



**OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION**

INSPECTION REPORT

BLIGH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Strood, Kent

LEA area: Medway

Unique reference number: 118470

Headteacher: Mr Rob Kingman

Reporting inspector: Mr Selwyn Ward
9271

Dates of inspection: 17 – 20 February 2003

Inspection number: 247905

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Boulwood
Date of previous inspection:	19 – 23 January 1998

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Jane O'Keefe 19798	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Marianne Harris 23288	Team inspector	Science Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
John Linstead 20948	Team inspector	English Art Design technology	
Robina Scahill 27654	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Physical education	How well does the school provide for pupils with special educational needs? How well does the school make use of information from assessment?
Simon Molony 32306	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History	How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well does the school ensure equality of opportunity and inclusion?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bligh is a community junior school for boys and girls aged 7 – 11 years. With 335 pupils, the school is much larger than average. Most of the pupils are white and of United Kingdom heritage, with only a very small number of pupils coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. There are no children at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. An above average number of pupils have special educational needs, mostly covering a wide range of learning difficulties but including some with social and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs, however, is below average. Overall, children's attainment when they join the school is average, although over the last two years pupils have been joining the school with above average standards in mathematics. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average, and this represents the mixed social and economic backgrounds of the children. The school has been through a period of considerable instability, with several changes of headteacher over a two-year period. More recently, the school has been making do with one less teacher than previously, with the deputy head taking on an almost full-time teaching commitment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Although standards at Bligh have suffered from the disruption caused by the many changes in leadership over the past two years, they are now rising and pupils are now achieving satisfactorily overall. The school is now well led, and has a positive ethos where pupils learn to take a pride in their achievements. Teaching is satisfactory, but there is too much inconsistent practice throughout the school. Although assessment information is used well to plan the curriculum, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning because the present staffing arrangements do not allow staff enough time to carry out their management responsibilities. Bligh is a satisfactorily effective school. It provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils do well in information and communication technology.
- The school is well led and children develop a pride in their work and a very positive attitude to learning.
- Pupils work well together and behave well as a result of the good provision for their personal development.
- Information from assessment is now being effectively used to plan teaching and this is beginning to raise standards.
- Homework is used well and parents are able to make a good contribution to supporting their children's learning.

What could be improved

- Pupils are not doing well enough in mathematics.
- Work could be better matched to pupils' different abilities.
- There is too much inconsistent practice in teaching throughout the school.
- Staff with responsibilities are not given the chance to manage effectively.
- Children do not have enough opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Bligh Junior was last inspected in January 1998. Since the last inspection, standards have fluctuated from year-to-year more than would normally be expected in a school of this size. Test results fell during the period affected by the several changes of leadership before the appointment of the present headteacher. Standards are now improving, but in English and mathematics they are still not as good as at the time of the last inspection. In other subjects, however, standards are similar to last time. In information and communication technology, there has been very good improvement; standards, which were previously below average, are now above those expected nationally. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The school has been successful

in tackling most of the issues raised in the last inspection, although provision for pupils' cultural development remains a weakness and there is still a need to extend child protection training for newer staff.

STANDARDS

The table shows the results attained at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in national tests.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	B	B	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	C	D	E	E	
science	C	E	C	C	

Schools are normally categorised as similar according to the number of children known to be eligible for free school meals.

Results in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated from year-to-year to a greater extent than would normally be expected in a school of this size. The school clearly suffered a fall in results last year in English and mathematics, following the turmoil of going through a succession of changes of leadership before the appointment of the present headteacher. As a result, children last year did not do as well as they should have done. From work seen, standards are in line with national expectations in English and science. This represents satisfactory achievement. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or pupils of different abilities; more able pupils and those with special educational needs make sound progress. Although improved since last year, standards in mathematics at the top of the school are still below average. Since these pupils were average in mathematics when they joined the school in Year 3, they are clearly not doing as well as they should in this subject. The school sets ambitious targets for test results in English and mathematics. Last year's results fell far short of the targets. This year's targets are similarly challenging, and it is unlikely that they will be met – particularly in mathematics.

In information and communication technology, standards are better than those found nationally. In other subjects, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Although inspectors did not see the full range of activities in physical education and so are unable to make an overall judgement about standards in this subject, Bligh's success against other schools in competitive sports would suggest above average standards. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally-agreed syllabus.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work and in the school. They enjoy school and have a very positive attitude to learning. They are attentive and interested in lessons and often work with enthusiasm, even on occasions when the activities they are given are dull or lack challenge.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good in almost all lessons and very good in the playground and around the school. There were no exclusions last year.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are good, both among pupils and between pupils and adults. Children are polite, friendly and considerate, and they are keen to volunteer to help. They respond well to the trust they are given. Children of different abilities and from different backgrounds mix, work and get on well together and are all included in the full range of school activities.
Attendance	Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 - 6
Quality of teaching	satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is satisfactory. The *National Literacy* and *Numeracy Strategies* are broadly followed although, in mathematics, lessons for older pupils often follow textbooks rather than the guidance suggested in the *Strategy*. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to explain how they work things out, and so do not get the benefit of learning from each other's methods. Nevertheless, a strength of teaching is the good focus in lessons on teaching basic skills such as spelling and punctuation. Handwriting is taught well and the standard of presentation is high, so that pupils take a growing pride in their work. In some of the most effective lessons, teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils at the start so that children know what they are supposed to learn. This was not a consistent feature of teaching, however, and sometimes teachers merely described the tasks to be carried out rather than the aims of the lesson. Plenary sessions, at the end of lessons, were sometimes used well to reinforce the key learning points, but many lessons, including some that were otherwise successful, fizzled out rather than reaching a conclusion where pupils could discuss with the teacher what they had learnt. Nevertheless, teachers generally make good use of ongoing assessment in lessons, for example through the use of whiteboards on which pupils write and display their answers. In some of the most effective lessons, teachers had made use of this assessment information to adjust their next day's teaching plans so as to more closely focus on what pupils need to learn.

