

INSPECTION REPORT

BENTFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stansted

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 114978

Headteacher: Patrick Draper

Reporting inspector: John Lilly
12487

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 June 2002

Inspection number: 245194

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and junior

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rainsford Road
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Peter Deeks

Date of previous inspection: March 1998

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			The Foundation Stage	Teaching and learning
			Special educational needs	Leadership and management
			English as an additional language	
			Equal opportunities	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bentfield is a primary school of average size, with 230 girls and boys on roll between the ages of 3 and 11. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds but most come from homes that reflect the nationally average economic and social conditions. The school has the mission to be a highly inclusive school, welcoming a wide range of pupils and seeking to provide for their needs; the school receives enhanced provision for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is higher than average. Although the number of pupils with English as an additional language is small, the proportion is above the national average. Most pupils join the nursery with average attainment although the range includes very able children and also those with profound learning difficulties. A much higher than average number of pupils have joined the school other than at the Foundation Stage and more than half of these pupils had learning or behaviour problems. The school won a national Achievement Award in 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bentfield is a good school. It is also a very inclusive school with strong values and a powerful commitment to helping all pupils to learn, whatever their problems or background. Pupils throughout the school make good progress in lessons because they are well taught. Provision for personal development is very good and, consequently, pupils become more mature and behave well, relate well to other people, and have very good attitudes to their work. Leadership and management successfully create a caring, warm and welcoming environment in which to teach and learn. Standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly in line with national expectations, although better than this in English and mathematics. Standards overall across all subjects are broadly in line with the national average, although slightly below those in schools serving similar communities. This is because managers need to place greater focus on raising standards and setting challenging goals for attainment. The school is moving towards being a very effective school and has the determination to achieve this aim. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially within the last year, and the school offers sound value for money.

What the school does well

The school is a welcoming community in which pupils learn and develop well because:

- Senior management is now stronger and staff are fully committed to finding ways to help every pupil succeed.
- Teaching is good.
- Provision for personal development is very good.
- Staff ensure that pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- The school builds very effective partnership with most parents and the community, and this enriches the pupils' learning.

What could be improved

To raise standards further and provide the quality of education the school has the potential to achieve, the school needs to:

- place greater priority on the leadership and management that focuses upon raising standards;
- use assessment more effectively to set targets to achieve and to measure progress towards these goals;
- improve the accommodation so that noise from adjacent classrooms does not have a negative affect upon learning and behaviour.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998. Improvement has been good. Since that time standards in design and technology, and information and communication technology, have improved significantly and the curriculum is better planned. Leadership and management have improved significantly over the last year and subject leadership has become more effective. Even so, improvement is still needed because the school has yet to assess progress sufficiently rigorously against standards in comparable schools. Collective worship now lies at the heart of the school's life but governors have not addressed concerns about accommodation highlighted in the last report. The school supports good learning, even though pupils present greater problems. There is now good provision for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties and very good early years provision from the age of three.

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	B	B	D	D
mathematics	B	A	D	E
science	C	A	E	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Up until 2000, results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 improved at greater than the national rate, but they fell back dramatically in 2001. These results were well below the average for similar schools. Since that time standards have improved and are now above national expectations for pupils in Year 6 in English and mathematics and broadly in line in science. Attainment in Year 6 is higher than in other years because the ability of pupils is also higher. Therefore, attainment overall in the school matches national expectations but is still slightly below the average for similar schools. Results in National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001 matched the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, but were below average in science. Overall, these results were below the average for similar schools. There has been improvement since that time and attainment matches national expectations in English and mathematics and is above these standards in

science. Even so, attainment overall is still slightly below the average for comparable schools. Standards are rising throughout the school, although some weaknesses remain in writing. These results show that, in the main, girls do as well as boys, and most but not all of the more able pupils achieve the higher grades, Levels 3 and 5. Current pupils make good progress in lessons but over time progress is slightly less good. This is mainly due to insufficiently effective use of assessment to track and evaluate progress, and taking immediate action when progress slows. The school's targets tend to be predictions rather than goals that reflect high standards in similar schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very keen to come to school and have very good attitudes to their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good and bullying rare.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop very well and become balanced, confident young people. Relationships amongst pupils, and between pupils and adults are good.
Attendance	Attendance is average.

Even though a few pupils find it very difficult to control their behaviour, most pupils behave well and are very keen to join in with all the school has to offer. Pupils respect the feelings and beliefs of others and are very polite. A small number of older boys, sometimes of higher ability, have a tendency to behave in ways that make fun of others and challenge authority; staff deal with this unsatisfactory behaviour firmly. Many pupils join the nursery with low social and personal skills but, from that time, personal development in all its aspects is very good. Pupils taking holidays in term-time spoil an otherwise good rate of attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good throughout the school. It is always at least satisfactory and usually good. Teaching in more than a third of lessons observed was very good or excellent. At best, teaching is exciting, challenging and inspiring but there are lessons where learning is slow, especially for the most able pupils. Teachers as a whole are good at planning lessons and managing the classes, and there is very good teamwork between class teachers and skilled learning support assistants. The influence of teaching over time is less marked, mainly because assessment does not identify quickly enough when progress slows, and marking does not give clear enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Similarly, because assessment and target setting require improvement, work is not always well matched to the range of attainment and learning needs in each class, especially for the most able pupils. Overall, teachers do not make sufficient use of homework and this has a negative affect on progress, especially of the more able pupils. Pupils work eagerly, co-

operatively and collaboratively but tend not to find self-evaluation and planning their own improvement easy because target setting is still under-developed. Literacy and numeracy are well taught, and improved standards are beginning to raise standards in all subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and those with severe or profound learning difficulties are well taught, and pupils with English as an additional language make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and significantly enriched through activities outside lessons. Provision for core subjects tends to be better than for foundation subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision, including that for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, is good and in many aspects very good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils are well supported and make good progress in their acquisition of English and in their general work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for personal development is very good. It is very good for spiritual, moral and social development, and good for cultural development. This quality helps most pupils develop as well rounded, balanced and caring young people.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes good care for the safety and welfare of pupils. Guidance on how they can improve their achievements is still at an early stage of development because assessment is insufficiently effective and comprehensive.

The school has built a very good partnership with parents. They are kept well informed and the school seeks their views on ways to improve the school. However, there is a small group of parents who do not agree with the way, and direction in which, the school is led. The generally good partnership extends to members of the local community and both these partnerships enrich the life and work of the school. The school is unusual in providing for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. These pupils benefit considerably by being part of the school and, in turn, other pupils gain from and value their presence.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides inspiring and visionary leadership but management as a whole needs to become better at raising standards. In this area, the school has made a good start but has some way to go.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very supportive of the school and its aims, and involve themselves in the life and work of the school. They do not meet their responsibilities for the performance management of teachers in full.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has recently taken a hard and rigorous look at where it is and how it needs to improve. Even so, managers and governors do not sufficiently compare the performance of the school with standards in comparable schools.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are invested prudently but, because the school is not, as yet, sufficiently skilled at self-evaluation, there is an uncertainty as to where investment should be made next and, therefore, governors miss opportunities to gain best value.

There are enough qualified staff to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the wide range of learning needs amongst pupils. The grounds are excellent but the buildings provide too little space for children at the Foundation Stage and, elsewhere, noise travels from one classroom to another. Both these weaknesses have a negative effect on learning. Resources are of satisfactory range, quality and quantity but not yet good enough to support the highest standards.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school and behave well. • Their children are well taught and make good progress. • Their children develop well and gain strong values. • They find it easy to discuss concerns with staff. • They feel very involved with the life and work of the school. • They like the inclusive nature of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want the leadership and management of the school to improve. • They want behaviour to improve and feel bullying is too common. • They want teachers to make more effective use of homework.

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. Although leadership and management are strong as to the values of the school, they are not sufficiently effective at ensuring pupils' progress and attainment improves. Behaviour is good both within and outside classrooms, although there are rare exceptions. Bullying is rare and restricted to isolated incidents that are dealt with firmly, but co-ordination and communication between staff and between staff and parents requires improvement. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting felt that the school is improving but slowly, although they were very appreciative of how far it had already come.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

(Inspectors compare attainment against standards in each year set by the National Curriculum; a significant proportion of pupils are expected to exceed these expectations. They also compare attainment with national averages, and the averages for schools having similar pupils so that comparison is fair. The attainment of pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties is judged separately.)

1. Children join the Foundation Stage with average attainment and leave the reception year with most achieving their early learning goals and many exceeding them. By the end of Year 2, attainment meets national expectations and is average. Current Year 6 pupils attain higher than average standards in English and mathematics, and meet expectations and average standards in most other subjects. The picture varies in other years. Standards meet expectations and are average overall in Year 5, above average in Years 3 and 4, broadly average in Year 2 and slightly above average in Year 1. Four of the highest-attaining Year 2 pupils work with Year 3. Standards in Year 1 reflect the good progress made at the Foundation Stage. Overall, progress in lessons is good; over time it is also good, but slightly less so. Attainment and progress in English and mathematics tend to be higher than in other subjects in all years and this relates mainly to the way teachers match the work to each level of ability.
2. Attainment and progress in some subjects and at some times are satisfactory rather than good. This mixed picture relates in part to the different mix of pupils in each year and, in part and most significantly, to insufficient use of assessment. Similarly, classes tend to work in isolation instead of inter-connected parts of a productive and powerful teaching and learning design. As a result, there is not the rapid, smooth and comprehensive progress as pupils move up the school that the quality of class teaching suggests should be the case.
3. Following the last inspection, standards in National Curriculum tests at the ends of Years 2 and 6 rose faster than the national rate until 2000, but then declined significantly in 2001. Overall, these 2001 results at the ends of Years 2 and 6 were significantly below the average for comparable schools. Problems with staffing and the late arrival of new pupils with problems with their learning go some way to explain the decline at Year 6, but the school also needs to be better at countering such negative factors. Since 2001, standards at the end of Year 6 have improved significantly and are now above average in English and mathematics.
4. In a highly inclusive school, the mix of ability and learning needs in each class is likely to be wide and complex, and this is the case at Bentfield. For example, the average attainment of pupils in Year 6 is better than the national average. Even though learning needs are more mixed and average ability lower in Years 3 and 4, standards of attainment give some confidence that these pupils will perform as well as current Year 6 pupils, when they themselves are in Year 6. However, in Year 5 many pupils find it difficult to concentrate and behave well, and this means that the teacher needs to spend more time on class control; this detracts from the benefits of otherwise good teaching. One result of this wide range of ability and learning needs is that such a school must have very accurate assessment of each individual pupil's attainment, and must track and evaluate his or her progress continuously. This is not the case at Bentfield and, therefore, the school does not spot quickly enough when learning slows and action

needs to be taken. The school does not yet ensure that the challenge and support within teaching match precisely each pupil's learning needs.

5. Although the school's estimates for the final attainment of pupils reflect these problems, they are not goals to achieve that match standards in the most effective comparable schools. Such goals challenge a school to learn from best practice in very effective schools, and make them more aware of areas to improve. Similarly, estimates run the risk of becoming in themselves targets. The result of this balance of strengths and weaknesses is that the good progress seen in lessons is not so evident when analysing pupils' previous work completed over time.
6. Results in National Curriculum tests and assessments at the end of Year 2 in 2001 matched the national average in reading, writing, and mathematics but were below average in science. These results, overall, were below the average for comparable schools. Particularly significant were the relatively low standards of pupils' speaking and listening skills, skills that will affect all other learning. The unsatisfactory accommodation allows noise to hold back progress in these skills in particular.
7. On a more positive note, most more-able pupils achieved their potential in core subjects, although fewer did so in other subjects. Current attainment by the end of Year 2 has improved and at least matches national expectations: it is good in mathematics and physical education.
8. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were below the national average in English and mathematics and well below this standard in science. Overall, these results were well below the average for comparable schools. Since that time standards have risen, and the attainment of current Year 6 pupils is above national expectations in English and mathematics and in line in science. Attainment in all other subjects matches national expectations except for physical education where it is above.
9. The school has focused on raising standards and improving progress in literacy and numeracy. This has resulted in good improvement but has led to a lack of equal priority on standards in other subjects; consequently, standards in several subjects have remained the same as at the time of the last inspection. When the school has taken strong action, for example in design and technology and information and communication technology, standards have improved. Similarly, strong action by management has led to the appointment of a specialist music teacher who has raised standards in the performance aspects of the subject considerably. Physical education is another subject in which strong leadership and very good teaching results in very good attainment and progress. Although the school has begun to find ways for learning in one subject to support learning in another, for example extended writing in history supporting literacy, developments are not as advanced as in very effective schools. Even so, improving standards in literacy, and especially in reading, throughout the school are making a significant contribution to learning in other subjects. Similarly, high standards in numeracy mean that pupils can confidently use these skills as a natural part of problem solving in other subjects.

10. Although boys tend to make equal progress to girls, the behaviour and concentration of some boys in Years 5 and 6 hold back their progress. This is a significant reason why progress in Years 5 and 6 is not as good as in Years 3 and 4. Pupils with special educational needs make at least good progress because they are skilfully supported by learning support assistants and their progress is assessed, tracked and evaluated continually. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in their acquisition of English and their general work because their needs are addressed and their progress monitored. Pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties are very well supported and make good progress, even though each step may be very small. Above all, they gain in self-esteem and a belief that they are valued and belong.
11. The best progress is by slightly above average ability pupils because they are better at managing their own work. Very able pupils tend to make only satisfactory progress overall because they find some of the work unchallenging and overly restrictive. Most pupils of average and below average ability make good progress. When this is not the case there are two reasons. Firstly their behaviour and attitudes hinder their learning and, secondly, teachers do not spot quickly enough that they have not understood the work and do not know how to improve.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' very positive attitudes, good behaviour and awareness of the needs of others enhance their learning. Most pupils look forward to coming to school and are happy, polite and eager to talk to visitors. Standards of behaviour for the majority are good. There were four exclusions, involving just one pupil, during the last school year. Parents say that they are very pleased with the ethos promoted by the school of valuing others regardless of their ability, ethnicity or physical disability. They consider this to be a key strength of the school and inspectors agree. Most parents say that their children like school. Some parents have concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils whose poor behaviour has a negative effect on others. Although not generally the case, small groups of boys do sometimes disrupt the learning of others.
13. The large majority of pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. They are enthusiastic learners who listen and respond well, and are keen to participate. Pupils respond well to challenging questions. For example, in a science lesson on the circulatory system pupils were keen to use their new found knowledge to explore new hypotheses and investigate the subject in greater depth; they showed real joy in learning. Most pupils settle to work quickly at the beginning of lessons and concentrate well on their individual or group tasks without direct supervision. Staff give pupils many opportunities to work in pairs or small groups and pupils use this time well to discuss their work and support each other's learning. Consequently, in a geography lesson on holiday destinations, pupils learnt from each other a surprising number of facts about a variety of places. In some lessons, a few pupils become restless and lose interest, particularly in whole-class discussions when they are distracted by noise from other classes. Teachers work very closely with the numerous learning support assistants to minimise the impact of this poor behaviour on the rest of the class. Although there is a system of cards to communicate between classes about noise levels, this is not always used effectively.

