to decimals. For example, they cannot always see how  $7 \times 8 = 56$  relates to  $0.7 \times 0.8 = 0.56$ . Higher attaining pupils use their mathematical knowledge well. One boy worked out a problem using his knowledge of the number of degrees in a circle and the relationship with degrees in a right angle.
126. In Year 6, a scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are confident in using a range of strategies to aid their work in the subject. For example they use a grid method effectively to solve problems involving multiplication. They use repeated subtraction to solve division problems. Pupils make effective use of calculators to check results. They are challenged to explain their working both orally and in writing and they are making good progress in developing these skills.
127. In almost all lessons seen, pupils' attitudes to mathematics were good and they showed a real enjoyment of their work. They wanted to learn and they often became very excited and involved in the challenges given to them by their teachers. Pupils are confident in answering questions, even if they are incorrect, and they are provided with numerous opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and their learning. They enjoy doing this and they benefit considerably as a result. Good use is made in lessons of small whiteboards for the rapid recording of answers in mental and oral work and the pupils find these highly motivating. Pupils co-operated well with each other and were confident to work individually and in pairs. They were usually attentive and interested except in the minority of lessons where some difficulties were caused by the open-plan design of the building which allowed noise levels from other classes to intrude and this caused distraction. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are very good.
128. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support so that they maintain their interest and effort, and make sound progress.
129. Only on a small number of occasions does pupils' behaviour fall below a satisfactory level. Sometimes this was caused by teachers expecting pupils to sit for too long on the carpet which

caused them to become restless. On another occasion, despite the teacher's good strategies for dealing with poor behaviour, pupils behaved inappropriately and disturbed the atmosphere in the class.

130. Across the school the quality of teaching is good overall, although a few aspects require further attention. This is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection when the quality of teaching was mainly satisfactory and there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers work together well in parallel classes. Occasionally, there is an inconsistency of approach to lessons and, in some lessons, teachers do not clearly identify a focus group with which they will work.
131. The national numeracy strategy has been successfully implemented in the school and the work for each year group is clearly linked to this. Teachers make good use of the lesson plans that are available within the strategy and usually adapt these to suit the pupils. Occasionally, insufficient note is taken of gaps in prior learning and this impedes progress. Learning targets are clearly defined in the planning but are not always made clear to pupils in a language that they can understand. Although teachers incorporate a mental warm-up activity, the range of work is sometimes limited and does not sufficiently enable the practice and consolidation of number facts. Similarly, the review session towards the end of each lesson is often brief and does not always provide an opportunity for pupils to consider what they have learned and what comes next.
132. The school has made satisfactory, and in some respects, good progress since the last inspection. The issue raised in the last inspection about developing greater continuity in pupils' learning across the school has been addressed through the introduction of the numeracy strategy and through monitoring of attainment carried out by the subject co-ordinator. The school makes effective use of non-statutory national tests in Years 3, 4 and 5 and has also introduced a test for pupils in Year 1. The school has maintained satisfactory standards in mathematics and indications are that current school initiatives are having a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress.
133. Pupils use two workbooks for mathematics but the purpose of each of these is not always clear. A considerable amount of work in mathematics is conducted orally and answers are noted on small whiteboards. In Year 5, pupils record this work briefly in their workbooks or even photocopy the whiteboard. The orderly presentation of work is not promoted consistently. Opportunities for pupils to carry out mathematical investigations are limited and this is an area for further development.
134. Resources are adequate. There are computers available in each classroom but they were rarely in use during lessons and opportunities are often missed to use them to support teaching and learning.
135. A comprehensive system for assessment, recording and evaluation of work in mathematics has been introduced recently. Not all teachers use this consistently and as a result pupils' progress is not always tracked and plotted effectively. Consequently, teaching is not always based on reliable information about prior learning and the stages of development that pupils have reached. Pupils' work is marked regularly but comments are often related to presentation and completion of work rather than giving an indication as to how work could be improved in future.
136. The co-ordinator provides strong and effective leadership. She has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the subject within the school. She has carried out a thorough analysis of results and identified implications for teaching and learning. She has introduced assessment procedures that are on course to become increasingly effective once fully implemented. She has a very good knowledge of the subject and is well equipped to provide support and guidance for other members of staff. She is involved in the monitoring of teaching and learning of the subject throughout the school and provides individual feedback to teachers relating to their current practice and how they could improve. She has led training in the subject in school and has kept up to date with developments through meeting with other co-ordinators and through

discussion with the local numeracy consultant. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