Lessons are generally planned well across each year group to ensure equality of opportunity in the parallel classes. Good use is made of questioning, with teachers not just taking answers from those who volunteer them, so that all pupils are fully included in lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and relate well to them, so that children are generally eager to please. Behaviour is mostly well managed. In the most effective lessons, teachers had high expectations and activities were well chosen to ensure a brisk pace, with pupils getting a lot done in the time allowed. By contrast though, slow pace was a feature of less successful lessons. In a number of lessons, work was not matched to pupils' different abilities, so that sometimes it was too easy for some and too difficult for others. Although teachers have high quality information about the learning targets of pupils with special educational needs, many lessons made little reference to these. Teaching assistants are sometimes well used, but this is inconsistent, with them offering insufficiently focused support in some lessons.

There is some very good quality marking which offers helpful guidance to pupils on what they need to do to do better, but this is, again, too inconsistent, with much marking that offers little more than mere ticks or words of encouragement. Homework, on the other hand, is consistently well used throughout the school and this makes a good contribution to pupils' progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	National Curriculum requirements are met. In most lessons, teachers plan effectively to ensure equality of opportunity across the three classes in each year group. Provision for extracurricular activities is satisfactory overall and the curriculum is enhanced well through visits and visitors to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory support. Each pupil has a very well focused individual education plan, but their targets are not always sufficiently referred to in teachers' lesson plans so that work is not always adequately matched to children's needs. Although the school has identified a number of gifted and talented pupils, there is currently little specific provision for them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and this contributes to the good relationships and positive behaviour of the children. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to learn about their own and other cultures.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Children's general welfare is looked after well. There are effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and satisfactory systems for dealing with attendance. Staff have not all benefited from training on child protection.
How well the school uses assessment information	The information from assessment is used well to plan teaching and learning in English and mathematics.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents are kept well informed about news and events through regular newsletters. Reports are satisfactory, although in many the targets for improvement are too vague. Homework is used well and enables parents to support their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is now well led, and the headteacher provides clear educational direction in a school with a positive ethos that encourages pupils to develop a pride in their work and a positive attitude to learning. Management, however, is unsatisfactory. The school has been functioning with one less teacher than usual, and so the headteacher has had to manage a number of subjects, and the deputy head and other staff with responsibility for managing subjects have had little or no time to monitor teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Although governors are short-handed, with several unfilled vacancies, they are committed to the school and do a good job. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and of what is needed to improve the quality of education that the school provides.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes satisfactory use of the principles of <i>best value</i> to evaluate the effectiveness of its work. Performance management arrangements are in place, but teachers new to the school, including those who are newly-qualified, are not given enough support.
The strategic use of resources	The school has a two-year school improvement plan. This is detailed but does not adequately set the priorities for management attention or spending. Funding, however, is properly used for the benefit of pupils.
The school's buildings and facilities	Resources and accommodation are both satisfactory. There are adequate classrooms and facilities, except that there is no library. The school has budgeted for this, and for further improvements in information and communication technology.
Staffing	Bligh has been carrying a teaching vacancy because of uncertainties over the amount of income it was expecting to receive from the local education authority. Although there has been a teacher in every class, the consequence has been a lack of time for management tasks to be carried out effectively. The school has no music specialist. Although staff are coping with music teaching, the lack of a specialist, or even a pianist for assemblies, restricts opportunities for pupils to listen to and take part in musical activities.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • The teaching is good. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • Children the right amount of homework. • Behaviour is good. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school does not work closely enough with parents. • Parents are not kept well informed about how well their children are doing.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is well led and managed.• The school is approachable. | |
|---|--|