14. Pupils' behaviour around the school and at lunchtimes is good. They play happily together in the playground and most are aware of the needs of those around them. Inspectors investigated parents' concerns about occasional instances of bullying in the playground. Pupils and parents spoke of these being mostly teasing and name calling, but on one or two occasions poor behaviour had involved hitting. The school is aware of these concerns and has taken strong steps to address them through further use the 'incident' book and the more recent 'gold book' system. The midday supervisors meet regularly to monitor the systems and discuss pupils' behaviour in the playground. Pupils also elect one of the supervisors to be their special friend to confide in if necessary. More detailed feedback to parents about action taken to deal with any bullying would help to increase their confidence that the school does not countenance this on any account. No instances of bullying were seen during the inspection and pupils were eager to talk to inspectors very openly and were delighted to share their experiences. They were confidently curious and asked many questions.
15. Most pupils relate well to the staff, showing respect and responding quickly to directions. Most enjoy good relationships, are very much aware of the impact of their actions on others and the importance of community and sharing. A fine example of this was the answer given by a Year 4 pupil when asked 'What is the best thing about Bentfield School?'. She replied that 'having children with profound learning difficulties in the school because we can help them and become friends with them'. The others in the group quickly nodded their agreement, showing they shared this caring approach. They show an understanding and appreciation of their different cultures and backgrounds. Racial harmony is good and pupils appreciate and value pupils with faiths and cultures different from their own. Pupils enjoy being given responsibilities and carry them out earnestly, showing initiative and responsibility. Many older pupils in the playground look after the younger ones quite naturally.
16. The pupils' good and often very good personal development starts with the very good development in the nursery and reception classes. Reflecting the very good provision throughout the school, pupils develop well as people and show increasing maturity. They gain a spiritual aspect to the way they think about their own lives and the world, and back this by clear moral standards that become part of the way they govern their own lives. They gain a strong sense of the rights and responsibilities of being a member of a community and already understand what it means to be a good citizen. They revel in creative and personal achievement and recognise value in the achievements of others. This good, and in most cases very good personal development makes a major contribution to pupils' learning and forms a strong foundation for their future lives. The school has improved on the good standards noted at the time of the last inspection.
17. Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average for similar types of school. There is no reported unauthorised absence, which is below the national average. During the week of the inspection, more pupils than usual were away because of an increase in the number of holidays taken during term time. The school is concerned about this increase and actively discourages parents from taking pupils out of school for holidays. Punctuality at the start of the school day is good for the majority, with many pupils arriving early so that they can show their work to their parents or so that the parent can talk to the teacher. This contributes to a very happy and positive start to the school day; as one parent put it, 'for the pupils it's like coming to another home'.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. Teaching is good and is a strength of the school. It has significantly improved since the last inspection. All teaching observed was at least satisfactory and most was at least good. More than a third was very good with several instances of excellent teaching. A strength of the teaching was the consistent quality throughout the school, although teaching of core subjects (English, mathematics and science) tended to be better than for other subjects. Strengths are planning, class management and very strong teamwork between class teachers and skilled learning support assistants. Teaching, overall, for physical education is very good. Areas for improvement are:
- Effective use of assessment to focus teaching and give clear feedback to pupils;
 - Better matching of the challenge in teaching to the needs of each level of ability, especially the most able.
19. Overall, there is not consistent or sufficiently full use of homework, for example setting long and short-term projects that particularly focus on the learning needs of each level of ability, and preparing pupils more precisely for the demands of secondary education. Similarly, marking does not consistently give pupils sufficient feedback on how to improve.
20. Although teaching in lessons is of good quality, the influence on pupils' progress and attainment over time is not quite as good. This is because assessment in all its forms is not as yet sufficiently developed. Insufficient use of assessment allows a situation in which teaching is not tightly linked to enabling each pupil or groups of pupils to learn rapidly but one secure step at a time, and because pupils are not sufficiently involved in setting their own targets and continuously striving to meet them.
21. Senior managers observe lessons and give feedback on how teachers can improve, but this important aspect of management has yet to become a highly effective way of raising standards, amongst other things, because it is not related to performance management that includes achieving targets for pupils' attainment. Insufficient assessment means some subject managers do not have a clear idea of standards in their subjects and, therefore, cannot take timely action to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
22. The best practice in the assessment and tracking of the progress and attainment of pupils is within provision for pupils with special educational needs, and this leads to greater teaching focus by class teachers, and relevant and effective contributions by learning support assistants and the specialist teachers. This monitoring and evaluation aspect of teaching has improved significantly due to the work of the learning development manager and co-ordinator of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Her management followed by training and guidance for staff has increased the effective teaching of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, in the main by very effective learning support assistants. This expert management also tracks the progress and attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language and it has improved the teaching of these pupils, which is at least satisfactory. Even so, the knowledge of this manager does not always transfer sufficiently to the awareness and skills of the class teachers. All the above shows how expert and systematic management improves the effectiveness of teaching, but also highlights the need for even stronger leadership so that the management becomes a more powerful force for change and improvement to some present practices. This strong leadership is needed to overcome resistance to change.

23. In the most effective lessons, the teachers set high expectations of pupils' behaviour and concentration, and back this by crystal clear and challenging targets for learning in each lesson and over time. The teaching is dynamic, exciting and inspiring, and consequently the pupils are highly involved, ready to take risks, proud of their achievements and able to learn from mistakes. In these lessons, pupils were very keen to learn collaboratively as well as co-operatively, and continuously asked themselves how they could make their work even better. The clearest example of this very high quality teaching is by the specialist music teacher. This quality was also evident elsewhere, for example in two physical education lessons, in two science lessons and in the excellent teaching section of an assembly. On all these occasions, the teachers did not set any ceilings to achievement and had high expectations of each level of ability; this allowed all pupils to meet their potential and the most able to move well ahead. The most consistently good practice throughout each day is in the nursery. This is because teachers and support assistants use assessment consistently to know what children have achieved and what they need to achieve next. These staff make a very close balance between providing rich opportunities to learn and then finding highly opportunistic ways to encourage each child to ever greater achievement and attainment. Children find this exciting and rewarding, for instance when very young children learned to complete an electrical circuit by joining wires to light a bulb and then by holding hands. The teacher did not presume they could not learn this advanced idea because they were so young. Another example was in a religious education lesson higher up the school when the teacher helped pupils to probe and investigate their feelings and emotions. This teaching took the risk of helping pupils to express their inner feelings and emerging beliefs, while ensuring the results were valued by others. This quality was also seen in 'circle time' teaching (times when pupils can share and discuss their concerns and worries), and the school is developing this effective style of provision for the personal development of pupils.
24. On the comparatively rare occasions when learning became slow and pedestrian, it was because the teaching was unchallenging and unexciting. In particular, this was because the teaching lacked clear targets to be achieved and learning objectives tended to be 'we are going to learn about' rather than 'we are going to learn how to do'. This 'same fits all' style of teaching led to the most able being bored, with consequent drop in standards of behaviour, and the less able being uncertain as to what they needed to do. Occasionally, in lessons where contributions from various subjects were planned to enrich learning in all of them, the pupils were not sufficiently guided to use each subject together rather than separately, for example using art to extend their understanding of the impact of culture in history.
25. The pupils generally show good attitudes and are keen to learn, but because the environment was noisy or hot, or because the teacher's class management became insecure, poor behaviour very occasionally caused learning to slow. In most cases the teacher acted strongly and promptly to put the learning back on course.
26. In the main, but not uniquely, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is the most effective over time. This is because the use of assessment is more effective, the lessons have clearer objectives, and the work is better matched to each level of attainment and ability. The school is finding better ways to enable work in all subjects to build these skills but managers need to implement the initiative more systematically and ensure that it becomes central to the planning of every teacher. Initiatives include for instance, extended writing in history, expressive writing in religious education, report writing in science, analysis and presentation of numerical data in geography and use of shape and measurement in design and technology. Such strategies should benefit the

school's attempts to improve the quality of writing, but need implementing with even greater coherence and consistency across classes.

27. Improvements in the teaching of information and communication technology are bringing a much increased richness and excitement to all learning, but this is mainly through central teaching in the computer suite. Teachers do not make enough use of these technologies in classrooms and opportunities to empower and enrich all learning are missed.
28. A key strength in the most effective teaching and learning is the way both teachers and pupils see learning as a whole, understanding how each area contributes to the others. This is a stronger aspect of teaching and learning in some classes than in others, and is especially good in the reception class. The day starts with a wide range of purposeful group activities led by staff and, later, the children's understanding transfers to purposeful and dynamic self-selected play outside. Without intruding into the children's responsibility to choose meaningful activities, staff work highly opportunistically to enrich the learning through perceptive and timely guidance.

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

29. The curriculum is good and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and for religious education. It builds upon very good provision at the Foundation Stage and there is well-managed transition between the nursery and reception classes and then on to more structured work in Year 1. The curriculum is broad, varied and relevant to the pupils' lives because it includes interesting topics to study. All subjects are now delivered in specifically designated lessons and teachers base their planning upon schemes of work that ensure the required skills, knowledge and understanding are taught systematically. Even so, schemes of work do not always make a strong enough link between topics to be covered and attainment to be achieved at each level of the pupils' ability. This makes assessment and, therefore, tracking and evaluation of pupils' progress difficult. As one result, there is not enough challenge for very able pupils in some lessons. Subjects are given sufficient time, but the high priority accorded to literacy and numeracy means some other subjects have only just enough. To overcome this, the school is beginning to create better linkage between subjects.
30. All pupils, whatever their personal or learning needs, have good access to the learning. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in planning and provision since the last inspection, for example for art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and, recently, music, and good improvement in mathematics. Areas for future improvement are:
 - Developing the schemes of work so that there is a clearer relationship in all subjects to National Curriculum levels of attainment;
 - Providing a more challenging curriculum for more able pupils.
31. Standards are improving because, alongside other initiatives, effective implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is achieving good results, especially in mathematics. There are appropriate arrangements for sex, drugs, health and citizenship education. Provision for personal and social education is good and a new and detailed scheme of work provides a very good basis for future improvement. This is an improvement since the last inspection when provision was satisfactory.

32. Provision for equal opportunity is very good. The school has a clear policy on providing equality of opportunity, which is one of the founding principles of the school. All pupils, including pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties, have good opportunities within the full curriculum. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. The special educational needs co-ordinator's overview of these pupils is systematic and thorough. She carefully assesses the progress of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Individual education plans are very clear about how to meet each pupil's specific needs. Well-organised and very skilled learning support assistants ensure that targets on the individual education plans are met. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
33. The curriculum makes good provision for pupils with English as an additional language. The school has identified gifted and able pupils, but specific provision needs to develop further. Pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties receive good support from the whole school community and are well integrated into all aspects of school life including physical education, music and swimming; this is inclusion in action. The well-trained learning support assistants and classroom teachers with the support of the expert guidance of the special needs co-ordinator ensure that pupils' specific needs are well met in the classroom. The co-ordinator is also learning development manager and this role has already brought greater cohesion and effectiveness to the curricular provision overall; this gives the school a strong foundation and direction for future improvement.
34. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils have opportunities to attend a wide range of clubs including chess, choir, recorder and percussion. There is a wide range of sports clubs such as, athletics, netball, football, rounders, hockey and cricket. The school participates in sports and chess tournaments successfully. Classes make trips termly and these relate to their schoolwork, for example a visit to the British Museum linked to history. On the first day of inspection two classes were on visits. Year 5 and Year 6 go on a bi-annual residential trip to the Isle of Wight. There are frequent visitors to the school such as, a 'rock' workshop for Year 3 and Year 4 to provide stimulating experiences for pupils in the field of geology. During the recent art week, a potter visited the school, as did an 'education dance group'.
35. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. As part of the science curriculum, much emphasis is placed upon the reasons for a healthy diet. In physical education, pupils are encouraged to keep their bodies healthy. The Anti-Drugs Theatre Group gave a noisy but very effective presentation about the dangers of drugs. Staff encourage pupils to take responsibility for the school community. As a result, pupils in Year 6 organise teams for the sports evening with the guidance of the physical education co-ordinator.
36. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. A local businessman provided the money to buy hockey equipment. Stansted Carnival Committee ensures that no pupil misses the residential trip because of financial concerns. The local clergy from St John's Church, the United Reformed Church and the Free Church lead assemblies. The choir visits Hargrave House Home for the elderly and the local policeman is a regular visitor. The relationship with partner institutions is very good. The curriculum forms a secure foundation for work at secondary school and there is effective communication with the main schools to which the pupils progress.