## **SCIENCE**

137. In the 2001 statutory teacher assessments of science, pupils' attainment in Year 2 was close to the national average. However, the number of pupils achieving above the expected level was lower than was the case nationally. The examination of pupils' work and observation of lessons during the inspection indicates that standards are higher this year. Pupils are almost all achieving the nationally expected level and just over a quarter are achieving above this. This is a direct result of the improved quality of teaching. It also indicates that standards have improved since the last inspection, when no pupils achieved standards that exceeded the national target of Level 2. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 work hard and do a lot of work in the time available. Their oral work indicates that they know a lot more than their written work suggests. They are able to follow instructions to carry out investigations and are beginning to understand the importance of making them fair by controlling the variables. Their work on forces has involved them in carrying out accurate measurements and timing. As a result, they have been able to reach sensible conclusions. They understand how electrical circuits work and can explain why a bulb will not light up in an incomplete circuit. They have a good understanding of life processes and can group things according to whether they are living or not living. During the inspection, they demonstrated a thorough understanding of the life cycles of frogs and chickens. Their interest in this work was particularly strong because the teacher had arranged for them to have five-day-old chicks in the classroom whose eggs they had seen in a previous lesson.
138. In the 2001 national tests for pupils in Year 6, the school's performance was well below the national average. However, the scrutiny of work and lessons observed during the inspection, indicate that the attainment of the pupils currently in Year 6 is much higher. Almost all pupils are on target to achieve average standards. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The improvement in standards is partly due to the improvement in the quality of teaching and it is also because this year group does not comprise such a high proportion of lower attaining pupils as last year's group. Expectations of pupils are appropriately high and they are being set more challenging work from an earlier age. Consequently, standards are being driven up. A significant number of pupils in Year 4 are already achieving the national average. By the end of Year 6, pupils carry out investigations competently, paying good attention to the need for fair testing and recording their results clearly, sometimes making good use of computers to do so. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop these skills further, so that pupils have more opportunities to plan their own investigations and to repeat them if their findings are different to their predictions, or, if they think they may not be accurate. This skill is not fully developed throughout the school and as a result too few pupils attain standards that are above average. Pupils carry out a lot of suitably challenging activities. In Year 6, they demonstrate a secure understanding of reversible and irreversible changes and can use this knowledge to enable them to separate mixtures of different materials. They understand how living things have adapted to the environment and are able to produce their own keys to enable different living things to be classified according to their type. They generally work hard and have done a great deal of work in the time available.
139. Pupils who have special educational needs are well integrated in the lessons. They receive very effective help from learning support assistants and as a result, they achieve standards that are appropriate for their ability. Pupils from travelling families and those with English as an additional language are well supported, make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriate standards.
140. The quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Teachers plan their work carefully and their organisation is good. This enables the lessons to run smoothly and results in pupils doing a lot of work in the time available. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on investigative work and this is successful in stimulating pupils' interest. Similarly, considerable thought is put into using interesting resources and teaching methods. As a result, pupils generally enjoy their work and

try hard to do well. Teachers generally manage pupils effectively and they listen carefully and follow the instructions they are given. Teachers are good at asking questions and this enables them to check what pupils have understood and to challenge them to use their understanding and apply it to unfamiliar situations. Teachers are consciously planning more opportunities for pupils to use computers, both for research and to enable them to improve the presentation of their work. When support assistants are present, they have a positive effect on the learning of the pupils they are supporting and also those who are sitting close to them. This means that pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language are able to take a full part in the lessons. However, the highest attaining pupils and those whose attainment is relatively low are not always given work that is well matched to their ability. This sometimes prevents them achieving their full potential and occasionally leads to unsatisfactory behaviour. The science co-ordinator has already identified this as an area for improvement and has written a sensible plan of action to tackle the issue. Teachers generally create an atmosphere where pupils feel confident to answer questions, even if they are not sure they are right. This has a very positive effect on learning as it encourages pupils to answer questions and to show initiative. Teachers' marking of work varies enormously in terms of frequency and usefulness. Most teachers mark books regularly, identifying what pupils have done well and indicating how it could be improved. Others mark regularly and provide positive comments, but these do not always relate adequately to the scientific content of the work. Others mark work infrequently, leaving pupils unsure of how well they are doing. Effective monitoring of pupils' work by the co-ordinator has already highlighted this as an issue and the school knows there is a need for consistency.