Around a third of the parents returned their questionnaires and their views were positive. Inspectors agree with most of the favourable views expressed. The teaching is satisfactory and children make sound progress overall. The school is well led but management needs to be improved. Inspectors consider that the school works hard to involve parents and has been effective in this, but inspectors judged that, though reports were satisfactory, they could be improved by communicating more specific, measurable targets for improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Throughout this report, the school's test results are compared with the national average, as well as against "*similar schools*". Schools are usually grouped as similar according to the proportion of children attending who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In judging standards, inspectors analysed results attained in the national standard assessment tests (SATs) taken at the end of Year 6, both in 2002 and in previous years. Inspectors looked at work currently being done in lessons and at work done throughout the past year. They listened to children read and discussed children's work with them, as well as with their teachers. Whereas judgements on attainment relate to comparisons with nationally expected standards, *achievement* relates to the progress pupils make and compares how well children do as against their prior attainment. English, mathematics and science are referred to as *core subjects*, and a degree of priority was given in the inspection to looking at these subjects. Other curriculum subjects are sometimes referred to as *non-core* or *foundation subjects*.
2. An above average number of pupils in the school have been identified as having special educational needs. These needs are largely learning related, although some are linked to behaviour. Most of the pupils with special educational needs attain standards that are well below the nationally expected standard. The majority achieves satisfactorily and a few make good progress, especially in English. Some of the pupils who achieve well are taken off the school's special educational needs profile.
3. Results in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 have fluctuated from year-to-year to a greater extent than would normally be expected in a school of this size. The school suffered a fall in results following the turmoil of going through a succession of changes of leadership before the appointment of the present headteacher, and children last year did not do as well as they should have done. This underachievement was evident in both English and mathematics. In each of these subjects, pupils did much less well than would have been expected from the test scores they attained at the end of Year 2, when they were in the infants.
4. Standards have improved this year, however. From work seen, they are now in line with national expectations in English. In science, where test results last year were average, standards continue to be in line with those expected nationally. In both subjects, this represents satisfactory achievement. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or pupils of different abilities; more able pupils and those with special educational needs make sound progress, even though work in lessons is not always well matched to pupils' abilities.
5. The picture is not as good in mathematics. Test results in mathematics have generally been lower than those attained in the other core subjects since the last inspection. Although improved since last year's tests, standards in Year 6 are still below average. Since these pupils were average in mathematics when they joined the school in Year 3, they are clearly not doing as well as they should be in this subject. The school sets ambitious targets for test results in English and mathematics. Last year's results fell far short of the targets. This year's targets are similarly optimistic, and it is unlikely that they will be met – particularly in mathematics. Although work seen in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 is in line with expectations for pupils' ages, pupils' infant test results show that over the last two years, children have been starting school in Year 3 with generally above average standards in mathematics. Achievement in mathematics continues therefore to be unsatisfactory.
6. In information and communication technology, standards are better than those found nationally. This represents good achievement and very considerable improvement since the last inspection, where standards in this subject were identified as a key issue for the school. In other subjects, standards are broadly in line with national expectations. Inspectors did not see the full range of activities in physical education and were obviously not able to look at past work, so are unable to make an *overall* judgement about standards in this subject, but Bligh's success against other schools in competitive sports would suggest above average standards. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally-agreed syllabus.

7. In their responses to the questionnaire sent to parents just before the inspection, almost all parents expressed satisfaction with the progress their children were making. Several were particularly happy about the school's improved success in this year's *11 plus* selection tests, where the proportion of pupils obtaining selective school places had increased this year to almost a third, from less than a quarter last year. Inspectors agree that, with the exception of mathematics, children are now making sound progress. Standards have improved since last year's low point, but in English and mathematics they are still not as good as at the time of the last inspection. In other subjects, however, standards are similar to last time, and in information and communication technology, there has been very good improvement. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school. Inspectors agree. A strength of Bligh Junior is the very positive attitude to learning that pupils develop. The ethos of the school is one where children are encouraged to take a pride in their work. In practical terms, this means, for example, that handwriting is systematically taught and this helps pupils present their work well. The pride that pupils take in their work is extended to the pride they have about the school as a whole. They are keen to volunteer to help and to take on responsibilities. They are trusted around the school, and, in turn, they respond well to the trust they are given.
9. In lessons, this very positive attitude is shown by the enthusiasm with which pupils respond. Pupils are almost invariably attentive and interested in lessons, even on the occasions when the activities they are given are dull or lack challenge. For example, in a science lesson in Year 6, pupils made satisfactory progress because they collaborated well together, even though they were given little opportunity to contribute their own ideas on how the investigation might be carried out and how the results might best be recorded. Pupils often help one another in lessons, for example when working in pairs in the computer suite. In some lessons, pupils swap work to help each other during the drafting stage of a piece of written work, although where this was seen in another Year 6 class in an English lesson, where a more able child was paired with a lower attaining pupil, inevitably it was only the lower attaining pupil that benefited from constructive feedback on their work.
10. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons, and this confirms the positive view expressed by parents. In the playground and around the school, behaviour is very good. Pupils understand and respond well to the school's rules and are keen to earn the stickers and other rewards on offer for good behaviour, consideration and good effort. There have been no exclusions over the past year. This is an improvement since the last inspection, which reported a rising trend in the number of exclusions. Relationships throughout the school are good. Boys and girls, including those of different abilities and from different backgrounds, get on well with one another and with the teachers and other adults in the school.
11. Attendance is satisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and the rate of unauthorised absence is much reduced so that it is now in line with that found nationally. Pupils arrive at school on time and are mostly prompt getting back to lessons after break. Pupils' good behaviour and very positive attitude to learning have been maintained since the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. Since the last inspection, the school has moved from *streaming* arrangements, where children in each year group were put into different classes according to their ability, to teaching in mixed ability classes in all subjects except mathematics. In this subject, pupils are organised into ability *sets*. In view of the seemingly low test results in English and mathematics last year, part of the focus of the inspection was on literacy and numeracy, so some priority was given to observing the teaching of English and mathematics. Inspectors saw all classes being taught at least one of these subjects. In most cases, inspectors were able to observe full lessons and, in judging teaching, evidence was sought that pupils were learning and making progress. In all, inspectors saw 76 full or part lessons. Teaching was good or better in two out of five lessons, and in about one lesson in ten, teaching was

very good or excellent. Teaching was less than satisfactory in five of the lessons seen. This represents a picture of satisfactory teaching overall. It is a broadly similar pattern of teaching to that seen in the last inspection. There was no significant difference between the quality of teaching overall in each year group, except that there was less very good teaching seen in Year 6 than in the other year groups. English and mathematics teaching were both satisfactory.