Provision for personal development

37. Provision for the personal development of pupils is very good. It is very good for spiritual, moral and social development, and good for cultural development, and this latter provision has very good features. The provision helps pupils develop as well-rounded individuals, sure of their own value and with a strong sense of responsibility towards others. This good development has a very positive effect upon the pupils' work, behaviour and learning, and many parents who have moved their children to the school report that they have not only become happier but have also made better progress. Provision has improved since the last inspection but areas for further improvement are:
- Extending the use of such strategies as 'circle time' (times when pupils share and discuss concerns) to increase the depth with which pupils grapple with complex personal issues;
 - Implementing further procedures for developing independence, for example more frequent target setting linked to personal plans for improvement and recording of achievement.
38. Provision for spiritual development is very good. The school has rectified deficiencies noted at the last inspection and assemblies now play a central part in the collective worship of the school. They fully involve the pupils and begin with powerful teaching on a religious or moral theme. In an infant assembly, the teacher told the story of Zacchaeus with great skill and the children became engrossed not only in the story but also in what it meant in their own lives. This was followed by quiet reflection that led naturally to prayer. Following a similar model, the headteacher told the story of the 'green and blue people' who hated each other, again with very great skill and power. He used probing questions to help the pupils grapple with the challenging issues raised. This was followed by a period of silent, deep and quiet reflection that again led to caring prayer. The force of these powerful and highly reflective assemblies is often reinforced through discussion in class. In a very effective religious education lesson, the teacher helped the pupils learn the power of quiet meditation and to share the deep spiritual experience the exercise allowed. This session was managed with great skill and sensitivity. These are a few examples from many opportunities for spiritual growth seen in other subjects ranging from the Foundation Stage to later study in science, art and music. Consequently, pupils are not afraid to have faith and view the world and the family of man with awe, wonder and reverence.
39. Provision for moral development is also very good. The school sets clear expectations of right and wrong, and helps pupils to see the necessity of rules and their importance. Simply set out as 'take five' rules, pupils help decide rules for public areas and their own class. They learn why things are right and wrong, and how it is difficult to do what is right; this is reinforced by sensible rewards and sanctions. This strong sense of right and wrong becomes the pupils' own values and is a component of much learning, for example in history and geography. Caring for others and including everyone in our lives is at the heart of the school's values, and pupils gain these same courageous values.
40. Provision for social development is very strong. In the main, pupils are given many opportunities to learn by playing a full part in an orderly, inclusive and purposeful community. They are encouraged to take responsibilities that demand greater and greater initiative and responsibility, and the school council is allowed to play an important part in the decision making of the school. Through outside-class activities and encouragement to take part in community activities such as a 'fun-run' with their parents, pupils learn and find pride in playing their part as young citizens. The school provides opportunity for social learning through residential trips every other year. Particularly strong are the opportunities for social development through the rich and challenging physical education curriculum; this curriculum shows all pupils how even

pupils with many learning difficulties can and do play a full part. As a result, pupils develop the skills and confidence to organise major school events and become natural 'joiners' of curricular and extra-curricular activities, alongside community activities.

41. Provision for cultural development is rich and varied. Visitors to the school introduce pupils to a wide range of cultural achievement and creativity, experiences enriched by visits and community activities. Although the creative sides are well developed in art and music, the subjects do not provide enough experience of different cultures and major creative figures in the past and world-wide. Well-planned religious education helps pupils respect and appreciate other faith cultures, and good opportunities in history and geography help pupils to understand the importance of cultural achievement in human lives in such as Ancient Egypt and modern India. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to use their own imagination and creativity through dance and performance, and to recognise and celebrate cultural achievements in their home communities. This rich provision helps pupils appreciate their own and other peoples' creativity and prepares them well for life in a multi-faith and culture society.
42. The school is developing the use of 'circle time', sometimes using outside experts, and has made a sensible start at helping pupils to set their own targets and to plan how to reach them. However, these various initiatives need bringing together, as part of a more strategic plan, and developing further. Recently developed policies for personal, social and health education provide a very good platform for future improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The care for the welfare of pupils is good. Parents value the caring, family atmosphere and the community ethos of the school. Staff know the pupils well and are concerned for their welfare. They are sensitive to pupils' needs, particularly those with medical and learning difficulties. Care is good for pupils who become ill whilst at school. Most pupils settle happily into the nursery and the reception classes. They quickly become familiar with established routines, which help them to feel secure. The induction system for those pupils joining the school at other times is flexible and well suited to the individual pupil's needs.
44. Child protection procedures follow the local authority guidelines and teachers are correctly instructed on how these operate. Health and safety procedures are good. They are thorough, follow the local authority policy and are reviewed annually. Risk assessment is carried out regularly.
45. The school cares well for pupils with special educational needs. Needs are identified early, and progress against targets is monitored thoroughly. Progress is evaluated continuously and individual education plans are adapted when required. Changes and progress are discussed with parents and ways found to move forward. The co-ordinator for special educational needs ensures that teachers, learning support assistants and parents work effectively together to support the pupils, and pupils take a good part in work towards their targets. This good support extends to pupils who have English as an additional language. If they cannot speak English when they arrive they receive effective help from outside specialists. The co-ordinator monitors and evaluates their progress, and accurately assesses their attainment in acquiring English, suggesting to teachers how they may adapt their teaching to meet the needs of the pupils. Even so, there is a need to ensure that teachers understand the learning problems these pupils may meet and how to overcome them.

46. Staff support pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties well and help them to feel full members of the school. The co-ordinator is very experienced and expert in identifying their needs and finding ways to support their physical, developmental and learning requirements. She ensures that learning support assistants are well trained and teachers well briefed, and this creates a confidence that generates a welcoming and fully inclusive ethos. Pupils value this aspect of their school, as do most parents. Very good relationships with the parents of these pupils enhance this good provision and in most cases detailed diaries on progress go between home and school daily. Parents often work closely in school with staff to support their children, treated by pupils and staff as full members of the class team. The pupils, whatever their individual needs, are given good support by all of the staff.
47. Monitoring and promotion of good behaviour are good. They are supported by an effective policy, which gives clear guidance about expectations and the strategies to be used, including those to deal with bullying. The school is considering ways to make parents more aware of the policy and procedures for dealing with poor behaviour by giving more information to parents as pupils join the school rather than the present system of making it available for those parents who ask. This would be a beneficial improvement. Senior managers follow up individual cases of poor behaviour, including rare threatening behaviour towards adults or other pupils, rigorously and implement well-considered strategies for continued improvement. This involves effective partnership with outside specialist agencies. The good level of supervision at lunchtimes promotes good behaviour in the playground and the dining hall, and supervisors encourage pupils to behave well by entering names in the 'gold book'. These are read out at weekly assemblies as a reward for those who have made a special effort. The supervisors see their role as truly educational rather than simply one of supervision, and look continually for ways to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils. They meet regularly with the manager for learning development so that their staff development needs can be met and their good ideas implemented.
48. Monitoring of attendance is good. The school follows up absences rigorously. It makes effective use of the educational welfare service to investigate problems promptly.
49. Procedures for monitoring and supporting the personal development of pupils are good. Staff know the pupils well and there are many opportunities for both formal and informal discussions between teachers and classroom assistants. This allows staff to spot problems early and act promptly when pupils need further support. Pupils are given opportunities to work collaboratively and independently but, as yet, do not receive sufficient guidance on targets to meet, and how they may reach these targets. The school provides good support for pupils about to progress to secondary school, as observed in a very effective class session to share and discuss concerns led by an outside specialist. This session also provided group support for a pupil who had just returned from a temporary exclusion from school.
50. The school's commitment to the welfare and care of pupils extends beyond the school day and parents and pupils particularly praised the after school 'Kids Club'. One parent lamented the difficulty of persuading pupils to go home because they enjoyed it so much. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Assessment

51. The last inspection raised concerns about the quality of the assessment of pupils' work and its use to inform future planning for the continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Improvement since that time has been unsatisfactory. At a governor and

senior management level, the school does analyse assessment data from National Curriculum tests and assessments but, as at the last inspection, they do not compare with sufficient rigour the school's performance with, above all, standards in comparable schools. Because of this, the school's targets become estimates rather than goals to reach. Even if such goals were to be set, weaknesses in present assessment systems mean that data is too thin to highlight where weaknesses in teaching and learning need to be rectified if the school is to reach the goals.

52. The very recently appointed deputy headteacher has begun to develop and implement with more rigour previous policy for whole school systems for gathering and recording assessment details and this provides a secure management basis for future and urgent improvement. Strong leadership is now needed to bring about changes in the practice of teachers. Standardised tests are now used throughout the school to assess the annual progress of pupils in English and mathematics, and to a lesser extent there is assessment in science. This is a beginning, but there are no full-school assessment systems in other subjects. As at the last inspection, while there is evidence of good practice in some classes, overall, teachers' effective use of assessment and recording of pupils' attainment varies from the minimal to the satisfactory in both quality and quantity.
53. Insufficient use is made of assessment data to provide teaching with targets to meet for each class, each ability groups and each individual pupil. Similarly, although a start has been made in English, the school has considerable work to do to create systems to track, record and evaluate pupils' progress and attainment, and then transfer what this tells teachers into targets for individual pupils that the pupils can play a part in meeting, continuously. Overall, this means full school improvement planning becomes ineffective because there are not the improvement tools available to make aims move to the class and individual level. Pupils have personal targets in English and some general targets. The extent to which assessment information is used, however, to focus the learning objectives for each lesson and level of ability within the class varies widely between the difficult to identify to the beginnings of greater precision. There is a need to ensure that subject co-ordinators have a true knowledge of the standards to meet and standards attained in their subjects so that they can take timely action to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Performance data is still not consistently analysed to identify clear indications of trends and patterns that would impact on future planning.
54. The weaknesses in the collection, recording and interpretation of assessment data mean that feedback to pupils is too often imprecise and too general. For example, marking rarely tells pupils where and why they have succeeded and what they need to learn next. In very effective schools, teachers agree targets with pupils and guide them how to plan to meet them, and then self-evaluate their own progress and record their achievements. This best practice provides a quality benchmark against which to evaluate Bentfield's present practice.
55. The very good practice in the support of pupils with special educational needs provides a very good example to follow. The co-ordinator, working with class teachers, ensures that pupils' learning needs are assessed and diagnosed. This then transfers into very clear individual education plans that guide the pupils, their teachers and their learning support assistants, and that involve close partnership with parents. In turn, the understanding this brings has generated focused training for staff. Regular review means progress is tracked, recorded and evaluated, and the plans are up-dated immediately that this is necessary. The school goes even further in the support of pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties. Daily records of the pupils learning

goes home each day, so that home and school work in partnership in helping the pupils learn and develop.

56. The school is focusing on improvement in the effectiveness of plenary sessions at the ends of lessons but improvement across classes and subjects is not consistent. As a first step towards improving progress and raising attainment, it is at this stage in all lessons that provision needs to improve, namely, assessment of progress made and identification of areas that still need to be addressed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The strong and effective partnership between home and school is of direct benefit to pupils' learning. Most parents responded positively both to the pre-inspection questionnaire and also at the parents' meeting; they value many aspects of the school. Nearly all of those who responded to the questionnaire believe that teaching is good and that children like school, make good progress and are expected to work hard. They feel that the happiness of the children underpins their learning. They like the strong focus on a sense of community and particularly appreciate the openness and friendliness of the staff, valuing the fact that staff are very approachable. Some parents expressed concerns about homework, behaviour in school and management. Inspectors agree that teachers need to make more effective and consistent use of homework. They find that, except for isolated incidents, pupils behave well. Although effective overall, there are areas in leadership and management that require improvement.
58. The school genuinely practises its open-door policy. Parents are welcomed into the school each morning and encouraged to visit whenever they want to. The administrative staff play their part in maintaining this welcoming approach. In turn, parents feel that the school works closely with them and encourages their involvement. Most classes have regular volunteer helpers. Inspectors saw this help making a very valuable contribution in several lessons throughout the school. Other parents help when they can and there is good support at assemblies, parents' evenings, for school trips and for events organised by the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).
59. The PTA makes a considerable contribution to the work of the school and this is very much appreciated. It has a highly motivated committee that takes on new members each year to inject vitality and variety. The committee is very imaginative in inventing new ways to raise money, entertain the pupils and enrich their learning experience. The huge success of the PTA can be measured not only in the £6-7000 raised each year that directly benefits the pupils but also in the pupils' enthusiasm for the events. These are too numerous to list but the fairs held in May and at Christmas and the latest initiative started last year, the new 'Music in the Park' community event, very successfully brought together not only members of the school but a large number of the local community. This last event is sponsored by local and national businesses and held in the grounds of the school. The school enjoys a very special relationship with a home for the elderly, adjacent to the school's grounds. During the inspection, an art class used this relationship, taking the opportunity to sketch a variety of architectural features of the home's magnificent building; the residents and staff were very welcoming and encouraging. The school choir also visits to entertain the residents.
60. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. The prospectus and governors' annual reports are detailed and informative. Annual reports have improved since the last inspection; they comply with statutory requirements and are now very good. They are specific to each pupil and show what they know, what they can do and how they can improve. The school sends out informative newsletters shortly after the

beginning of each term. These contain brief outlines of the curriculum to be followed for each year group and parents particularly praised the quality of information in Year 1, which make the topics sound great fun. Arrangements for consultation with parents are effective. They are arranged at different times to enable as many parents as possible to attend.

61. The school has a homework policy, which details the requirements for each year. At present this is not shared with parents unless they ask to see it and parents are unsure of what their children are supposed to do. This has led to confusion and a significant number of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the homework their children are asked to do. Homework given is not always consistent with the policy and this inconsistency needs to be addressed. Parents of Year 6 pupils feel that their children are insufficiently prepared for the rigours of regular homework at secondary school and this is a concern raised by pupils. Inspectors agree there is need for improvement in the use of homework. Most parents give good support for their children's work at home and some would like the opportunity to do more.
62. The school has impressive links with the local community and a number of representatives attended a 'community tea' to meet with inspectors during the inspection week; they showed their strong support and esteem for the school. Often, it is parents that have opened the door to the school's community partnership.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. Leadership very strongly promotes the inclusive ethos of the school and this creates a very secure environment in which all pupils gain in self-esteem and take pride in their achievements. The style of leadership that focuses on raising standards is, however, not strong enough; management ensures that the school runs smoothly but is not, as yet, sufficiently skilled at raising standards. These weaknesses and strengths were noted at the time of the last inspection but significant improvement has only occurred within the last year and needs to develop further. There is now a stronger determination to bring improvement and the school has the skills amongst staff to achieve that improvement. Even so, the school needs more expert advice on how to achieve their intentions and so improve in the following areas:
 - The role of performance management for teachers to raise pupils' attainment;
 - Leadership and management that focuses on raising standards of attainment;
 - Improvement planning that makes raising standards a high priority;
 - Staff development that focuses upon improving pupils' progress;
 - Investment and allocation of resources that are tightly related to achievement of high standards.
64. The school commits itself to being fully inclusive, welcoming and meeting the needs of all pupils, whatever their individual developmental and learning requirements. The strong leadership of the headteacher inspires others to accept the challenge of this commitment and, consequently, everyone working within or with the school shares a determination to meet the very challenging aims and values this commitment entails.
65. The headteacher's personal and professional leadership is through personal example, such as taking deeply reflective and challenging assemblies, very good classroom teaching, and carefully thought-through procedures for the personal development of pupils and behaviour management. The governors and headteacher have taken care to appoint experienced staff to support their vision, for example the deputy headteacher, the manager for learning development and the co-ordinator of the Foundation Stage.