141. The subject is managed effectively by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator. She has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and has effective strategies for monitoring what happens throughout the school. She has established very strong and effective links with the secondary school. Their support and advice are having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils.
142. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. All the teaching is now at least satisfactory, but the amount of good and very good teaching is now much higher. There is now much more emphasis on the teaching of investigative skills. Resources have been significantly improved and there is much more systematic use of computers. Standards have improved and a significant number of pupils are now attaining standards which are above the national average. The school is well placed to make further improvements.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

143. This subject has a high profile and is seen as an important part of the school curriculum. Pupils' achievement from Year 1 to Year 6 is sound and by the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are similar to those attained by pupils of the same age nationally. Their work is thoughtfully and competently displayed and contributes to a positive working environment. The work taught is based on a locally devised planning framework and it ensures that the National Curriculum requirements are met. As they move through the school pupils develop and refine a broad range of skills and techniques and become familiar with the work of a wide range of artists.
144. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use a range of materials, including paint, pastels, fabric, dyes, and clay. Pupils in Year 1 learn the skill of tie-dyeing and produce some pleasing results. They learn how to make printing blocks using card and string to produce interesting patterns and learn the skill of weaving using paper. During the inspection, they were taught a range of techniques using pastels. These included cross hatching, stippling, scribbling and blending colours. They had the chance to look at the work of Degas so they could see how effective the blending of colours could be. Pupils in Year 2 demonstrated care and attention to detail when making clay tiles, which were of a good standard. They rolled clay flat, made a ball, plaited lengths and produced clay Catherine wheels. Their ability to mix colours accurately is competent as their work on camouflaging and extending patterns indicates. They are aware that painting techniques in other

cultures are different and they have used sticks, fingers and other implements to produce paintings inspired by Aboriginal art.

145. As pupils move through Years 3 to 6, they extend and refine the skills developed in Years 1 and 2. They learn to use a more extensive range of printing techniques. Good work using printing ink was produced in Year 3. Sometimes they try their designs out on the computer before deciding on their best one. Having studied the work of different artists, they use the same techniques to produce their own work in the style of the artist. The self-portraits based on the work of Andy Warhol, produced by pupils in Year 4, are a good example of this. Pupils in Year 5 mix colours competently and have produced some very effective seascapes using the technique of 'pointillism'. Pupils in Year 6 have studied Indian art and used their knowledge to influence the making of cushions. These include effective use of skills such as batik, tie-dyeing, silk screen printing and embroidery.
146. Pupils with special educational needs, those from travelling families and those with English as an additional language are fully involved in these lessons and receive very effective help from support assistants and parent helpers.
147. Overall the quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory. Teachers plan an interesting range of activities which the pupils enjoy and are interested in. As a result they try hard and take care with their work. Teachers provide competent demonstrations of new skills and techniques and as a result pupils are able to use them with a good level of competence. Opportunities are provided for the oldest pupils to make visits to places of artistic interest, such as the National Gallery and to a local textiles exhibition where they met the artist. Teachers are now developing the use of sketchbooks so that they are provided with a useful record of progress and enable pupils to experiment with new ideas. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to give pupils the opportunity to show more independence and creativity. Appropriate in-service training has taken place and is planned for the future. It has given teachers more confidence and is leading to more adventurous and challenging work. Teachers plan their lessons well and their organisation is good. As a result, all the materials are to hand and accessible to the pupils when required. This helps the lessons to run smoothly and pupils are able to do a lot of work in the time available. Pupils are generally managed well and their behaviour is good. However, on some occasions, they become silly and noisy and this has an adverse effect on the learning of classes sharing the teaching space. Assessment is a weakness at the moment and teachers are not evaluating work against clear learning objectives. The co-ordinator realises this aspect needs development and is attending appropriate training so that she can implement suitable assessment procedures for the next academic year.
148. The co-ordinator is managing the subject effectively. Systematic monitoring procedures have already highlighted the areas needing further development. Based on this, she has organised appropriate training for staff. Where this has already taken place, it is having a positive impact on the teaching and learning.
149. Satisfactory improvement has taken place since the last inspection. Resources have been developed and teachers have benefited from training in the aspects they were least confident in. The use of sketchbooks has improved, but an effective assessment strategy has still to be developed. Computers are used well to support learning and pupils have a good understanding of how to use paint and graphics programs.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

150. By the end of Year 2 and again by the end of Year 6 pupils attain standards that exceed national expectations. This indicates a significant improvement since the last inspection when standards were below the national expectation by the end of Year 6 and close to the national expectation at the end of Year 2, with no pupils achieving standards that exceeded national expectations.

151. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now learn to use the design process as soon as they enter the school. The improved planning framework ensures that they develop these skills systematically as they move through the school. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able to draw simple, labelled designs of what they would like to make and can produce lists of the materials they will need. They develop a good range of practical skills using a broad range of materials and as a result, achieve a good standard of finish in their work. They are developing their evaluation skills well and all can say what they do and don't like about their work and most can suggest how it could be improved. Pupils in Year 1 have worked very hard on designing and making children's playgrounds. They show a good level of initiative and creativity in their choice of materials and the types of rides they have made. Pupils in Year 2 have made puppets based on Joseph and his coat of many colours. They have produced repeating designs, both by hand and using the computer, before deciding on the best one to make with fabric and paints. They show good attention to the quality of finish in their work.
152. Pupils develop their designing and making skills systematically as they move through from Year 3 to Year 6. As a result, the quality of some of the work by the end of Year 6 is of an exceptionally high standard. Pupils in Year 6 have researched Indian patterns and the development of the traditional 'Paisley' pattern in considerable detail, before producing their own designs for cushions. They have learnt a good range of textile techniques, including tie-dyeing, batik, repeated block printing, silk painting and machine sewing, all of which have been incorporated in their designs. The depth of their research into different properties of materials, different fastenings and decorative finishes is exceptional. This information has enabled them to make informed choices to ensure that their cushions will be successful. The quality of this work is outstanding. Similarly, pupils in Year 5 have produced very good toys using junk materials, wood and fabric. They have investigated the needs of their 'target market' before producing their designs for a new toy. Their toys show a secure understanding of how cams can be used to create movement and they have taken great care to ensure a good quality of finish. Pupils in Year 4 have produced some well finished masks and understand the importance of producing a range of designs before deciding which one will be the best one to manufacture. The pupils in Year 3 developed their evaluation skills particularly well when they designed and made appealing sandwiches that would be suitable to put in a lunchbox.
153. Pupils with special educational needs, those from travelling families and those with English as an additional language are fully integrated in lessons. Where necessary they receive additional guidance from support assistants and parent helpers. As a result they achieve well.
154. Although it was not possible to observe the teaching of design and technology during the inspection, the wealth of evidence available through classroom displays, photographs and children's books, clearly indicates that the quality of provision throughout the school is good. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the subject and have high expectations of their pupils. They plan an interesting range of activities that develop the pupils' skills and knowledge systematically and at the same time capture their interest and enthusiasm. Classroom assistants and parent helpers make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning in this subject. There is a good range of resources available and pupils are encouraged to show independence and creativity when selecting them. New skills and techniques are taught competently and, as a result, the quality of pupils' finished work is good and occasionally outstanding. Designing and evaluation skills are now effectively taught and this has contributed to an improvement in standards overall. Teachers have achieved an appropriate balance between activities that involve making skills and designing and evaluating skills. Consequently, they have been able to maintain pupils' enthusiasm and this has a positive impact upon the standards they attain.
155. The co-ordinator has taken on board all the recommendations raised at the time of the last inspection. She has improved her own skills and knowledge by attending appropriate courses. This, combined with the use of the nationally produced planning framework, has had a direct impact on the raising of standards. The activities planned are now leading to high achievement, rather than causing the underachievement cited in the last inspection report. The school is aware of the need to develop an effective but manageable system for assessing pupils' work. There was evidence of the good use of computers in the designing process where pupils used

graphics programs appropriately. Links between the Year 6 teacher and the local technology college are having a very positive impact on the standards achieved at the end of Year 6. They are also preparing pupils particularly well for the next phase of their education.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

156. Pupils are on course to attain standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. A limited number of lessons were observed during this inspection, however evidence from teachers' planning, examples of pupils' work and the scrutiny of displays around the school indicate that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory gains in their learning.
157. Fieldwork is developing well and pupils of all age groups undertake studies in and around the immediate locality. Pupils in Year 1 have conducted field study visits in the vicinity of the school. They develop their knowledge of the village as they study photographs taken in different parts of Soham. A pupil called out with delight as he recognised his father's car in one photograph. Others shared this excitement as they recognised and related to familiar, village landmarks. Individual road maps enabled them to identify safe crossing places and to discuss safety issues for pupils who wait for the school bus. After noting the dangers of crossing on a corner one pupil pointed out that the safest place to cross a road is at the lights when the green man starts walking. Pupils extend their sense of travel by plotting the travels of Barnaby, the school bear, on a world map as he travels to far off countries such as Japan. Pupils in Year 2 have researched the differences between their home village of Soham and the remote fictional Isle of Struay. Here computers were used well to find out about the island of Coll upon which the stories of Struay are based. As they investigated and described the landscapes, travel facilities and the way people live on the island, the pupils developed geographical skills of observing and recording similarities and differences between two contrasting environments.
158. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are studying ways in which people can improve or damage the environment. Pupils in Year 4 analysed the results of a litter survey undertaken in the school grounds, questioning why so much litter has been dropped and exploring ways in which they could improve the situation. Pupils identified map symbols and learned to orientate their plans of the school as they considered the pattern of litter dropped around the school grounds.
159. In Year 5 pupils considered the effects on the lives and the environment of the local population when builders applied to develop the green belt area of Bodafan Fields on the outskirts of Llandudno. They used geographical language, for example location, route, direction. As they analysed arguments for and against the development they considered the evidence and suggested explanations for differing view points.
160. Pupils in Year 6 are beginning to understand the damage caused through man-made disasters. They listened with intense interest to a report on the plight of an oil tanker in trouble on the sea. The difficulties facing the tanker seemed likely to result in a huge oil slick being deposited in shallow waters. The lesson met its objective of raising awareness of the vulnerability of the environment and wild life. Pupils began to recognise how human error can change the character of a place. In a study of India they described the physical and human features of everyday life in the village of Chembakoli, the food eaten, transport, religion and climate. In this study computers were used well to research for information.
161. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the lessons observed, there were several particularly good features in the teaching. These included good questioning, clear instructions to pupils, appropriate activities being set and good use of resources. However, in many lessons all pupils worked on the same activities which presented insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils often produce work that is well presented and their handwriting is legible. However, other pupils' handwriting is often untidy and work is not always marked or completed. This is an area for development. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are