13. The *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* are broadly followed although, in mathematics, lessons often follow textbook routines rather than the guidance suggested in the *Strategy*. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to explain how they work things out, and so do not get the benefit of learning from each other's methods. For example, in an otherwise effective lesson in Year 6, the teacher explained her method for solving a problem from a previous year's test paper but it was clear that several of the pupils had used different methods, some of which might have been easier for other pupils to follow. Nevertheless, a strength of teaching is the good focus in lessons on teaching basic skills. In English, this means a good focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar. In mathematics, it includes good development of mental arithmetic and emphasis on learning multiplication tables. In, for example, information and communication technology, skills, such as manipulating email, are taught so that pupils build effectively on what they have learnt before. Handwriting is taught well and the standard of presentation is high, so that pupils take a growing pride in their work.
14. In some of the most effective lessons, teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils at the start so that children know it is what they are supposed to learn. This was not a consistent feature of teaching, however. Sometimes even when "learning objectives" were supposedly given, these were merely a description of the tasks to be carried out rather than the aims of the lesson. Plenary sessions, at the end of lessons, were sometimes used well to reinforce the key learning points. For example, in a very effective mathematics lesson in Year 3, pupils were invited at the end to say what they thought they had learnt. The teacher took the opportunity to quiz those who thought they had not learnt very much, and this helped raise their confidence and self-esteem as the children realised that they had made better progress than they had thought. This, again, was not a consistent feature of teaching. Many lessons, including some that were otherwise successful, fizzled out rather than reaching a conclusion where pupils could discuss with the teacher what they had learnt or where the teacher could reinforce the main points of the lesson.
15. Teachers generally make good use of ongoing assessment in lessons, for example through the use of whiteboards on which pupils write and display their answers. These were used successfully across several subjects, and not merely English and mathematics, where they are most commonly used in other schools. In some of the most effective lessons, teachers had made use of this assessment information to adjust their next day's teaching plans so as to more closely focus on what pupils needed to learn. Some lessons, however, were poorly planned, so that activities did not follow sensibly from one another. Pupils in these lessons were unclear about what they were supposed to be doing and learnt very little. This was a common feature of the lessons that were less than satisfactory.
16. Lessons are generally planned well across each year group to ensure equality of opportunity in each of the three parallel classes. Good use is made of questioning, with teachers not just taking answers from those who volunteer them, so that all pupils are fully included in lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and relate well to them, so that children are generally eager to please. Behaviour is mostly well managed.
17. In the most effective lessons, teachers had high expectations, and activities were well chosen to ensure a brisk pace, with pupils getting a lot done in the time allowed. By contrast though, slow pace was a feature of less successful lessons. In a number of lessons, work was not matched to pupils' different abilities, so that sometimes it was too easy for some and too difficult for others. Though they make satisfactory progress, more able pupils, in particular, are not always given enough opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning, for example by designing their own investigations in science. The lack of a non-fiction reference library also limits the opportunity for pupils to undertake their own research in school.
18. Overall, support for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Although they are withdrawn from some lessons for supported learning in small groups, the school is effective in ensuring that these pupils do not miss out on what the rest of the class is learning. Teachers have

high quality information about the learning targets of pupils with special educational needs through their very well written individual education plans. Teaching assistants know these targets well and break them down into smaller more immediately achievable targets where necessary. However, the support they give is less effective when the teacher is addressing the whole class. On these occasions, their work is often less focused. Also, the work that class teachers plan does not take sufficient account of learning targets in pupils' individual education plans, so lesson activities are not always appropriate to pupils with special educational needs when they are not supported.

19. There is some very good quality marking which offers helpful guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve. In some cases, pupils are encouraged to write written responses to the teacher, so that the marking becomes a dialogue that supports children's learning. The quality of marking, however, is too inconsistent, with much marking that offers little more than mere ticks or words of encouragement. Rarely was marking linked to pupils' targets for learning. Homework, on the other hand, is consistently well used throughout the school. Parents are able, through homework, to support their children's learning at home and this makes a good contribution to the progress pupils make. Parents clearly appreciate this, with an unusually high proportion of parents expressing satisfaction with the amount of homework. Almost all of the parents who returned their questionnaires, described teaching as good and indicated that the school has high expectations for pupils to do their best. Inspectors certainly found a number of examples of good and very good teaching in the school, but there is not enough consistent good practice to ensure consistently good teaching. Because work is not always matched closely enough to pupils' abilities, expectations are sometimes not as high as they could be.