These appointments have strengthened the management of the school considerably. These staff have helped colleagues design well-considered policies, for example for assessment and making training more focused for learning support assistants. There are now very good policies for the personal, social and health education of the pupils. However, some of these improvements are still fresh on the ground and need to develop further, so that they underpin everything the school does and are embedded in everyone's practice. The senior management team has become more effective at leading the school forward and managing in ways that help everyone to work to a common purpose and in similar ways, sharing good ideas and problems with others, but there is still much to do. A few staff are resistant to change and this holds back the school as a whole, and the senior staff need to provide even stronger leadership to ensure that necessary change occurs. Key examples are the introduction of more rigorous and systematic assessment procedures, and a clearer focus on pupils' progress and attainment.

66. The school held a 'vision day' earlier this year when the staff, along with pupils, parents and governors, effectively identified where the school was and what still needed to be done. This day and the carefully written-up results provide a very clear picture of the strengths of the school as well as the weaknesses. A key weakness identified was that, although relationships between staff were warm and caring, communication amongst staff and between senior management and other staff was not as secure as people thought it was and needed improvement. The deputy headteacher works hard alongside her senior management colleagues to address the need for better communication, but senior management as a whole realise there is some way to go. For example, many subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently clear as to the school improvement plan and their role in its success.
67. Subjects are competently managed, and staff know what they need to teach and when and why. However, some of these managers do not have a clear view of standards because assessment procedures are not sufficiently developed and, overall, they do not have enough opportunity to monitor and evaluate standards in classrooms. This means they are unable to provide the powerful leadership that their subjects require, and then work alongside colleagues to bring about improvement.
68. The school improvement plan is extremely comprehensive and illuminates the work of governors and senior management. Even so, its very complexity leads to a confused view of the way forward and lacks a rigorous focus on raising standards. It tends to concentrate on improving the environment for learning and misses the equally important need to improve the progress of pupils and raise their attainment. The school's documentation says that planning is 'SMART' but some senior managers were unclear as to what this means in detail.
69. Governors are very supportive and work in a businesslike way. In the main, they meet their statutory responsibilities. They have a clear but general understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but recognise they are not always confident that they can see a strategic way to create a school that meets their vision. This has several reasons. Firstly, they do not as yet monitor and evaluate standards sufficiently systematically, and this leads to them missing, for example, that performance management of teachers does not meet statutory requirements in full. Secondly, in evaluating the performance of the school they do not compare with sufficient rigour present performance with performance in comparable schools. Thirdly, and this is something they recognise and have begun to address, the governing body needs more guidance from experts with their planning and decision-making.

70. Many of these weaknesses were reported by the last inspection and the action plan that inspection brought about addressed key elements. However, the most improvement has only been within the last year. This slow initial improvement made the school very vulnerable to additional pressures such as difficulties in recruiting staff and the increase in the number of pupils presenting problems. One consequence was the results in national tests at the ends of Years 2 and 6 in 2001, results that were below and well below standards in comparable schools. Improvements in leadership and management within the last year have brought immediate improvements in standards. Attainment of current pupils throughout the school now matches national expectations but still remains overall below the average for comparable schools. Improvements in provision for personal development and behaviour management mean that the school is more skilled at ensuring that all pupils make good progress.

71. Improvement in leadership and management over the four years since the last inspection has been satisfactory and in the last year good. This results in a situation that the school has built its capacity for future improvement, and has a clearer idea as to what needs to be done to maintain rapid improvement.

Accommodation

72. The buildings are of novel design and create a strong sense of community and cohesion. New rooms equipped for pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties benefit these pupils and, through good management, also benefit all pupils. Overall, management ensures that the school makes good use of what the buildings have to offer. Even so, the 'quiet rooms' adjacent to many classrooms are at a higher level and do not allow supervision by sight; this limits their usefulness. Similarly, use of other areas for highly focused class-work involves movement around the school that potentially wastes time and may disrupt others. This requires very close management to ensure that use gains maximum benefits with minimal disruption. Inspectors did observe instances when use by one class disrupted the work of another, for example use of a space to see a video overshoot with one class and this inconvenienced another. The accommodation is kept in good order and sparkling clean by a very committed site management team.
73. The design of the buildings, however, has a further serious flaw. Classrooms are in open-plan pairs, and this allows noise from one classroom to travel to the other. This noise causes a significant loss in pupils' concentration and a subsequent decline in standards of behaviour. These negative effects outweigh the advantages to the open-plan design. The last inspection noted these weaknesses but they have not been effectively rectified and were replicated in the design of recent extensions to the building. To a lesser extent, the design of rooms for the Foundation Stage allows too small a space for class learning, while providing too great a space for such as storerooms. This has a negative effect on learning and provision.
74. The school grounds are excellent and have been skilfully developed to provide many opportunities for learning. Particularly good are the areas for outside learning for the Foundation Stage. Staff make very good use of what the grounds have to offer.

Staffing

75. Following a period of instability and difficulties in recruiting staff, governors and senior management have created a strong and stable staff with a wide range of relevant expertise. The many learning support assistants and mid-day supervisors work in close collaboration with class teachers, and the manager for learning development provides very good leadership and management for this team, including relevant guidance and training.
76. The senior management has made a wide range of training available to staff and staff use these opportunities well. This training, however, is not tightly related to the school improvement plan. The school does not have an annual staff development plan and systematic ways to evaluate the benefits to pupils that training should bring. There are procedures for staff to pass on what they learn on courses to colleagues but, as yet, they are not sufficiently secure.
77. There are performance management procedures for teachers, and sensible delegation for carrying out these staff development procedures. However, teachers' personal development plans do not include targets for pupils' attainment to be achieved and this contravenes statutory requirements. This hinders the school's attempts to balance plans to improve the environment for personal development and learning with an equally important focus on raising standards of attainment.

Resources for learning

78. Overall, resources for learning are of satisfactory range, quality and quantity, but they are not good enough to provide a powerful tool for addressing the many learning and development needs of the pupils. There is a need to audit resources as a whole and decide where investment is necessary. An example of this was apparent in a lesson when the teacher told the pupils that it would have been better to have artefacts to enrich the learning but they were not available. Similarly, many resource sheets are photocopied and this misses the opportunity to bring the colour and richness that books and high quality photographs can bring to the learning. An example of how better resources can improve progress and raise attainment significantly is the recent introduction of the high quality computer suite.
79. The library has recently moved to the demountable classroom and has not yet been made into a powerful resource for learning. Placing the library in this classroom might remove this essential resource away from the centre of the school and make access difficult in inclement weather. The school recognises these potential problems and is addressing them.

Efficiency

80. Governors ensure that finance is used prudently and that a sensible balance is maintained at the end of each year. They relate their investment to the school improvement plan and consider the need for longer-term investment. Even so, the budget does not ensure that priorities are clear and well focused because governors' awareness of strengths and weaknesses is general rather than precise. Governors check expenditure against budget frequently and the administration of the school makes certain that expenditure is well accounted. To increase efficiency, the school makes sound use of information technology. The school office has an air of calm efficiency and makes certain things run smoothly while also working hard and perceptively to have productive relationships with people, such as parents, who visit or telephone the school. The school office also has oversight of the school medical room.
81. Governors and senior management, consider reflectively how they can get best value for money. Even so, they realise they do not always gain enough guidance from outside experts or compare the school's performance and practices with best practice elsewhere with sufficient rigour or system so as to see ways to gain best value. The school does challenge present ideas but some members of staff are resistant to necessary change; consequently, changes intended are not carried through consistently. Monies received for set purposes, for example special educational needs, are spent correctly and the school searches out best quality at lowest cost. Balancing the good progress and development of pupils against the above average revenue the school receives for each pupil, the school offers satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

82. The school's has earned a well-founded reputation for helping pupils with problems and this has encouraged a significant number of additional pupils to join the school, many of whom have special educational needs. The school, however, also has many average, able and very able pupils and they achieve at least satisfactory standards. The school has accepted the mission to be a flagship of excellent inclusive practice and to achieve this mission the quality of provision needs to be not just good but very good. Blown off-course by staff recruitment problems and the change in the mix of pupils, standards dropped significantly in 2001, but have now begun to improve. The staff have been strengthened and, alongside the very strong values of the school, this gives Bentfield the potential to become a very good school indeed. Even so, to achieve this vision there is much still to do.
83. To raise standards of attainment to levels that compare well with similar schools, governors and staff should:
- (1) Increase the focus of leadership and management on raising standards by:
 - ensuring that performance management for teachers includes attainment targets for pupils;
(Paragraph 77 and elsewhere)
 - ensuring that senior management provides stronger leadership and policies that focus on high standards of attainment;
(Paragraphs 66 –69)
 - ensuring that plans for improvement focus on actions that will raise standards;
(Paragraph 68)
 - ensuring that staff development is planned in ways that focus on gaining the skills to achieve standards that are better than the average for similar schools;
(Paragraphs 76 and 77)
 - ensuring that investment and allocation of resources are tightly related to achievement of high standards.
(Paragraphs 80 and 81)
 - (2) Improve and extend the use of assessment to set targets to achieve and to measure progress towards these goals by:
 - ensuring that assessment in all subjects provides accurate measurement against National Curriculum attainment targets and tracks each pupil's progress against these targets;
(Paragraph 51 – 56)
 - using this assessment data to set continually more challenging targets for pupils;
(Paragraphs 51 – 56)
 - ensuring that pupils get continuous guidance on why they succeed, why they meet problems and what they need to learn next to improve;
(Paragraphs 51 – 56)
 - improving guidance for pupils so that they can evaluate their own work against these targets more continuously and take a greater part in deciding their own targets and plans for improvement.
(Paragraphs 51 – 56)
 - (3) Improve the environment for learning by:

- finding ways to stop noise from one classroom disrupting learning and teaching in adjacent classrooms.
(Paragraphs 72 and 73)

Whilst addressing the above areas for improvement, governors and staff should also:

- (1) Audit and improve learning resources to ensure that they match the needs of all pupils.
(Paragraphs 78 and 79)
- (2) Ensure that teachers plan in ways that allow information and communication technology to enrich further the classroom learning.
(Paragraph 27)
- (3) Ensure that teachers make consistently effective use of homework.
(Paragraph 19)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	24

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	19	24	9	0	0	0
Percentage	4	35	44	17	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. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents almost two percentage points.

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)	16	198
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	16

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	2	38

(These include 8 pupils with severe or profound learning difficulties)

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.6

School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	11	11	22

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (81)	86 (88)	86 (92)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	9	9	9
	Total	19	19	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	86 (81)	86 (92)	86 (92)
	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)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	13	8	21

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	8	10
	Girls	5	5	6
	Total	15	13	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (79)	62 (84)	76 (100)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	9
	Girls	5	5	5
	Total	13	13	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (89)	62 (84)	67 (100)
	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	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	160
Any other minority ethnic group	3

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.2
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	377

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	50
Number of pupils per FTE adult	10.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2

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	4	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. The four exclusions involved a single pupil.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	629223
Total expenditure	618013
Expenditure per pupil	3287
Balance brought forward from previous year	43086
Balance carried forward to next year	542296

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	230
Number of questionnaires returned	97

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	38	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	47	6	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	53	16	10	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	55	16	3	0
The teaching is good.	48	49	1	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	49	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	7	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	40	53	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	43	46	9	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	37	44	11	6	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	53	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	34	5	0	12

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

(The Foundation Stage covers six areas of learning. To prepare for work within the National Curriculum, children are expected to progress through three steps and achieve early learning goals (ELGs) in each area of this learning. Guidance for this stage expects learning to be a balance between focused work in groups and structured play with a purpose.)

84. Provision for 'early years' learning at the Foundation Stage is very good and much improved and extended since the last inspection. Just before their fifth birthday, most but not all children progress from the nursery to the reception class, but some children join the school at the reception year. Teaching and learning as a whole are good and the children learn within a rich, balanced, broad and relevant curricular provision. Most children join the nursery aged three with broadly average attainment, although physical development is higher than average, and personal and social development is below levels expected at that age. They join the nursery as confident speakers, but the expressive language that helps children think through and solve problems is not well developed. Within this broad picture there is a very wide range of ability with some children of very high ability and also children with profound learning difficulties. Most children leave the nursery for the reception class well on their way to reaching their 'early learning goals' and a few have already reached them in some areas. By the time children leave the reception class most have achieved these goals and many exceed them. The provision sets out to be fully inclusive, and largely succeeds.
85. The outside accommodation is excellent. It provides extensive space in which children can learn, and has been very well and expertly developed to provide very good opportunities for imaginative play, physical activity and growing plants to study, care for and learn about. There are separate areas for nursery and reception children, with easy and immediate access from classrooms. The equipment, including toys for large-scale play and playhouses is very good in range and quality. The indoor classrooms are well furnished, equipped and organised, and provide many opportunities to stimulate and encourage learning. They are, however, too small, and this hinders teachers' ability to set out discrete areas for different types of learning, for example areas for quiet reading or listening to tapes and places for children to role play. This is particularly the case in the reception classroom as there are larger numbers of children.
86. Planning is detailed and comprehensive, yet simply arranged so that it can give immediate guidance to staff. Assessment is used very effectively to guide teaching and evaluate learning, especially in the nursery. There is a slight difference in the priority given to assessment between the nursery and the reception class. In the nursery there is a close balance between helping children to become happy and confident learners, and the need to help children learn quickly and reach their full potential, while in reception there is a slight imbalance towards the personal development aspects. To ensure that assessment guides both teaching and learning more securely, the senior manager has just obtained a national framework for assessing attainment and tracking progress, and intends to implement its use for next year.
87. The provision is well led and managed by a very expert lead teacher who has specific responsibility for the reception class. She has recently joined the senior management of the school, evidence of the importance the school places upon early years provision as the foundation for all that follows. She has produced clear and useful policy, and

ensures that the curriculum is suitably broad and that teaching helps children progress one step at a time in all the required areas of learning. She is very ably supported by the teacher of the nursery class, where children attend part-time, with morning and afternoon sessions. These teachers have different strengths and together make a very strong team. They work as a very close-knit team with skilled nursery nurses and learning support assistants. These colleagues provide very effective general support and very skilled support for children with profound learning difficulties. The management ensures that tasks are shared and delegated in ways that meet the needs of the children precisely and that use the strengths and enthusiasms of each member of the teaching team. Training for staff is a significant part of this effective management. There is a very effective partnership between home and school, with excellent communication between the two. Provision has improved and significantly extended since the last inspection.