good and this helps pupils to learn satisfactorily. Pupils are encouraged to learn the vocabulary specific to the subject. There are good links with literacy and numeracy as when pupils conduct research and write about conditions in other countries and collect data on climate and population.

162. The co-ordinator provides a clear direction for the work in the subject. A detailed policy, supported by a clear framework for teaching different parts of the subject that takes account national guidance, helps teachers in their planning. At the present time there is no monitoring of teaching and learning. However the co-ordinator has a clear view of the main priorities for development, including the assessment of pupils' work in order to raise standards of attainment. The school has strong links with Soham Village College. Pupils in Year 6 are prepared for their transfer to secondary school through the co-operation between Year 6 teachers and tutors from the College who help them work on a geographical project to be completed and marked when they enter Year 7. This is a positive initiative to raise standards. A good range of resources is available. Computers are used effectively for researching information and resources are satisfactory.

## **HISTORY**

163. Standards have been maintained at a similar level to that reported at the last inspection. As a result of planning arrangements, lessons were only observed in Year 3. A scrutiny of work already completed and discussions with pupils indicate that standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are in line with national expectations.
164. Through a planned series of topics in each year group, pupils learn about particular people and events, as well as studying particular periods. They learn about the changes that have taken place over time and the impact of those changes on their own lives. They begin to appreciate the value of evidence and how that evidence can be interpreted to help them to find out about the past.
165. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress in their acquisition of knowledge and skills. For some pupils the current organisation results in long periods of time between one history study unit and the next.
166. In Year 1, pupils compare everyday objects and activities from the past and the present. For example they compared old and new toys, historic and modern buildings and looked at differences in transport, clothes and entertainment. By the end of Year 2, pupils have considered how events in the past have affected their own local community. For example they investigated the Soham War Memorial and wrote about what happened there on Remembrance Day. They examined the Soham village sign and learned that it depicts significant features from the village as well as a particular event in history.
167. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed a lively interest and are able to recall and describe their understanding of a number of events and periods from the past. They develop an awareness of chronology and put events into an accurate order. For example, they identified that the Anglo Saxons and the Vikings invaded England sometime between the departure of the Romans and the start of the Tudor period.
168. In Year 4, through a study of everyday life in Britain during World War Two, pupils used primary evidence, such as gas masks, as well as information books to form judgements about life at that time. They compiled an impressive folder of work that contained their thoughts about how people lived. 'People soon learned to make everything last for as long as possible.' Gas masks 'were usually a problem because you had to carry it everywhere you go.' They also considered the changes in people's lives since World War Two and one pupil concluded that, 'Home life has changed a lot and I think for the better'.
169. Pupils in Year 6 carried out a substantial study of Ancient Greece in which they learned about everyday life at that time. Their comprehensive project books contain investigations into the

Olympians, Greek theatre and architecture as well as Greek myths. They gathered their information from a range of reference books as well as from Internet web-sites. They evaluate their own work and receive feedback from their teachers – 'I like my Ancient Greece book ..... I had loads of fun doing it'.