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

20. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is relevant to the needs of the pupils. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provision for information and communication technology, which was a weakness identified in the last inspection, is now good. Information and communication technology is also now used well to support learning in other subjects, through internet research and through, for example, matching work in *logo* (giving instructions to move a *turtle* around the computer screen) with work on directions and clockwise rotation in mathematics. All subjects have schemes of work that help teachers to plan, although the needs of the more able pupils are not always met. Strategies are in place for the teaching of literacy and numeracy that are reasonably effective, although standards in mathematics are still too low.
21. Provision for pupils personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory overall with some good work being done in Year 4 on drug misuse and the impact of smoking on health and in Year 6 on the need for laws in communities. Sex education is taught through science and health related topics throughout the school.
22. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, and this contributes to pupils' good behaviour and very positive attitude to learning. Opportunities, however, for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures are unsatisfactory. The school promotes beliefs and values that pupils adhere to, while pupils are confident in talking about their own values which guide their lives. The pupils co-operate very well with each other and have lots of opportunities to work collaboratively on joint projects. Assembly provides opportunities for all pupils to acknowledge the achievements of individuals, groups and classes. History, in particular, gives pupils opportunities to consider feelings and emotions when considering life in Victorian times and during the Second World War. In an assembly seen during the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 5 performed a lively recreation of a Victorian schoolroom that not only confirmed their own historical understanding but also captured the imagination and provoked a thoughtful response from the entire school.
23. Assembly and collective worship play an important role in the development of pupil's spiritual development. Pupils show enthusiasm for themes covered in assembly and are very responsive. The school develops themes in assembly that are explored during the week, deepening pupils' understanding of important issues such as the environment and conservation. Pupils clearly enjoy assembly. They are very responsive and sing songs and hymns with enthusiasm. The school meets

the requirements for collective worship as well as those of the locally-agreed syllabus for its religious education curriculum.

24. Provision for moral development is good. Pupils undertake work which develops their understanding of the need for rules in class, the school and in their communities. Class rules are displayed on the classroom walls. Pupils assume responsibility in Year 6 for being house captains, monitors and sports captains which develops their understanding of responsibility.
25. Provision for pupil's social development is good. Pupils get on well together, share tasks and generally get a lot done when asked to work in pairs or small groups. For example, pupils work effectively in information and communication technology when sharing machines and collaborating on multimedia projects. Year 6 pupils produce some very good projects following visits made in the summer term to Rochester. The good leadership of the school promotes a very positive attitude with pupils working well together and behaving well.
26. Overall opportunities for cultural development are unsatisfactory. While there is a multicultural policy, it has not had much impact on the curriculum available to the pupils. Opportunities are taken in history to highlight the cultural changes that have occurred over time through visits of theatre groups and days dedicated to Victorian times and the Second World War. Some other cultures are looked at as part of geography and religious education, but there are relatively few visitors to the school by people from other cultures. Pupils in this largely monocultural school are not well enough prepared for the rich diversity of culture that they will experience when they move on to other schools and to working in multicultural Britain. Opportunities are also missed for pupils to learn about their own cultural heritage. For example, pupils do not get the chance to listen to music and learn about different composers as they arrive at and leave assembly.
27. Good use is made of links with the local community. Year 6 pupils designed a garden for the local old people's home using the school's computer facilities. The pupils also assisted in planting the garden and designed a mural for the wall of the home. The school entertains older people from the community at Christmas and in end-of-term concerts. Local cub and scout groups use the school facilities and a local football team use the school grounds. Bligh Junior is currently involved in a project with Powergen and the BBC in recording and predicting the weather. Satisfactory links exist with the local infant school as well as the grammar schools and high schools that receive the Year 6 pupils when they leave primary school.
28. Bligh Junior offers pupils a satisfactory range of extracurricular activities. They include the weather club who meet daily, line dancing, football for all years, gardening club and Year 5 and Year 6 netball. In the absence of a music specialist in the school, there are, though, few opportunities for musical activities outside lessons. All clubs are well attended and valued by parents. A girls' computer club exists as a result of an initiative within Medway schools to encourage girls to develop an interest and skills in computing, however no similar opportunities are offered to boys. The school has a reputation for its sporting success within the local community of schools.
29. The school has a policy for equal opportunities that has recently been reviewed. All pupils have access to the curriculum that is carefully planned across each year group to ensure all pupils receive similar teaching. However not enough attention is given to the needs of different ability groups in teachers' planning. The school ensures that all pupils are fully included in all activities.
30. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The extra support they receive from support staff within class and within withdrawal groups ensures the pupils are included and have full access to the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs are well supervised by teaching assistants who have been well trained. Pupil's individual education plans are available in each class for teaching assistants but the content of the plans rarely contribute to teachers' lesson planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31. Bligh Junior is a caring school where staff know pupils and their families well. This ensures pupils' general well-being which in turn contributes to the progress that pupils make. Relationships are

good throughout the school and parents are particularly happy with the attitudes and values that the school promotes.