Personal, social and emotional development

88. Provision is very good and teaching very effective. Hence, even though most children join the Foundation Stage with lower than average personal skills, they make good progress. Initially, they find it difficult to concentrate on a task and tend to wander from activity to activity. They are unused to routines and rules, and find it difficult to share and take turns. They soon learn these skills in the nursery class and, by the time they leave the reception class, most have achieved their early learning goals and many exceed them. During their time in the nursery and reception classes, they increase in their ability to stick at an activity, co-operate and collaborate with others and deal with problems without frustration. They become confident of their own value and identity and, therefore, learn to value others. This good progress is because staff ensure that the work is orderly and full of purpose. There is a very good balance between working as a group and freer play. At the heart of this provision are snack times. These are warmly but firmly managed, yet give children excellent opportunities to learn and gain the ability to work as a group, share and take turns. Similarly, very effective sessions outside give children the ability to choose activities for themselves, while staff powerfully but not intrusively, support and guide these activities. In this way, children become keen, happy and confident learners. Perhaps the clearest example of this good learning was observed in a gymnastic session in the hall. With clear guidance from the teacher, children confidently attempted very challenging activities but did not allow their excitement to carry them away. They, in most cases, remained very conscious of their own and other children's safety and need for space, and took turns willingly. Responsibility for taking care of the health and safety of themselves and others is frequently reinforced, for example wearing hats when it is sunny outside. Underpinning all this provision are staff's high and clear expectations of right and wrong, and children learn the difference and understand the reasons why.

Communication, language and literacy

89. Provision is very good and teaching very effective. Therefore, children make good progress, building on their simple understanding of the meaning of books and writing, and rectifying their less developed ability to listen for meaning and use talking to think through problems. By the time they leave the nursery, they enjoy and value books, see their purpose, can follow a story and have learned that text has meaning. Most know the sounds of many letters and a few can use this knowledge to read simple words. All can recognise their written names. Reading is taught well and plays a focused part in each session, with the sound of letters being reinforced in every activity. This very good provision continues in the reception class and, consequently, almost all children achieve their early learning goals and most exceed them, able to read many words: a few can read simple texts. Their attainment is above average by the time they progress to Year 1.
90. The secure management of both focused and structured play sessions means that staff are continually developing children's speaking and listening skills and by the time they leave the reception class most have exceeded their early learning goals. This was very evident in a reception physical education lesson, when children listened carefully to the teacher's complex instructions, and carried out their chosen activities in ways that showed they understood what they had heard. At the end of the lesson, many confidently explained to others what they had achieved, asking relevant questions to increase their understanding. Most children have average attainment, and some above average speaking and listening skills by the time they progress to Year 1.
91. Children join the nursery class with average ability to manipulate pencils with control and this skill is developed by systematic teaching that allows good opportunities to learn how to form letters and numbers correctly. By the time the children leave the nursery, most can at least write their name and many can use simple writing to record their observations, for example their observations of living things. By the time children leave the reception class most have exceeded their early learning goals and can form letters and numbers correctly, and many can use these skills to form words and in some cases simple sentences.

Mathematical development

92. Provision is very good and teaching effective. Children join the school with average attainment. Both classrooms provide a number-rich environment. Almost every display carries some information about number and almost every interaction between a child and an adult contains reference to mathematical ideas and number. In both classes, there are focused activities and sessions to develop these skills further. By the time most children leave the nursery they can count to at least ten and understand that numbers run in sequence. When they join the nursery their numeracy attainment is slightly above average, and this builds quickly and further through activities using sand, water, shapes and practical activities such as cooking. These well-planned activities continue in the reception class, developing very effectively the children's understanding of larger and smaller, longer and shorter and the way shapes relate, and then the idea of take-away and add. Particular good is the way teachers develop the children's understanding of the function and importance of number; they do this by being very opportunistic in helping children to solve simple practical problems such as deciding how many children are away. This learning is further developed through group activities making models using construction sets, and putting objects into categories and then deciding for themselves which is the larger group and why. By the time children leave

the nursery class almost all reach their early learning goals, and by the time they leave the reception class, most children will have exceeded them and a few will have exceeded them by a considerable margin.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

93. Provision is very good and teaching very effective. Most children join the nursery with an average knowledge and understanding of the world, and have a wider than average vocabulary. On this good foundation, staff provide powerful opportunities to extend the children's knowledge and skills. At the time of the inspection, the nursery class were studying mini-beasts and were involved with play in a 'laboratory'. They learned how to observe carefully, record their results in pictures accurately, and consider with good understanding how caterpillars became butterflies. The nursery is full of living things including plants, ants, worms and caterpillars becoming 'cocoons'. This allows children to develop their observation, recording, and hypothesising skills well, alongside their understanding of why living things need care, for example growing plants in the outside area and providing ants, worms and caterpillars the food and right environment to live.
94. Teachers provide many opportunities for children to use commercial construction toys and 'junk' materials to construct things with a purpose. They learn to cut and join skilfully, thinking hard about how what they make can be improved. They begin to learn the sequence of time securely and the concepts of a little and a long time ago, by story and talking about events in their own lives. Similarly, animated talk between adults and children builds a good understanding of difference, at first between home and school, and then other areas that draw on the children's own experience. As yet, although there are computers and children use them with confidence, this aspect of learning needs improvement. By the time children leave the reception class, almost all will have achieved their early learning goals, and most are on course to exceed them, and some by a wide margin. For example, when discussing why you needed to take off the side shoots of a tomato plant, an able child in the reception class suggested this was because they 'choked off the food' coming up from the roots if they remained.

Physical development

95. Provision is very good and teaching highly effective. Hence, building upon a foundation that they join the nursery with above average attainment in both the control of their bodies and in their dexterity, children make rapid progress throughout the nursery and reception years. By the time children leave the reception class, all except the children with severe or profound learning difficulties are on course to achieve their early learning goals and almost all to exceed them by a fair margin. A few children are already attaining at a very high level, for example a girl who performed a 'star jump' off a high trestle, landing in a balanced and secure way. They learn by being given many opportunities to control small tools and such as pens and paintbrushes. All staff ensure that the children know that they are expected to use tools and pencils accurately and with great care, and children do so. This was observed in focused writing groups, model-making using straws and joining pieces, and the results were very evident in displays of previous work, for example collages using small pieces and the children's emerging writing. This very good provision extends from the inside to the outside accommodation, with children given many opportunities to develop their dexterity through sand and water play, and the careful care for plants.
96. Similarly, staff develop the children's ability to control their bodies very well. Outside areas provide plenty of space and children learn to ride tricycles with perceptive and skilled control. There is room to move around rapidly but in a controlled manner.

Teachers make very good use of the gymnastic equipment in the hall. Children in the reception class show considerable physical confidence and skill. They move sideways with skill, finding ways to improve, and then to turn, stop, and move quickly or slowly. They show very good balance on equipment and the ability to jump off low and high trestles. They control their swinging movements on the climbing bars and parallel bars, clearly designing new and better movements, and swing on ropes with control and good consciousness of the needs of others.

Creative development

97. Provision is good and teaching effective. Hence, although children join the nursery with average attainment, most join the reception class with slightly above their early learning goals, and children in the reception class are on course to significantly exceed these goals. Even so, it is in this area of learning that the cramped inside accommodation has the most negative effect because the areas of provision, although well organised and managed, are too small to allow children sufficient freedom to expand their learning. Staff provide a wide range of opportunities for children to paint, to make collages, to learn to use colour and to investigate many media and materials. Previous work on display, for example collage and painted flowers, shows that the children gain a joy in creativity and considerable skill in observing, and representing and expressing their ideas and feelings creatively. They sing with enthusiasm and enjoy making music with simple instruments. Overall, the accommodation creates a rich and stimulating environment for creative development but insufficient space for practical and imaginative learning through play.
98. Other teaching and provision provides good opportunities for children to use their imagination. At some times this is through story and at others through free role play, often using the playhouses, toys, dressing up clothes and play areas such as the 'laboratory'. Children show that they can use their imagination to become part of the activity, as when boys in the reception area outside played at being policemen. This good learning helped them understand the roles played by others and their own feelings and those of others. A particularly good example of the innovative provision was the 'cocoon' in the nursery into which children could crawl, investigating the experience of being 'cocooned'.

ENGLISH

99. The provision for pupils' learning in English is good. Across different skills, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 matches the expected range of standards. These pupils did not have the benefit of current provision at the Foundation Stage. Reading is strong and writing weaker. By the end of the current Year 6, standards are above average, covering an unusually wide spread of attainment. Pupils learn well and make good progress because teaching is good and because a high proportion of learning time is devoted to the subject, particularly to reading. Leadership is satisfactory and management secure. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced and embedded into teachers' practice. A good degree of flexibility matches this approach to pupils' wider needs, for example for creative writing. Many cross-curricular links, for instance between written work and history studies, create useful connections with other areas of pupils' studies. The school recognises that this development needs extending and making more consistently secure in teachers' planning. Learning support assistants give a good level of support to pupils individually and in groups to help learning, especially of abler and less able pupils. Improvement since the time of the most recent inspection report has been satisfactory. Areas to improve are:

- Pupils' writing, particularly the consistent use of even, joined script in non-handwriting exercises;
 - More helpful marking of written work, which identifies the next steps for improvement;
 - Finer, more detailed target-setting which identifies exactly what pupils have to do to achieve agreed goals; for example sub-levels of the National Curriculum.
100. Pupils' attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2 over recent years showed a rising trend until 2001 when results fell from above average in 2000, to average compared with the national attainment. Pupils did less well in reading and writing tests than those in similar schools, and speaking and listening were also weak overall. National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 reflected a similar picture. Attainment in English had been above average and then fell to below average in 2001 compared with all schools nationally. Pupils did much less well than would have been expected, given their prior attainment when they were seven. They also performed significantly less well than pupils in comparable schools. Results in Year 6 were affected by staffing issues and pupils with low attainment joining the school in that year. Broadly similar patterns can be seen in both mathematics and science attainment in the Year 2 and Year 6 tests in 2001.
101. Pupils' current attainment by the end of Year 2 is in line with the range expected of that age group. The distribution of lower, middle and higher-attaining pupils is average. Pupils' reading is strong because a lot of time is provided for this aspect of English, particularly in the 'Drop Everything And Read' (DEAR) sessions during each day. Teachers provide younger pupils with a well-structured reading programme, which helps them to understand text through the development of phonic and other reading techniques.
102. Pupils' creative writing was well developed in Year 1, where pupils were inventing poems about sea creatures using similar-sounding initial sounds for their chosen animals and fish. The teaching of handwriting and subsequent practice ensures that pupils learn joined script at an appropriate time and handwriting books show that most pupils can apply these skills. By Year 2, though, not all pupils who could apply these joined script techniques regularly in other than handwriting lessons. Middle-attaining pupils, especially boys, in a Year 2 literacy lesson for example, were not using good script in written work about synonyms and words showing degrees of meaning. The next day, their writing was much better. This demonstrates the inconsistencies observed in pupils' writing across time in the analysis of previous work, both in English and also in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils and teachers need to place greater emphasis on developing consistently good, fluent, even script at an early stage, because the result of their using poorer script prevents pupils getting their thoughts and ideas down on paper fast enough. It also hinders pupils' progress in reaching the standards in the content of their writing of which most are capable. Currently, only very high attaining pupils' work shows this consistency.
103. Pupils' speaking and listening are now good by Year 2 and this is an improvement since last year. In the literacy lesson seen, a very good plenary session provided pupils with many opportunities to suggest ideas about the story of a 'Silkie', an imaginary sea creature from a series of myths they had been studying. Their ideas were very imaginative and others listened respectfully to those who offered their thoughts and feelings to the discussion. The range of pupils' vocabulary is as should be expected for their ages and abilities, and pupils confidently express their thoughts aloud. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in their learning of the basic skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing of English. Pupils with English as an additional language make good

progress in their acquisition of English and quickly gain full access to the learning. Pupils with special educational need benefit from good assistance and support from classroom assistants who are used effectively to help these pupils and others to learn. Pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties are very well supported with various and expert initiatives to help them communicate with others, for example the use of pictorial symbols. The school is also developing the use of sign language.

104. By the end of the current Year 6, attainment is above expectations. The range of attainment in this cohort is unusually wide, with very low and very high attaining pupils in the class. A group of pupils, predominantly girls, is working at a level much higher than average in most aspects of English, again with reading as their strongest area. About a third of the class is above average in reading and these pupils read with very good expressiveness and pronunciation. They read widely and independently and their comprehension is also very good. Most Year 6 higher and middle-attaining pupils can speculate, predict and discuss plot, character and atmosphere in books they have chosen. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from the planning of different work for them across all skills and from the continued good support of learning support assistants.
105. Pupils' writing is average by the end of Year 6. As with the younger years, the technicalities of their writing in script formation are often not as good as the content. Pupils do not always, or consistently, get their good ideas on paper in a legible, neat way that does justice to their thoughts. Too many middle-attaining pupils are slower in writing than they should be. They need to make their writing more fluent to keep pace more effectively with their ideas.
106. Pupils currently in Year 6 did much less well than average in reading when they were seven, so their progress in this skill has been good. They were average in writing, though, and have not achieved as well in this area during the intervening four years. Speaking and listening skills are also average. Pupils and teachers are greatly hindered in making good progress in these aspects because the design of the buildings allows noise from adjacent groups to damage the environment for learning. This makes it very difficult for anyone to concentrate on what others are saying in most classes. Despite good teaching and firm class control, in Year 5, in particular, there are some pupils who find it very hard to concentrate and maintain focus and these pupils are very easily distracted. Accommodation such as the open-plan classrooms particularly hinders the development of good listening skills in a class such as this. Given the recent turbulence in staffing in the upper junior years and the changes in composition of the class profile to include more lower-attaining pupils, pupils in Year 6 have done well to achieve as well as they have. Because of good teaching, progress has been good for these pupils, who have pulled up their standards from a weaker position when they were seven. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are already demonstrating higher than average standards. Given the same rate of progress across the school, these pupils have the potential to do very well by the time they are eleven.
107. This rate of progress in English comes about because of consistently good teaching across the school. In no year do pupils currently experience any discontinuity in this good quality of provision, so their relative rate of progress is now constant. Teachers understand well the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy. They are confident enough to create sufficient flexibility in the ways they use this time to make learning useful and relevant to the needs of their pupils. Many examples were seen in observations of the specified literacy sessions, where teachers made good cross-curricular links to other subjects, for example through the texts they use. This is particularly useful as pupils get older. In Year 3 for instance, the visit to the Science Museum, which pupils had made on the Monday of inspection week, formed the basis of

a good lesson. Ideas about the moon and planets, which pupils had explored on the visit, were effectively developed as the theme on which pupils wrote a letter. Here they imagined that they were returning from the moon and describing its features, temperature range and lengths of day and night there, for example. In Year 4, the theme for persuasive writing came from pupils' geography and history studies about India. These links create a 'seamless' approach to learning where pupils' literacy studies are well integrated into the whole curriculum. Year 5's literacy linked Greek myths and legends effectively to grammar work on connectives within text. Many other opportunities, such as the literacy hours seen in Year 2 and Year 6, give pupils good experience of books and range widely across literature for their inspiration. Year 6 were beginning to write journals of book-critiques in this lesson, comparing two novels by the same author. Teachers take good advantage of the opportunity offered by DEAR time to listen to and assess pupils' individual reading. The school has correctly identified the area of writing as requiring improvement. Pupils' learning of writing would benefit from a similar focus, and additional time allocation, to that provided for reading. Teachers set targets in English for pupils, who are aware of these, particularly for their written work. The subject's use of fine, smaller targets which are easily measurable, is not yet in place though, so current targets do not form the basis for systematic, 'next-steps' improvement for individuals. Because the subject already has a basis of assessment, English has some data that could form the start of this type of assessment within the school. Marking of pupils' work is often useful in giving encouragement and confidence, but does not systematically relate to standards or attainment. Teachers could usefully employ such attainment-related marking. This would be particularly effective if combined with a better use of homework tasks for older pupils, to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses and suggest ways of accessing a higher level; they themselves, and their parents, could help to achieve these levels.