170. During discussions with pupils, their enjoyment of the subject was quite apparent. They talked confidently about how some historical evidence could be 'fact' or 'opinion' and related this to current world issues. They shared their ideas about how they gathered evidence from books, pictures and from artefacts. Pupils also use the Internet effectively to gather information for their projects, for example when researching the life of Ghandi and aspects of Ancient Egypt.
171. It was not possible to see many lessons being taught during the inspection and so it is not possible to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching. Teaching in the lessons seen in Year 3 were good. Following a video about Egyptian burial procedures, teachers used questions well to stimulate discussion and to assess pupils' understanding.
172. Resources available to teachers are appropriate and are used well. Computers are used well to research for information. The co-ordinator has recognised the need to increase the range of resources and to organise them centrally.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

173. Pupils' attainment exceeds national expectations by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6. This is a significant improvement since the time of the previous inspection when standards were above average at the end of Year 2 and in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. The improvement is directly related to good teaching and the provision of two well-resourced computer suites that are used effectively to teach pupils each strand of the curriculum. The development of the subject has been a major priority. Staff have been well trained, they show secure subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for improving standards. Their enthusiasm is reflected in the response of pupils who show enjoyment in learning and in using the very good resources. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress through a well-structured curriculum. All pupils, including those from travelling families, have equal opportunity and there is no significant difference in the progress and attainment of boys and girls.
174. By the end of Year 2, pupils show above average skills in word-processing. They use the keyboard and mouse with confidence to enter text and edit their work. They know how to save work to a file and access it at a later date. When writing stories and instructions, they refine sentences by adding words and making corrections. The use of computers to control devices has been successfully developed. Pupils in Year 2 understand how to program a series of instructions to control a robotic toy and use a control program on the computer. They offered clear explanations about how a sequence of instructions can be repeated to produce geometrical shapes. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to use a database program. They conducted surveys on colour, travel and fruits and used the information to show results in graphical form. They recognise the use of computers in the outside world. They described how doctors, police and teachers keep records and access data. The school's librarian ensures that all pupils are able to use the computerised library system to locate information.
175. By the end of Year 6, pupils have above average skills in each strand of the curriculum. Pupils are confident in using word-processing packages to draft and edit written work in English, history, science and religious education. They create short passages of text which they alter by changing the size and style of font. Pupils are very confident in saving work to their individual files. When required to produce presentations, they know how to access the Internet and CD ROMs to search for information. They use the clipboard to cut, copy and paste. In Year 6, pupils know how to incorporate images, sound and text to ensure their presentations have impact. Pupils used this knowledge very effectively to present slides to their class on the dangers of smoking.

176. Pupils have above average skills in managing and manipulating data. They used a spreadsheet program to show how data can be recorded. When completing mathematical problems, they understood the importance of entering the correct formulae into cells.
177. The use of computers for retrieving and storing information is a strong feature of pupils' learning. Pupils have a secure understanding of the capacity of computers. They describe how to access the Internet to find information linked to termly projects. When studying India, they locate different web-sites to research the climate and facts about Gandhi and Sikhism. They are not so confident in using e-mail.
178. Pupils have a secure understanding of control and graphical modelling. They know how to move, rotate and resize graphics when designing their ideal classroom. They discuss designs and recognise how a control program is used to monitor traffic flow and change traffic lights. The weakest aspect of their knowledge is their lack of understanding of sensors. They do not have sufficient opportunity to use sensors and write a series of commands in which outputs and inputs are used, for example, in a burglar alarm, level crossing and weather station.
179. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers have received very good in-service training and show confidence in their knowledge and understanding of computers. They make excellent use of two very well-resourced computer suites to teach each part of the curriculum. They have good class management skills and ensure lessons are well balanced with explanation, hands-on experience in using the resources and discussion of the learning target for the lesson. In an excellent lesson for pupils in Year 4, the teacher held pupils' attention when she explained how titles and data could be highlighted. Pupils demonstrate a high degree of competence in creating graphs from a database.
180. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that skills learnt are used to enhance learning in other subjects. Good links are made in geography, literacy and religious education. Pupils are encouraged to use web-sites to research information. A weakness in teaching is related to the lack of use of the computer in classrooms.
181. The two co-ordinators are very enthusiastic and have clear vision for future development. They have supported staff effectively and teachers are now confident in using and teaching the subject. They have also ensured the school has very good resources and that staff training needs have been tackled successfully. They monitor planning, teaching and learning and provide staff with guidance on what is expected of pupils in each year group. They recognise the need to improve resources in relation to developing skills in the control of devices and to make better use of computers in the classrooms. They have developed assessment effectively to ensure progression through the stages of the National Curriculum.