32. Every class has its own rules which are agreed by the pupils themselves. The school's procedures for promoting and monitoring behaviour are good. The policy is clearly written showing the importance of respect for all and valuing each individual. The system of *team points* is understood, respected and valued by all. Good behaviour and consideration of others is celebrated each week in special *sharing* assemblies where certificates are presented to pupils for good effort, work and behaviour. This arrangement is highly valued by the pupils. The school has good systems for monitoring the very small minority of pupils whose behaviour is causing concern. Behaviour programmes are agreed with the headteacher who meets each of these pupils daily to monitor and encourage any improvements in their behaviour. Bullying is rare in the school and pupils are confident that, if an incident should occur, it would be dealt with effectively by teachers.
33. Appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with child protection issues. The head teacher is the person designated to deal with any concerns and the school's policy follows local guidelines. The headteacher reminds staff of the correct procedures to follow should they have any concerns about the welfare of a pupil. Staff have not, however, recently had training in this sensitive area to ensure particularly that teachers new to the school, or who are newly-qualified, are made sufficiently aware of the procedures for dealing with child protection issues. The school has appropriate policies for sex and drugs education which are dealt with in the science lessons and during personal social and health education lessons. The school has adopted the appropriate procedures for ensuring internet safety for all with all parents having been asked to give their permission for their children to use e-mails and the internet. All teachers have had a note listing the small number of pupils in the school who are not allowed to use outside email or the internet because their parents have not returned the necessary consent form.
34. The premises are appropriately maintained by the site manager and annual risk assessments and other checks are undertaken rigorously by the governors. No health and safety concerns were apparent during the inspection. Good procedures are in place for dealing with sickness and accidents, with pupils observed being treated by staff very kindly when hurt and unwell. Pupils are very happy with the care they receive and say they feel well looked after.
35. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored by staff and the importance of regular attendance is regularly stressed to parents in newsletters and the brochure. Parents know the importance of informing the school promptly if their child is unwell. The school is visited by the local education welfare officer every fortnight when registers are checked and families contacted should there be any concerns about a pupil's attendance or punctuality.
36. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic achievement are satisfactory. A computer program to track pupils' achievements has just been introduced and is beginning to identify how much progress pupils make in English and mathematics. The results of statutory and optional national tests are used to predict pupils' achievement for the terms ahead and the levels they are expected to attain by the end of Year 6. Assessment information is used well to set targets for individual pupils in English and for groups and classes in mathematics. Careful records are kept of pupils' achievements in reading. There are no formal procedures for assessing other subjects, but teachers have individual mark books in which they keep records and notes of pupils' progress. The details in these vary considerably between classes.
37. The school is making good use of information from assessment to plan the curriculum in English and mathematics. Pupils' answers in annual tests are analysed and weaknesses identified. These become a focus in the next term's planning. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed appropriately and individual educational plans incorporate very clear targets for their learning, although insufficient use is made of them in by class teachers in planning their lessons. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly with the pupils so they know the progress they are making. The school has identified children regarded as gifted and talented. However, there is little specific provision for them as yet. Planning is not used consistently enough to set work at appropriate levels for all pupils.
38. Pupils' needs are known when they start school from the records that are passed on from the infant school. Pupils new to the school are monitored and assessed. Individual education plans are reviewed regularly with the special educational needs co-ordinator, the class teachers, the teaching

assistants and the pupils themselves. The school makes every effort to see that each pupil has suitable support and appropriate outside agencies are involved where necessary. Parents of children with special educational needs are informed about their children's progress towards the targets laid out in the individual education plans, including targets for behaviour. Pupils who achieve well and are taken off the register for special educational needs continue to be monitored to ensure that their progress is maintained.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The school now benefits from good links with its parents and this has a positive effect on pupils' progress. Most parents are pleased with the care and education their children receive at Bligh Junior. There is an "open door" policy at the school with teachers always accessible to parents after school. This is valued by parents. The headteacher is always highly visible around the school and available to talk to parents should they have a concern. The home-school agreement is well established and valued with almost all parents signing it this year. A number of parents and members of the local community help regularly in classrooms each week with the *Reader Leader* scheme providing useful support to teaching staff by listening to pupils read. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in the reviews of their children's progress. The very effective parent teacher association regularly organises fund-raising and social events which are strongly supported by parents and the local community. Significant amounts of money are raised by these events which support the further development of the school and its resources.
40. Although most parents expressed positive views about most aspects of the school's work, a significant minority did not think the school worked closely enough with parents and did not feel they were kept well enough informed about their child's progress. Inspectors consider that the school works hard and is effective in involving parents, but that reports on children's progress could be improved. The school provides useful information to parents in the form of the prospectus, newsletters and general letters. The governors annual report meets almost all the legal requirements for its content however it does not give details of any action taken since the last inspection, as is legally required. Consultation meetings with teachers are held twice yearly. These are well attended and parents find them useful and informative. Meetings giving information on the curriculum are held regularly. Written annual reports on pupils are issued in the summer term. These provide information on the work pupils have covered and, in the core subjects, how well pupils are doing. Reports do not, however, give clear guidance on what a pupil should be doing next in order to improve. The targets they do set are far too vague and generalised. Most parents appreciate what the school does for their children and particularly value the supportive ethos provided. Parents themselves support the school and are always keen to help in any way they can. Parents value the homework system and support it well. Relationships between the school and parents are good.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

41. The headteacher provides good clear leadership for the school, after a period of considerable turbulence which has had an adverse effect on standards. The now good leadership has resulted in the pupils having a very positive attitude to learning and a staff that are committed to both the school and the children. The pupils take a great pride in their work and the headteacher and staff celebrate the achievements of each child. Good leadership also means that the school now has a good capacity for improvement.
42. The management of the school is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for staff with responsibilities to raise standards in their subject. The headteacher has observed teaching, but most co-ordinators have not, and this means that inconsistencies in teaching and learning are not identified and tackled effectively. The local authority has been very supportive of the school and has provided some very useful suggestions for improvements. For example, the questioning of pupils during lessons was identified as an issue and the local authority advisor suggested asking those without their hands up. This was adopted by some of the teachers and in some lessons this

was an effective strategy, used to involve all members of the class. However, there has been no follow up by the school to ensure that this is happening regularly.