108. The leadership of English is still sound and management of the subject has been successful in maintaining similar standards to those described in the last report. The National Literacy Strategy has been introduced successfully. The criticism in the last report concerning insufficient handwriting supervision and teachers' inconsistent expectations of written presentation, however, still applies. This is part of the reason for the inconsistencies in pupils' written work described above, and still needs improvement. The level of noise from other classrooms, also criticised in the last report as unhelpful for quiet work, is still a major factor in pupils' lack of concentration and development of better speaking and listening skills. Although teachers use 'quiet rooms' in some year groups, these present other barriers to concentration, such as excessive heat, which is particularly difficult for lower-attaining pupils, or those with severe or profound learning difficulties. Pupils cannot tolerate the conditions for long.
109. The location of the library has changed twice since the last report. Having only relocated the week prior to inspection, it is too early to make a judgement on its new position. The school has considered this carefully and re-positioned non-fiction books in a detached, demountable mobile classroom. While this could, in itself, bring difficulties, being removed from a central position, the co-ordinator is fully aware of the need for teachers to keep pupils in regular contact with this resource and has sensible plans for this development. Other fiction books are helpfully dispersed around classes where pupils use them well. The number of books available has increased and is now satisfactory. Although continuity and progression in learning are now ensured through effective planning, the main issue from the last report, which remains unresolved, relates to the whole-school key issue arising from this inspection. This is the lack of a formalised system of diagnostic assessment and its use to improve standards. The school recognises that pupils need more opportunities to use information and

communication technology in classrooms, once more up-to-date machines are available. Overall, English has improved satisfactorily since the last report.

MATHEMATICS

110. The provision for learning is good. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. By the ends of Years 2 and 6, pupils' attainment is above national expectations and above average. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Strengths in the provision are: teaching, planning and the good response teachers generate from pupils. Areas for further improvement are:
- Ensure that pupils' work is well presented;
 - Review the use of worksheets, checking that they do not restrict pupils' opportunities to set out in mathematical form the working out of problems;
 - Further develop assessment to inform teaching more precisely and track, record and evaluate pupils' attainment and progress, using this assessment data to set continually more challenging targets for pupils;
 - Use information and communication technology as a more integral part of class learning.
111. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, pupils attained below average results when compared with all schools and well below average when compared with similar schools. There was some evidence of boys achieving better than girls. These results, which were significantly lower than the previous two years when the trend had been upwards, were adversely affected by pupil mobility and staffing difficulties. However, pupils in the present Year 6 attain above average standards.
112. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 2, pupils attained results in line with national expectations but below average when compared with similar schools. Over time, the results have varied with a dip in 1998. Pupils in the present Year 2 attain above average standards. The percentage of pupils reaching higher levels is above the national average. This indicates good progress since the last inspection. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. Pupils throughout the school with special educational needs and English as an additional language are supported well and make good progress. Pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties receive specialised and good support, and are made to feel fully part of the class.
113. By Year 2, pupils measure using centimetres and are aware of lines of symmetry accurately and with good understanding. They count and manipulate numbers swiftly to a hundred in mental mathematics. The higher-attaining pupils recognise that if you half the numbers 0, 10, 20 and up to 100, the answers follow a pattern. Pupils have experience with block graphs, constructing sensible and informative charts for their own birthdays. They undertake mathematical investigations with confidence and good understanding, as seen when finding patterns in sequences of numbers. This is a good improvement since the last inspection when investigative skills were under-developed. Teachers encourage pupils to apply their number skills in different contexts when working in other subjects, for instance pupils in a Year 2 physical education lesson focused on how many times they could hit the ball and could they hit 'more' than this number; this helps pupils have good understanding of how to apply mathematics to everyday situations. Teachers encourage pupils to use a wide range of mathematical strategies and vocabulary, as in Year 1 where higher-attaining pupils state that $6 + 6$ is $6 + 4 = 10$ then add the digit 2; these pupils had immediate recall of number bonds to 10. There is broad coverage of the syllabus, but much of it is through worksheets.

This does not allow pupils enough opportunity to develop their independent organisational skills in presenting mathematical work. Presentation is still not consistently acceptable, a weakness noted at the last inspection.

114. By Year 6, pupils have a very thorough understanding and quick-fire response to tables up to 12, which are regularly tested. This is a good improvement since the last inspection. The higher-attaining pupils can draw shapes well, and with four lines of symmetry and rotational symmetry. They can convert fractions to decimals confidently, such as $1/50 = 2/100 = 0.02 = 2\%$, and know with good understanding that to find the volume of a cuboid you have to multiply length x breadth x height. They can undertake mathematical investigations with confidence, as seen in Year 5 where pupils successfully solved a number problem looking at a progressively enlarging number pattern; the pupils with special educational needs complete each step practically with cubes, while the higher-attainers develop their understanding of mathematical formulae that can be applied repeatedly. In Year 4, pupils know that $7/10$ metre is 0.70m or 70cms and confidently solve weight, money, distance and volume problems using decimal places accurately. There is a broad coverage of the syllabus with emphasis upon quick mental recall of number facts, extension of mathematical vocabulary and strategy; all these activities support good progress. Apart from Year 4, however, where the presentation of work is of a consistently high standard, the quality of organisation and presentation of work is not consistently good.
115. The quality of learning for boys and girls is good in most classes and in Year 4 it is very good. This is partly due to the effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because work in lessons is carefully organised to meet their requirements and they are usually supported by highly skilled learning support assistants. For instance, in Year 5 the learning support assistant was observed developing pupils' mathematical strategies in adding $3.3 + 3.4$. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress, as in Year 2, where the learning support assistant focused on the mathematical vocabulary of simple number addition. Pupils with severe learning difficulties in Year 4 worked one-to-one with their learning support assistants, identifying numbers 1-20, then recognising their tens and units value on an abacus, lastly recording this with help in their books.
116. Some teachers recorded attainment of pupils during the year. These results are passed on to the next teacher, but they are not used to set specific mathematical targets for pupils or to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning; this issue was also noted at the last inspection and too little progress has been made.
117. In all lessons seen, pupils with higher attainment were suitably challenged; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' mental and mathematical vocabulary skills are being well developed within numeracy lessons, especially in the first part of the lesson. Pupils use their numeracy skills to support other subjects, for example considering symmetrical patterns in art in Year 5. There was no evidence of information and communication technology being used in the mathematics lessons seen, although in their specific information and communication technology lessons pupils use their skill to construct graphs and charts. At the time of the last inspection, the use of these technologies was not planned into tasks at all so limited progress has been made. The school needs to make the use of information and communication technology a more integrated part of class learning.
118. Pupils are well motivated and enjoy mathematics lessons. They show great enjoyment of mental mathematics. Pupils generally listen quite well to their teachers and peers, especially when reminded; furthermore, Year 4 has consistently good listening skills

and are very attentive. Sometimes it is difficult for pupils to hear because of the sound coming from other classes who are involved in a variety of different activities in this open planned building. Pupils collaborate well together in pairs and in small groups, as seen in a good Year 3 lesson where pairs of pupils played 'bingo' centred around the four times table using dice.

119. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. These good attitudes contribute to quality of learning. Teaching is always good across the years and in one class very good. In the best teaching, activities are clearly set out, challenging and involve the pupils in working out problems for themselves. Pupils respond by settling down quickly to their work, eagerly searching for accurate answers to the problem set. This was a marked feature of a lesson in Year 4 dealing with decimal places. A range of tasks at different levels was very clearly explained so that pupils knew exactly what to do when they started their work and made considerable advances in their learning. A further strength is the quality of the feedback given to individual pupils in helping them to overcome difficulties. This helps the pupils feel at ease with their work and take risks.
120. Planning is good across the school and teachers generally ensure that their pupils, of all attainments, work at appropriate tasks; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Management of pupils, which is a challenge because of the constraints caused by the open-plan building, is good and this contributes to the good behaviour seen in most lessons, which ensures that pupils get on with their work. Teachers offer helpful feedback to pupils during teaching sessions and in the plenary, which is the final part of the lesson. In a good lesson in Year 5, pupils were encouraged to assess their own learning, deciding if they had increased their understanding of doubling numbers. Discussion helps them to clarify the knowledge. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The quality of marking varies across the school but in only a few classes is it informative to the pupils about how to improve their work. Homework is used effectively, with much emphasis on multiplication tables.
121. The subject has a new co-ordinator, who has made a satisfactory start. She has monitored teaching and has identified the areas for development. These include a new scheme of work for pupils aged eight to eleven and identification of computer software linked to the programmes of study. Currently, assessment procedures with measurable mathematics targets for pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not sufficiently developed so as to support continued raising of standards.

SCIENCE

122. Provision for learning is good for pupils in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Standards have improved over the last year. Teaching overall is good and pupils make satisfactory and often good progress. Consequently, boys and girls in Year 6 attain standards in line with national expectations and those in Year 2 attain standards that are above national expectations. Pupils learning English as an additional language and those identified as having special educational needs, including those with severe or profound learning difficulties, make good progress relative to individual abilities and prior attainment. These findings are the same as at the last inspection, and the subject is now back on course after a set-back in 2001. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and sound progress has been made. Strengths in the provision are the good and expert teaching that generates pupils' keenness to learn, and good working relationships. Areas for further improvement are:

- Development of assessment procedures to inform teaching and track, record and evaluate pupils' progress;
 - Ensuring that pupils gain feedback through activities such as marking, on how to improve and meet targets for attainment;
 - Making more effective and consistent use of homework.
123. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2001, standards were well below the national average and also those of comparable schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was well below the national average. These results were adversely affected by pupil mobility and staffing difficulties. Prior to this dip, the standards had been improving more rapidly than the national average. There is some evidence that boys achieved better than girls. In the 2001 National Curriculum teacher assessment at the end of Year 2, standards were below the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 3, however, was above the national average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girl.
124. Pupils in Year 1 correctly identify parts of the body and know what happens to their bodies after exercise. The higher-attaining pupils know well that the heart beats faster, legs ache and people become 'puffed out'. During their study of sound, pupils successfully investigated which materials block out sound most effectively. In Year 2, pupils understand securely the key features of the properties of materials and can construct a simple electrical circuit. They understand the rules of scientific experiment and use them to investigate how far sound travels. In one lesson, the higher-attaining pupils noted that human beings are warm-blooded mammals. Pupils use a wide variety of methods to present scientific information in charts, written work, graphs and well-labelled diagrams. There is a good range of topics covered in both classes with many scientific investigations, for example pupils in Year 2 conducted an experiment to find which tubes are strongest, those with paper rolled continuously or those with paper folded. In both year groups, there are good links with other subjects; for example, pupils use their numeracy skills when compiling graphs to record findings.
125. Pupils in Year 3 have good understanding of the nature and properties of materials and can use this knowledge to sort man-made and natural materials. In an experiment to find which paper is most absorbent, the higher-attaining pupils accurately predicted the results and, once tested, presented their evidence in well-organised charts. In Year 4, pupils confidently use a wide scientific vocabulary. They formulate their own questions to research the similarities and differences between horse, fish and chicken bones. When conducting an experiment to separate solids from liquids, they present the evidence well and in a scientific style using a key to explain the chart. They show good scientific skills in their work.
126. In Year 5, during their study of solids, liquids and gases, pupils conducted an investigation into the temperature at which melting and evaporation take place. The higher-attaining pupils were able to predict that the wet cloth above the radiator would be the first to dry because of the movement of hot air. In Year 6, the highest-attainers present very well organised work, selecting the appropriate method to record their scientific observations, using either carefully constructed observational drawings or correctly labelled diagrams or charts. As part of their 'Living World' study, pupils worked co-operatively and collaboratively in pairs to undertake a survey of the land use of the school field. This involved dividing the land being examined into 25 equal-sized plots and then recording the ground covering type of each; this was then charted. This research used their numeracy skills well. Work is generally neat, well presented and in line with expectations for their age and ability. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

127. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is consistently good and it is very good in Year 4. This is a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. During the inspection, excellent teaching was observed in Year 1 and Year 5. In both excellent lessons, the teachers had a very good understanding of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and skilfully set up activities that enabled pupils to achieve the higher levels of the attainment targets and clearly demonstrate their attainment. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 5 about the circulatory system of the blood, a very relevant video was used as the basis for a very effective question-and-answer session where the class teacher used her very good subject knowledge to extend her pupils' learning. As the session progressed, pupils moved to the playground, where the teacher had reproduced a very impressive diagram of the body, heart and lungs on the ground. Pupil involvement was ensured when four pupils acted as the pump in the heart chambers, and others as oxygenated and deoxygenated blood cells. Pupils then followed the route of blood cells from heart to the lungs, collecting oxygen and cleaning the blood of carbon dioxide. As the pupils could demonstrate this understanding, the teacher introduced a further dimension by varying the speed of blood cells to replicate resting, walking and running. Pupils rose to this increased level of challenge and worked keenly with great enthusiasm. The result was rapid learning and a thirst for further knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language made the same progress as the rest of the class because the learning support assistants used very precise and detailed language to help their pupils selected for extra support.
128. All the pupils are keen to undertake science activities and the majority of pupils have attitudes to learning that are good and they behave well. This means that teachers can set many interesting and often exciting practical activities that help pupils to understand the concepts being taught and to learn securely. Even when pupils become excited, as some Year 3 pupils did in an experiment about night and day using torches, the teachers have good management skills, ensuring that all re-focus their attention. In addition, relationships between adults and pupils, and amongst pupils, are good and thus co-operation in groups is always good. Pupils, therefore, carry out practical work carefully and safely. Learning is secure because pupils strive hard to complete the work set by the teachers and learn well from each other; they listen carefully to advice offered by teachers and the very able learning support assistants.
129. Teachers carefully manage the organisation of their lessons and consider the constrictions of the open plan building. Even so, sometimes noise and movement from another room during discussion time, the limited specific teaching space or crowded quiet rooms for the older pupils hinder or disrupt the learning. The quality of marking varies across the school but in only a few cases does it inform pupils on how to improve their work. The use of information and communication technology to support science is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 4 have researched about electrons and conductors on the Internet and have written up experiments using word processors. The software on the rather old computers in the classrooms, however, is of narrow range and relevance, although, otherwise, resources are good. The use and effectiveness of homework varies from class to class and, overall, homework is not used effectively to provide opportunities for individual research and investigation.
130. The very new co-ordinator has made a satisfactory start. She is a very experienced science co-ordinator and an excellent practitioner. She has identified the strategies needed to raise standards and has the knowledge and expertise to implement them. She has already introduced a programme to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. This information has not yet been used to evaluate the effectiveness of

teaching and learning. This was also a weakness noted at the time of the last inspection. The last report suggested the development of a science portfolio of pupils' work to enhance teachers' understanding of learning outcomes against national expectations as a tool to raise standards. This has not been developed. The rigorous assessment procedures and target setting that support the improvement in standards are not sufficiently developed.