## **MUSIC**

182. Attainment and progress at the time of the last inspection were judged to match national expectations. There was limited evidence available during this inspection. It is, therefore, not possible to form judgements about the quality of teaching or the standards pupils attain. It is also not possible, therefore, to judge the extent of improvement since the last inspection.
183. The quality of singing in assembly, particularly that of the older pupils, is unsatisfactory. This was the same at the time of the last inspection. Opportunities for singing are provided after school when the choir meet. However, this is mainly attended by younger pupils from Years 2 and 4. The singing is tuneful and the pupils clearly enjoy singing together. They sing in unison and in parts, successfully, and are ably led by two committed teachers and a pianist, who is also a parent. There are opportunities for pupils to experience performing to a large audience, as when the choir joined with other schools in Ely Cathedral in November to commemorate Remembrance Day. The lack of interest in singing, demonstrated by older pupils, reflects the low

priority music has received while the school has addressed other pressing priorities. The co-ordinator is aware that music requires development in order to raise standards.

184. Pupils throughout the school have opportunities to compose their own musical scores and to perform in class as well as to other audiences. Right through the year, pupils perform in seasonal concerts to a variety of audiences including each other, parents, and senior citizens.
185. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents further are provided in the lunchtime recorder club for pupils in Years 3 to 6. A number of pupils take advantage of the opportunity to study an instrument with a specialist teacher and several gain recognition of their talents by passing examinations.
186. In a lesson observed Year 1, pupils showed real enjoyment as they clapped, sang and marched in time to the rhythms of nursery rhymes such as 'The Grand Old Duke of York'. In Year 2 pupils worked together in groups to create a musical score, learning that symbols can represent different sounds and moods. At the end of the lesson they performed their compositions successfully. There are photographic records of pupils in Year 6 working together in groups. These pupils also used their own notation system to create and record musical sequences evoking shifting weather patterns. Discussions with pupils confirmed that they have a good understanding of improvisation, dynamics and the musical structures that they used in their performances.
187. Pupils listen to music as they enter assembly but there is limited evidence of regularly planned opportunities for them to appreciate music, particularly live music. The school recognises that this is an area for development. One planned initiative involves inviting members of the music department from Soham Village College into school in order to provide real life musical experiences for the pupils.
188. There is a policy and a planning framework that helps teachers to plan a course of instruction that covers a good proportion of the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator is keen and committed to raising standards. However, because other school priorities have rightly taken pre-eminence, the subject has not been the focus of development. The co-ordinator monitors teachers' plans but has no opportunities to monitor teaching and learning through classroom observations. In order to raise standards in the subject the school acknowledges the need to monitor teaching and learning more directly. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to identify how well pupils are developing musical knowledge and understanding and to ensure that the subject is covered in sufficient depth. The resources for music are adequate and there is a range of music from different parts of the world on compact discs to support pupils' cultural development. There is little use of computers to support teaching and learning.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

189. The standards attained by pupils by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are broadly in line with national expectations and this maintains the position found at the time of the last inspection.
190. During the inspection, lessons were seen in games and athletics, although not in every age group. Over the course of the year, pupils are provided with a balanced programme of activities which includes gymnastics, dance, athletics and outdoor adventurous activities. In the past, pupils have also been able to benefit from lessons in the school swimming pool. The recently appointed school caretaker has not yet been trained to maintain the pool and so there is currently no provision for swimming.
191. From the evidence seen, pupils' achievement throughout the school is satisfactory and most make steady progress in their acquisition of skills in games and in gymnastics. Lessons begin with a warm-up activity and teachers emphasise the importance of this.

192. In Years 1 and 2, through a series of planned lessons, pupils develop the skills of working together and being aware of each other and the space available to them. For example, during a 'parachute' game, pupils learn the importance of co-operation and the need to look ahead in order to avoid collisions. In outdoor lessons, they practise sending and receiving a ball using throwing, rolling and kicking techniques. They begin to refine their actions and learn how to complete these activities more accurately. They generally work well in pairs and avoid getting in the way of other pupils.
193. By the end of Year 6, pupils' skills and techniques are more fully developed. They learn to evaluate their skills, individually or with a partner, and they identify ways in which they could improve their performance. For example, in a lesson in Year 5, pupils worked in pairs, practising their skills in the standing long jump and standing hop. They began to appreciate the effect of swinging their arms in order to provide momentum and they observed each other to evaluate the benefit or hindrance of the leg not used during a hop. As a result they refined their action and began to improve their performance.
194. In Year 6, pupils developed their skills in sending a ball to an opponent in short tennis, first of all by throwing and then with the use of a racquet. They recognised the need for accuracy and the need to vary the strength of their throw or hit according to the position of their opponent. Pupils improved their skills and control in performing forehand and backhand strokes in tennis through a carefully structured and incremental approach during the lesson.
195. In the lessons seen, teaching was always at least satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 to 6 it was generally good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when several lessons were unsatisfactory. Teachers emphasise the need for safety, and lessons are well organised and well managed. In the more effective lessons, teachers focus on the development of skills. Pupils practise these skills but are then periodically brought together to share their work and to discuss improvements. In this way, skills are developed in appropriate steps and pupils make sound progress. Where teaching is less effective there is sometimes a lack of pace and expectations of performance are unclear.
196. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond well to the opportunities provided for them. In most lessons, they work hard and listen carefully to instructions. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in these lessons. In Year 2 and in Year 5, two pupils with specific disabilities were thoroughly involved in their lessons on throwing and catching and in developing jumping skills, and were demonstrating particular enjoyment and satisfaction.
197. The subject is managed well by two members of staff who represent each key stage but who consult each other about the subject and areas for development. The school has an appropriate range of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum, both indoors and out. There is a good-sized hall and adequate playground and field space. The school takes advantage of opportunities provided by the local district council which include links with local sports clubs. A good range of clubs is organised for pupils at the end of the school day and there are links with other schools for football, hockey and dance. The school organises productive residential visits for pupils in Year 4 and in Year 6 and opportunities are provided for outdoor adventurous activities.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