43. The deputy headteacher has many responsibilities as well as currently being an almost full-time class teacher. He is the mentor for the newly-qualified teachers and for the graduate teacher. The deputy head has not had the time or opportunity to offer effective support for this inexperienced team and weaknesses in their teaching are not tackled well. Issues that have been identified in one lesson observation are not followed up on the next observation and so no programme of further training has been established, and they do not get enough support.
44. The governors are very supportive of the school and do a good job. They are well aware of the school's strengths and areas that need improvement. The chair of governors is new to the role, although she is an experienced governor and able to guide new governors in their responsibilities. There are several vacancies on the governing body and this means that each governor has to take on several jobs. However, very good use is made of the available expertise, so that the talents that governors are used well. One governor has been instrumental in sorting out the finances, and one has used his experience in health and safety to ensure that the school meets all of the statutory requirements, and more. The support offered by the governors has been vital to the continued running of the school during the recent past.
45. One of the jobs that the governors have taken on is the monitoring of the school improvement plan. This was drawn up before the appointment of the present headteacher and involved most of the school community. It is a very detailed plan, containing all of the curriculum areas. It is properly costed, identifies the person who will take a lead in the target for improvement, and states how the school will know they have achieved their goal. However, the detail means that there are no clear priorities, and it is not possible to get everything done. For example, the plan identifies monitoring by curriculum leaders as a priority and this is clearly not happening. The headteacher drew up a further plan when he arrived at the school and this identifies clear areas to develop, for example, buying more non-fiction books to form a library.
46. During the many changes of headteacher, the cycle of performance management has continued. It was set up by the deputy headteacher and most staff have targets set for them. However, this cycle does not include the inexperienced members of staff and there are ineffective systems in place to support the development of their teaching.
47. Much has been done to sort out the school's finances and there are now clear systems in place. Money is properly used for the benefit of the current pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed satisfactorily. Regular meetings between the special educational needs co-ordinator and all involved staff ensure that pupils are suitably supported. Teaching assistants are well qualified and have attended a wide range of courses covering all aspects of their work. Relevant resources are purchased to support pupils with special educational needs and the budget is used appropriately. Co-ordinators bid for money for their subject and the governors meet to decide how money will be allocated. This is closely aligned to the school improvement plan. Satisfactory use is made of new technology to track both the finances of the school and the overall assessment of pupils' progress.
48. Apart from the succession of temporary headteachers, staffing has been relatively stable over the last few years, but recently the school has lost an experienced member of staff. This has resulted in the headteacher taking on subject management in the key area of English, as well as religious education, music and assessment. The deputy headteacher has had to take on an almost full-time classroom teaching responsibility. This means that teaching and learning are not monitored effectively. There is no music specialist in the school and, although the pupils sing enthusiastically, there is nobody with the expertise to develop pupils' performing skills. Teaching assistants are usually deployed well, but there are times when they have no clear role in lessons and their knowledge and skills are not used to best effect.
49. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. The pupils benefit from good grounds and quiet courtyards. The computer suite is relatively new, but is not big enough to accommodate large classes. The school has plans to extend the suite and to install air conditioning which will improve the environment for the expensive machinery. The school also has plans to provide a library as the

pupils do not have one at present. Resources are satisfactory overall, apart from non-fiction books, which are in short supply.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50. Inspectors have identified the following interrelated key issues for action. In order to improve the standard of education provided for pupils, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- 1) Raise standards in mathematics by
 - (i) considering closer adherence to the guidance in the *National Numeracy Strategy*
 - (ii) giving pupils more opportunity to explain their methods
 - (iii) providing more opportunities for mathematical investigations
(paras 5, 7, 13, 59-62, 65)

- 2) Match work more closely to the abilities of different pupils by
 - (i) planning different work for the different abilities in each class, including within the mathematics sets
 - (ii) giving more opportunities to able pupils to devise their own investigations in mathematics and science
 - (iii) making more effective use in lessons of the targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs
 - (iv) developing specific provision for pupils identified as being gifted and talented
(paras 4, 17-20, 30, 37, 57, 61, 77, 80)

- 3) Ensure more consistent practice throughout the school over
 - (i) the sharing with pupils of clear learning objectives for lessons
 - (ii) the use of plenary sessions at the end of lessons for pupils to assess what they have learnt and for the teacher to reinforce the main points from the lesson
 - (iii) the marking of work so that it gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve and is linked to pupils' learning targets
 - (iv) keeping assessment records in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - (v) the use made of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning
(paras 14, 18-19, 36, 42, 48, 57, 64, 68, 95)

- 4) Improve the management of the school by
 - (i) ensuring that there is a lead member of staff for all subjects
 - (ii) giving staff with management responsibilities sufficient time to carry them out effectively
 - (iii) involving members of the senior management team and subject managers in monitoring of teaching and learning
 - (iv) developing better monitoring and support for teachers new to the school, including those who are newly-qualified
 - (v) extending consistent assessment arrangements to cover other non-core subjects
 - (vi) identifying priorities within the school improvement plan
(paras 36, 42-43, 45-46, 48, 58, 65, 69, 72, 74, 78, 81, 86, 89, 96)

- 5) Give pupils more opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures
(paras 22, 26, 28, 70, 88)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan. (Paragraph references are in brackets)