ART AND DESIGN

131. Provision for learning is now satisfactory overall. Pupils' attainments by the ends of Years 2 and 6 are average and meet expectations. They make good progress in the practical aspects of two and three-dimensional work in a variety of different media and on different scales. Learning of practical skills is good and pupils develop effective links with other areas of the curriculum without damage to their art development. They acquire insufficiently secure and wide knowledge and understanding about famous artists and how their own work can be informed by study of the historical side of the subject. This is because teachers develop this aspect of art less well in their teaching. Pupils' painting skills are often good. They learn to control this difficult medium well. Drawing skills, especially pupils' use of tone to represent the three-dimensional world in two-dimensions, is weaker than expected by Year 6. The art and design and design and technology curricula are usually rotated turn-by-turn in a cycle; this arrangement gives pupils satisfactory access to both subjects. Teaching of practical skills is generally good. Although resources exist for historical and critical work, teachers use them too seldom to enable continuity and progression in this aspect of pupils' skills. Areas for future improvement are:

- Improvement in drawing, especially tonal work;
- Consistent use of sketchbooks to record pupils' continuity and progression;
- More teaching of the historical and critical aspects so that pupils learn about the styles and practice of other artists

132. Pupils enjoy their experience of art. Even so, pupils do not gain a secure recognition of their own skills development and their overall learning, because there is inconsistent use of sketchbooks. Not all classes have them and Year 6's do not provide a useful overview of their progress. Pupils' development in recording visually what they observe, for example in figure drawing in Year 6, or the many portraits pupils make of themselves and others which decorate most years' bases, is sound. They benefit in many different ways from visiting artists as varied as a recent African masks specialist, when pupils made good ceramic masks, and a 'rocks' artist who developed large chalk drawings with Years 3 and 4 using different types of fossils and stone. Large hangings in the hall were developed from another visiting specialist, who made colourful celebratory banners with groups of pupils. The teaching of art is generally good and pupils learn well, achieving their potential in practical work in all years.

133. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The part-time subject co-ordinator has another whole-school role and provides specialist support for art when appropriate. Teachers generally are becoming more confident about teaching the practical aspects and now need to embed the historical and critical aspects more effectively into their planning. Attainment by Year 6 was below average at the time of the last inspection report and teaching unsatisfactory. Teaching is now at least satisfactory and often better in all years, with a very good lesson observed in Year 2. This represents good improvement in the subject since the time of the last report.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

134. The provision for learning is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach the standards expected for their age. This is an improvement since the last inspection when attainment was below national expectations. Three lessons were observed and discussions took place with Year 6 pupils. Boys and girls learn the subject with equal interest and enthusiasm and achieve similar standards. A strength in the provision is the well planned and effective teaching based on good subject knowledge. Areas for further improvement are:
- Greater use of information and communication technology;
 - Development of assessment systems to track, record and evaluate pupils' progress.
135. By the end of Year 2, standards are consistent with those found in most schools. Standards are similar to those found at the last inspection. As no lesson was observed due to timetable commitments, this judgement is made on an analysis of products pupils have made, teachers' planning, and discussions with staff and pupils. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve similarly to other pupils.
136. This consistently satisfactory progress is linked to the introduction of programmes of study based upon a national guidance syllabus. This has led to more cohesive and coherent planning and, consequently, improved continuity and progression in the pupils' learning. These are improvements since the last inspection.
137. Pupils in Year 1 describe different fruit, decide the ingredients, prepare and mix a fruit salad with thoughtful understanding and in ways that show they know why they must ensure that the stages in the process must all must work together to produce attractive food. They are learning to stitch well and this leads to work in Year 2, when pupils use these skills in their work on puppets, sewing felt puppets and using blanket stitch to represent a variety of people including Harry Potter and their class teacher. The quality of finished products is good. Teachers effectively develop the elements of pupils' learning related to developing, planning communicating and evaluating as aspects of the design process, and pupils' build these skills into their work.
138. In Year 3, pupils designed and made buggies using various methods of propelling, such as pulling an elastic band then letting go. The designs are well drawn and specify the equipment and materials to be used, including doweling rods for the base. In Year 4, pupils, including two pupils with severe learning difficulties, evaluated their reading bags before designing and making bags in a wide variety of designs using paper. In Year 5, their knowledge of mechanisms is extended well through the use of different cams in making a moving toy. Pupils generated a successful design using the correct technical language of crank handle and camshaft, and usefully for a designated audience, often a brother or sister; they then made the toy to a high standard. These products included a bird popping up over an attractive forest scene. Pupils use a variety of tools including modelling knives, drill, saw and bench hook skilfully. In Year 6, pupils made practical models of a wooden 'bike' shelter for the nursery class to protect their 'bikes'. They thoughtfully evaluated the success of their shelters and how to improve them. Throughout the school, teachers link design and technology effectively to other subjects such as history, art, science and English; for example, Year 3 pupils were making frames to display portraits they had painted.
139. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was always satisfactory and it was very good in two lessons; overall, it is good. In a very good lesson in Year 3,

where pupils were evaluating a variety of picture frames before designing and making their own, the teacher had high expectations of all pupils. They identified the need for a strong and stable stand. Then, in pairs working collaboratively, they evaluated commercially bought frames in a variety of materials. They decided upon the strength, attractiveness and other features of the frames. In good links to English and numeracy, a higher-attaining pupil commented on the right-angled base of his frame. Pupils usually listen with respect to adults and fellow pupils. In another lesson, however, pupils became overly excited when investigating different instruments prior to designing their own. The good management skills of their teacher returned pupils to their tasks and good progress. In this Year 5 lesson, labelling of these designs was not of an expected standard and there were technical weaknesses in drawing of 3-D shapes. There was too little evidence of information and communication technology being used to enhance design and technology learning throughout the school.

140. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject satisfactorily. He has monitored planning files, given advice to other teachers and ordered resources that are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. There is no programme of assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning to ensure continuity and progression in learning throughout the school in order to raise standards.

GEOGRAPHY

141. Provision for learning in geography is satisfactory. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Currently, between Year 3 and Year 6, teachers decide by preference the 'topic' curriculum for history, and then link geography themes to coincide with and enhance these history topics. This means that history usually predominates in time allocation. A new co-ordinator leads and manages both subjects, but has had little time to make an impact on either area. Even so, she has already decided that from next year the periods set for historical study in each year will be maintained, and this may allow for a better sequence of learning in geography. Key areas for improvement are:

- An increasing degree of separation between the concepts involved in geography and in history as pupils move into Years 5 and 6, to help them prepare better for these discrete disciplines in secondary school;
- Better assessment and tracking of pupils' achievement and attainment in geography.

142. As described above, the school teaches history and geography in conjunction, under the theme of a 'topic'. Attainments in both subjects are broadly similar and in line with expectations by the ends of Year 2 and Year 6. In pupils' earlier years in the school, this integrated approach is very valid and creates a seamless learning experience for pupils of all abilities. The topic also brings in many other areas of the curriculum, which further links learning together usefully. Pupils learn well because teachers are experienced and capable in highlighting and teaching the discrete threads of geography and history. In geography, therefore, pupils learn a secure concept of place, space and location. In Year 1, pupils had developed a very great interest in following the round-the-world progress of a young 'friend' and helper, and were very eager to talk knowledgeably about the places she had visited. They progress well and reach standards in Year 2 that match national expectations.

143. In a very good lesson in Year 3, pupils were above average in their knowledge of places, weather and climate. Most pupils were adept at using maps and atlases to discover information. These skills were also developing satisfactorily in a Year 4 lesson linked to the topic about India. Pupils could use atlases competently to find out a variety of

information about, for example topography, climate, agriculture and population density. By Year 6, analysis of pupils' previous work shows that attainment also broadly matches expectations. Work here on river systems and the water-cycle usefully integrates learning of science and geography.

144. Pupils respond well in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are well supported, and pupils with severe and profound learning difficulties have specialised support and are made to feel a full part of the class. Present planning linked to insufficiently developed assessment means that the challenge in the learning does not always meet the needs of the wide range of ability in most classes equally well. This has the most detrimental affect in the higher classes in the school. The improving attainment in mathematics enriches learning in geography but weaker standards in writing sometimes hold pupils back.
145. As in most other subjects, class teachers' geography teaching is good. Their own geographical knowledge and understanding are secure. Planning fits geography themes around history topics because teachers generally prefer the history aspects of the curriculum. This has worked to date, but when tracking the themes covered in current years, it seems that future plans will have to be altered if pupils are not to repeat certain themes. The new co-ordinator is aware of this, but has had too little time to re-plan as yet. Standards in geography remain similar to the situation described in the last report. Resources have improved but assessment, said then to be in its early stages, has not come far enough and remains an area for improvement. Improvement has been satisfactory overall, but there is still work to be done.

HISTORY

146. Provision for learning is satisfactory and teaching is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Attainment by the ends of Years 2 and 6 is inline with expectations but too few pupils exceed these standards. Progress overall is satisfactory. Strengths are the good subject knowledge of teachers and the good linkage to outside visits. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory and areas for further improvement are:
- Develop ways to assess attainment and track, record and evaluate pupils' progress, giving better feedback to pupils on how to improve;
 - Extend the scope of learning, especially for the more able pupils, for example through more empathetic writing, more investigation through, perhaps, homework, and greater emphasis on assessing bias in historical evidence;
 - Ensure that the sequence of topics encourages the pupils' understanding of the historical reasons for change over time.
147. Pupils make satisfactory and often good progress in lessons throughout the school, although progress over time is less clear. This is because the school has not thought through carefully enough the sequence in which history topics are taught and set plans for the steady building of pupils' skills and understanding. Similarly, lack of assessment and recording procedures means it is not possible to track and evaluate pupils' progress, and act when learning is too slow or insecure.
148. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils at all levels of ability made good progress because the lesson was carefully managed so that pupils learned each skill one step at a time and the challenge steadily increased. The teacher made very good use of photographic evidence of visits to the seaside from three different historical periods, linking one period to a story the pupils had read. A very skilled learning support assistant

supported a pupil with profound learning difficulties very well and in close collaboration with the class teacher, fully including the pupil in the class activity. Most pupils were very interested and thought hard about each problem.

149. In Year 2, pupils enjoyed a lesson on setting events such as holidays and celebrations in a time sequence, and using pictorial evidence to decide whether an event was a little or a long time ago. The teacher encouraged the pupils to think things through themselves and they did so, although some of their contributions tended to be guesses rather than ideas growing from careful consideration of evidence. There were good links to other work in religious education, and personal and social education. The learning was, however, slow because the behaviour and attention of the pupils deteriorated. This had several reasons but was mainly because the learning objectives were more 'we are going to learn about' rather than 'we are going to learn to do'.
150. In Year 5, pupils discussed what they had learned from a visit to the British museum connected with their study of Ancient Greece. The visit had been well planned and clearly enriched the pupils' learning. Pupils gained a good knowledge and understanding of the period. However, noise from the next-door classroom caused the attention of the pupils to deteriorate and this led to silly behaviour. Learning became slow, despite the well planned and executed teaching.
151. In Year 6, pupils studied Ancient Egypt and investigated in particular the role and importance of women. The lesson was well-planned and showed good subject expertise. The teacher made good use of a video to stimulate thinking and provide historical evidence. She related the new learning to past learning effectively. Most pupils were keen to learn and contribute but a few behaved in a silly way that spoiled the enjoyment and progress of others. This part of the lesson occurred in the 'quiet room' and cramped accommodation contributed to the slow progress. The class then divided into group activities that included historical writing and several art and design projects; progress improved. A learning support assistant made a very good contribution to the art activity making Egyptian masks. However, although the teacher's intentions were sensible, pupils engaged in the art activities did not link the history and art learning in the ways intended.
152. Analysis of previous work in all years confirms the above picture, showing strengths and also weaknesses in learning and teaching. Work tended to be descriptive rather than also including empathetic writing and historical thinking that assesses evidence and makes hypotheses. As seen above, classes sometimes study the same period, even though periods are not equally appropriate for the understanding and learning needs of different ages and the sequence in the teaching of skills within the curriculum.
153. The subject is satisfactorily managed but leadership is not yet sufficiently focused and strong to bring about necessary improvements. The co-ordinator is working to create a set sequence in topics and more productive links between history and geography. Resources are of satisfactory range and quality, but not yet good enough to drive up attainment and support powerful learning. Assessment is not yet in place to evaluate teaching and learning, and schemes of work are not planned or implemented with sufficient relationship to levels of attainment to be achieved in each year and for each level of pupils' ability. Consequently, progression and continuity in pupils' learning cannot be assured. Teachers' marking rarely suggests ways to improve and insufficient use is made of homework in some years. This misses opportunities to extend the learning of more able pupils; in the main, the learning objectives in lessons are the same for all levels of ability leaving some pupils unchallenged. Pupils make

good use of information and communication technology for historical research when in the computer suite, but too little use is made of it in classrooms.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