198. Pupils have maintained the standards achieved at the time of the previous inspection. They attain standards by the end of Year 2 and by the end of Year 6 that are in line with the expectations defined in the locally agreed syllabus. The achievement of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, is satisfactory in each year group. Teachers ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities and are fully included in lessons. Pupils show a positive response and develop an understanding of the customs and traditions of different faiths.

199. By the end of Year 2, pupils are familiar with the main events in the life of Christ. They explain that Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus. They discuss how Jesus was a teacher and leader and that the stories he told are in the Bible. They explain the meaning of the parable of the 'good shepherd' and relate this to how everyone is a special person. Teachers successfully reinforce this concept in assemblies and lessons. In a lesson in Year 2, the teacher shared some of her special belongings with her pupils. Following discussion, the pupils confidently described people and objects that were special to them. In Year 1, pupils learn to recognise the symbolism used in baptism and christening ceremonies. They describe the water, font, candles and special clothes used in these ceremonies. Pupils talk about the ways babies are welcomed in Sikhism and that a name is selected from a page of the writings of Guru Granth Sahib.
200. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the main events of the Christian calendar and are aware of world religions. They successfully named Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism as major world faiths and accurately described the main features of each. They demonstrated a clear understanding of Sikhism in their current studies. They recognised the main features of a Gurdwara and that this building is the heart of the Sikh community for worship and meetings. They compared their local church, St. Andrew's, with a Gurdwara. Teachers skilfully challenged pupils to consider symbolism and asked them to plan their own special meeting place. Pupils understand why societies and religions have rules. They know how to find out more about religion by using reference books, information technology, pictures and artefacts. Pupils in Year 5 explained that every Buddhist child will learn the five precepts of being generous, kind, truthful, of thinking clearly and of not harming any living thing.
201. Teaching is satisfactory across the school, as is the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers have a secure understanding of the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and plan pupils' learning using this as a basis. Good links are made with literacy and pupils are encouraged to write about their experiences and express their opinions during lessons. Teachers make effective use of resources and visits to the local church. Computers are used well to research for information about different world faiths. Visitors talk to pupils in assemblies and this helps pupils to learn how people celebrate faith. In the best lessons, teachers ensured a balance of activities to stimulate pupils' interest. In a Year 3 lesson, the teacher started the lessons by immediately gaining pupils' attention by showing a mystery box that contained something special to her. Pupils were fascinated by this and could not wait to find out what was so special to their teacher. The teacher then told the story of Mary Jones while pupils listened with their eyes closed. They were spellbound by the story and recognised the hardships that Mary experienced. They confidently discussed with a partner how Florence Nightingale, Mother Teresa and St. Francis had influenced people's lives. Throughout this lesson, pupils showed enjoyment and interest. In less successful lessons, teachers do not ensure that they have pupils' undivided attention at the start of the lesson. On occasions, the high level of noise from adjacent classrooms is a distraction and hinders pupils' learning. There are inconsistencies in teaching. This is evident in the scrutiny of pupils' previous work that shows differences in teachers' expectations. In too many classes, pupils do not take sufficient care with recording and presenting written work neatly. The amount of recorded work is below that seen in most schools. Marking is cursory and does not challenge pupils or show them how to improve their work.
202. The subject is effective in the way it promotes aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in raising awareness of different customs and beliefs. Pupils have few opportunities to visit different places of worship and there are few visits by a wider range of members from different faith communities.
203. The management of the subject is satisfactory and has been developed since the previous inspection. Teachers are provided with clear curricular guidance and their planning is monitored well. Assessment procedures have been developed to track pupils' progress. The curriculum leader has not been able to develop her role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.