154. The provision for the learning of information and communication technology (ICT) is now good. Attainment at the ends of Year 2 and Year 6 is in line with expectations. In some years, notably in Years 3 and 4, where pupils have had more of their time in the school with access to the new ICT suite, attainment is above average. Pupils make good progress in the discrete skills of the subject and in their use of computers in other areas of their curriculum. This is because of good teaching and the advent of the 18 month-old computer suite. Leadership of the subject and its management in recent years have been good. The co-ordinator is a capable practitioner, providing a good model for staff. There is an assistant who is a valuable asset, because pupils can have help from her on several aspects of their work in the suite, namely ordinary curriculum help and technical assistance. Further training is developing this assistant to take groups on her own in the suite when they need to use the equipment to support other studies. The school also has the support of another technician who visits the school to ensure machines are working and to give advice. The subject has improved very significantly since the time of the last report. Areas for improvement now relate to:
- Assessment of pupils' attainment and achievement and use of these assessments for setting targets for improvement in individuals' achievement;
 - The consideration of keyboarding and fingering practice to enable pupils to find letters more swiftly on the keyboard and thus input information more quickly;
 - Increasing class teachers' use of the computers in their own classrooms.
155. From a below average profile of attainment at the time of the last report, the subject has improved very significantly and pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 is now in line with the expectations for their ages. The new ICT suite has provided good opportunities for all pupils and represents hugely improved provision of hardware and of software. Pupils now have ready access to the Internet and use it appropriately. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and achieve well in ICT, both in learning about discrete programs and applications, and also in using computers across the curriculum. This type of work, for example to support attainment in mathematics or science, is evident both when pupils use the ICT suite and also in their ICT books and folders. It was much less evident in classrooms, however, because the computers in classrooms are under-used and were seldom switched on during the inspection. The machines are, however, old machines and some have faults. The school is about to invest in a further eight modern machines for the suite, which will free up existing ones to be used in classrooms. It is essential that teachers then use these newer machines in their classrooms, so that pupils develop the notion of computers as an everyday tool for use in their curriculum outside, as well as inside, the ICT suite. Pupils in some years, particularly those in Years 3 and 4, show standards that are above average in their use of ICT. These abler pupils will present a challenge as they move up the school because their skills are already as good as some of Year 6's. Throughout the school, pupils are less swift in their fingering on the keyboard than usual, reducing the speed with which they are able to work.
156. Pupils respond well to the good teaching they receive in ICT throughout the school. Teachers have good and improving confidence with the computers. They follow recommended programmes of study and schemes of work, which give their pupils good coverage of a variety of ICT skills. These are well linked with other aspects of pupils' studies. Younger pupils have made good use of a shapes-based drawing program to reinforce concepts of shape in mathematics. Year 1 have made well-constructed strings of repeating patterns, for example, and Year 2 have created

varyingly complex symmetrical patterns. Pupils speak with enjoyment of their tasks at all levels and they co-operate highly effectively when they work together on the machines. Year 3 pupils, for instance, were engaged on a simulation exercise, creating an imaginary 'world' through simple programming. They concentrated very well on this task for a lengthy lesson, sustaining a very good level of motivation and chatting quietly together about the work. Many, particularly higher-attaining pupils, were very independent here, seldom needing help from the teacher or technician to read and follow increasingly complicated instructions from the screen. Year 4 pupils were learning about decision-trees and creating good branching databases about different sets of information. Some of this related usefully to their current project about India. These cross-curricular links are very helpful in examples like this, as they create firm linkages in pupils' minds between different aspects of the curriculum. Year 5's maps and plans of their classroom space are of average standards and they are now learning well because of improved access to ICT resources. Year 6 have already made and used databases and were reinforcing this learning in another context in the lesson seen. Few, however, had developed an above average understanding of what different programs are used for, because their experience of the ICT has improved only relatively recently. Their learning in the time they have had the improved equipment has been good though. The next important step for the subject is to put in place overdue assessment of pupils' individual attainment and achievement. Targets for pupils can then be derived from assessment of current competences, and achievement and progress can be recorded, tracked and evaluated, so that teachers and pupils become equally involved in a cycle of improvement.

157. Leadership of the subject is strong and management has been very successful in putting in place improved resources and in raising attainment significantly. The improvement in ICT from the position described in the last report has been very good.

MUSIC

158. The school's current provision for learning of music gives pupils a very good experience in the subject, particularly in the performing aspects. To improve provision further the following should be considered:

- Ensuring that the subject receives the required time allocation as soon as is practicable;
- Improving resources for the subject, particularly tuned instruments for pupils' older years;
- Ensuring that all aspects of composing, listening, appraising and performance are embedded into lessons.

159. A specialist teacher has been brought in on a limited contract to improve teaching and from whom teachers can build upon their current skills. The school's success in raising pupils' achievement within the last year is good and pupils in all years have achieved very well during this time. Class teachers also teach music and will eventually take on full responsibility for teaching music. Pupils are learning well under this system because all music teaching seen was very good, inspiring pupils to a love of music in the very short time the teacher has for each class. In the half-hour lessons, it is difficult to fulfil the complete demands across the range of aspects required by the National Curriculum in music. The compromise made has been very effective in raising standards in key aspects of music to match the expected average. In performance, for example, pupils' singing and playing on tuned and untuned instruments shows them gaining confidence and performing well. Pupils listen to music attentively, both on tape and also when others are playing and performing. They are taught to use the

vocabulary of the subject very well and so respond to the teacher naturally using musical terminology. Pupils in all years enjoy giving brief appraisals of what they have heard, for example whether music is played at an allegro or lento tempo. Little opportunity exists within the 30 minutes for lengthier appraisal because the teacher and the co-ordinator have wisely placed priority and emphasis on pupils learning to sing and play instruments. Pupils needed to learn to enjoy the subject, which they now do. Singing, described as 'desultory' in the last report, often occurs now with gusto, particularly amongst younger pupils in their music lessons. The school provides good opportunities to learn the recorder and other instruments, and enjoyable and creative opportunities for singing together in a choir.

160. Very newly acquired resources for listening and appraising the music of famous composers are about to become a regular part of the curriculum, which will provide a more varied resource for these aspects of music. A greater range of instruments is still required. These are needed to enable Years 3 and 4 pupils, whose musical skills are improving rapidly as they move up through the school, to fulfil their potential when they are in Years 5 and 6. Resources are satisfactory for current pupils, whose skills were under-developed earlier in the school, but will not be sufficiently challenging for lower junior pupils whose performance skills will be much better when they get older. Electronic keyboards, for example, are needed to challenge many of these pupils in the composing aspects of the curriculum, currently under-represented in pupils' practice. Pupils create some compositions within the limited time available, but these are not recorded so cannot be properly appraised, used as the basis for critique or for future development. Assessment is not yet in place in the subject but is under consideration as class teachers move into the phase where they will take full responsibility for music. The use of information and communication technology is at present under-developed.
161. The subject has improved very significantly since the last report. Improvement has been recent and needs to be sustained. The leadership of this improvement has been good, providing, as it does, good transition and succession arrangements for the future security of the music curriculum. Management of current and planned staff development is good and already proving successful in developing teachers' confidence and understanding of the subject. There is a good range of individual instrumental tuition available and frequent outside-class musical activities, including a community event to be held shortly after the inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162. Provision for learning is very good. This area of curriculum is an example of the high quality education Bentfield can provide. By the end of Year 2, standards exceed those expected nationally. As they move through Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve as well as they should in relation to their earlier levels of skill. By end of Year 6, pupils make considerable advances in their knowledge and skills, and continue to attain standards above the national expectations. This high attainment leads to the high level of success achieved by many pupils in competitive sport and games. Boys and girls reach comparable standards in all activities observed. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with severe and profound learning difficulties, make good advances in skill in relation to their earlier levels performance. This is also true of pupils with English as an additional language. This very good picture is because teaching is very good and very well planned. The subject is highly inclusive and makes a major contribution to pupils' social development. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. An area for future improvement is assessment that tracks and evaluates pupils' progress and attainment.

163. In Year 1, the great majority of pupils show a good level of control of small equipment and show sound hand/eye co-ordination. They have some basic understanding of the effects of being active on their bodies. Accuracy in throwing and catching steadily develops throughout Year 2, as does refinement in the use of bats. Pupils in Year 3 were able to interpret music into movement with confidence and assurance. In Year 4, pupils, particularly the higher-attaining pupils, make good advances in learning how to make a sprint start when running races. Pupils with severe learning difficulties participate with enthusiasm in carrying equipment to the school field and then join in the activities encouraged by the learning support assistant. These running skills are further developed in Year 5, when pupils concentrate on the most efficient arms and legs position when sprinting. In Year 6, pupils learn to throw the discus with increasing efficiency using the correct holding position.
164. The quality of teaching seen was always at least satisfactory, usually at least good, and very good in Year 4 and when the headteacher was teaching Years 5 and 6. The main strength in teaching lies in the quality of planning and in the way teachers provide a progressively challenging range of activities. This provides greater scope for the higher-attainers and for those with specialist skills.
165. In the three very good lessons observed, teachers encouraged pupils to evaluate their performance, as seen in the Year 5 lesson where pupils were refining running styles. After 20 minutes, most pupils made significant improvements in their running styles, learning not only from their teacher but also from observing the style of each other. Lessons have a good balance of warm-up, stretch and cool down activities. Swimming lessons make a valuable contribution to pupils' physical development, and all pupils experience swimming as part of their physical education programme. Nearly all pupils learn to swim the distance expected by national guidance by the age of 11 and many exceed this.
166. There are frequent well-taken opportunities for pupils to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups. They share ideas and are eager to contribute because they know their contributions will be valued. These opportunities enhance their social development. As seen in Year 2 when pupils were practising bat and ball skills, they co-operate well in pairs and space themselves sensibly around the large field so as to have sufficient space. Participation in events such as football and netball training teaches pupils about the importance of working effectively as a team. Year 6 pupils are given the responsibility of organising their teams for the sports events evening.
167. As at the last inspection, the physical education curriculum is well planned. There is a very good balance between gymnastics, dance, games and swimming. No use of information and communication technology was observed. There are good cross-curricular links, especially with science, emphasising the importance of physical exercise for a healthy body.
168. The subject is very well led and has a high profile within the school. The co-ordinator is well qualified in his subject and this makes management strong. A particular strength is the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities including athletics, netball, football and cricket, led by the various members of staff. These are very 'serious' occasions in that there is some very good coaching of skills that pupils approach with considerable dedication. They are also enjoyable as the pupils take great pride in doing things excellently. Boys and girls participate in all activities with great enthusiasm. Resources are very good, including the quality of outdoor accommodation. There is a good range of stimulating outdoors equipment for lunchtime and break time. There is no whole school assessment system to help teachers plan lessons more effectively based on

information of what pupils already know and what they can do well. The co-ordinator has located an assessment scheme that he hopes to introduce.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

169. Overall, provision for learning is good and in some classes very good; it makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils' attainment by the end of Years 2 and 6 matches the expectations of this syllabus, although only a few pupils exceed them. Although the knowledge aspects of this attainment are very good, the pupils' ability to express their beliefs and spiritual experiences is only average. Most pupils make at least satisfactory progress and in most classes good progress, and this reflects the quality of teaching. Teaching in lessons is mainly good but has less effect over time because written work is often unimaginative. Strengths are the learning about religions and the importance given the subject through strong links with assemblies. These help pupils to appreciate the faiths of other peoples and treat seriously the spiritual and religious aspects of their own lives. Areas for further improvement are:
- Improving the balance between learning about religions and the response to religion that comes from investigation, reflection and expression;
 - Improving the range of resources for learning;
 - Improving the feedback to pupils' on how to improve and deepen their learning.
170. An infant assembly was a good example of the link between assemblies, collective worship and class learning. The assembly began with very good teaching of the story of Zacchaeus. This teaching used illustrations on an overhead projector extremely effectively, and skilled story telling and questions drew in contributions from the pupils that showed deep reflection and their awareness of the importance of the meaning of the story for their own lives. The assembly then became worship through quiet reflection and prayer; this deepened and enriched the pupils' learning. Later, in a Year 1 class, the teacher revisited the story, ensuring that every pupil really grappled with the meaning of the story and could apply what they learned to their own lives.
171. In a very good lesson in Year 4, pupils learned about Jewish food laws. The teacher planned the lesson with clear learning objectives for each level of ability. Pupils responded very well and balanced their good general religious knowledge and understanding with a willingness to probe their own reactions. The lesson was enriched by cross-reference to other subjects, for example science.
172. In a very good lesson in Year 5, the teacher introduced the idea of meditation with great skill and sensitivity. Pupils understood well why religious people spent time in quiet reflection and how this gave access to inner thoughts and feelings. The teacher then used artefacts to help pupils reflect deeply for themselves. They then shared the feelings the exercise generated. Other pupils listened to the feelings shared with respect, valuing the courage these expressions cost.
173. In a Year 6 lesson on the Jewish Bar-Mitzvah ceremony, pupils had a very good understanding of the main facts and showed mature curiosity that shone through from their questions. This grew out of the well-planned teaching that had consolidated learning from a previous video. Pupils could make some moves from description of facts to understanding the symbolic meaning and power of symbolic actions and special artefacts. However, the benefits of the lesson were lessened by the lack of actual artefacts to see and respond to, and the written tasks set were not arranged in ways that stretched the most able and supported the least.

174. Work in books throughout the school tends to show the 'same fits all' characteristic and the work of the most able pupils is different in length rather than depth of response and thinking. The work of less able pupils tends to be very short and often incomplete. Throughout the school, work in books is not as good as learning in lessons. Although the work shows steady learning of knowledge, only rarely is there work that asks pupils to empathise with others or express their own feelings, for example through prayers, poetry, pictures or symbols. Marking rarely picks out what is really good in a piece of work or suggests ways to improve.
175. The subject co-ordinator has good expertise and there is a useful policy. Even so, she has yet to have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate standards across the school sufficiently, and then act to improve provision. Resources for learning are barely satisfactory, especially as to artefacts and posters. The provision as a whole is enriched by good links with local churches.