- A. Continue with plans to develop a non-fiction library so that pupils are able to develop their independent research skills (paras 17, 45, 49, 55)
- B. Ensure that all teaching staff, including those new to the school, receive appropriate training on child protection (para 33)
- C. Ensure that the Governors' Annual Report fully meets legal requirements (para 40)
- D. Improve reports for parents by setting more specific measurable targets for pupils' improvement (para 40)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	7	23	40	4	1	0
Percentage	1	9	30	53	5	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Total may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	335
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	59

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	103

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.5

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the 2001-2002 school year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of <i>Key Stage 2</i> for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	39	50	89

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	26	34
	Girls	36	28	42
	Total	65	54	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (80)	61 (58)	85 (80)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	32	28	33
	Girls	39	38	43
	Total	71	66	76
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (82)	74 (72)	85 (83)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	323	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	30
Average class size	28

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	219

FTE means full-time equivalent

Financial year	2001/02
	£
Total income	721,136
Total expenditure	773,245
Expenditure per pupil	2,136
Balance brought forward from previous year	76,605
Balance carried forward to next year	24,496

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	340
Number of questionnaires returned	109

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	49	5	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	48	48	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	47	3	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	57	5	3	0
The teaching is good.	46	51	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	46	16	6	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	36	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	31	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	31	45	16	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	44	51	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	53	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	50	12	3	6

(Numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding.)

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

ENGLISH

51. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 showed steady improvement up until 2001, with attainment above the national average. However this fell in 2002. Although results in English were in line with the national average, they were below the average of similar schools. Pupils last year did not achieve as well as they should have done when compared with the standards they attained in the tests they took when they were in Year 2. There was very little difference in the attainments of boys and girls. The school fell some way short of the targets it had set itself.
52. Pupils currently in Year 6 are reaching levels of attainment in speaking and listening which are above national expectations, as was found in the last inspection. In reading and writing, they are not as high but have improved in the last year. They continue to match national expectations. Pupils in the younger classes are currently working at levels above those expected for their ages and the school is in a position to be able to show steady improvements in the coming years.
53. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entering the school. The quality of their handwriting improves as pupils move through the school. Pupils become more confident speakers, develop their ability to write for a variety of purposes and read more challenging texts with increasing expression. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the quality of support they receive.
54. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening has remained high since the last inspection. Pupils listen attentively in class discussions and are quick to volunteer responses especially when motivated by the subject matter. For example, pupils in Year 3 were keen to turn a description in a text on making jelly into instructions for their teacher to follow. Pupils speak clearly and convey their meaning well. This is developed well by teachers who give pupils plenty of opportunities to speak. In two of the lessons seen, this was helped still further as pupils were encouraged to answer, every time, in complete sentences. Pupils' vocabularies are extended by teachers using the correct terminology and through the regular use of a thesaurus. Older pupils are familiar with and use terms such as *genre*, *metaphor*, *alliteration* and *subordinate clauses*. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their experiences in preparing for their classes' turn to take part in the weekly assemblies when they act out something from their studies. During the inspection, for example, pupils in Year 5 entertained the school with a well-acted playlet set in Victorian times which they are studying in history.
55. Pupils' attainment in reading is in line with the national average. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy reading, often expressing this in the book reviews they write having finished a book. Classes have good stocks of fiction and pupils refer to these enthusiastically, naming authors and saying what genres they favoured. Shared and group reading sessions form a regular part of the teaching of reading and are used well to develop comprehension skills. For example, pupils in Year 4 took turns to read from their copy of a shared reference book. Their teacher and the teaching assistant skilfully posed their questions so that pupils quickly learned how to gather the information, sum it up and explain it in their own words. Most of the school's non-fiction books are distributed between the classes, which does not give pupils enough ready access to a wide enough range of texts. The school does not have a library, which is seriously hampering the effective teaching of research and library skills. It is well aware of this and is actively taking steps to provide this essential facility as soon as it can.
56. Pupils' attainment in writing in Year 6 is in line with national expectations. In other year groups, pupils' attainments is higher than that expected of pupils their age. Improvements have been made over the last year because the school has used its assessment information well. Careful analysis has been made of pupils' results in tests, of the half-termly written work it uses to keep track of pupils' progress and through good monitoring of pupils' work throughout the school. This has resulted in a good emphasis on teaching the basic skills in literacy. Standards in handwriting and presentation, spelling and comprehension skills have all been successfully raised. Pupils take a pride in their work and handwriting is good. Pupils spell commonly used words well and have a good knowledge of

punctuation. From the start of their time in school, pupils write in sentences well. These become more complex as they move through the school. Pupils recognise and use a variety of parts of speech to liven up their writing. In the older classes, pupils are beginning to understand the conventions of different types of writing. For example, in Year 6, pupils are taught how certain phrases such as *on the other hand* and *evidence suggests that* are associated with putting together persuasive arguments. Information and communication technology is also making a good contribution to writing as pupils develop their word processing skills.

57. Teaching is satisfactory overall. All teachers play their part in supporting the school's emphasis on the direct teaching of handwriting, spelling, comprehension and literary devices to enhance writing. Teachers plan the learning of these and other skills in writing very well. Pupils are given a wide range of writing opportunities within which they learn how to convey their meanings for different audiences and purposes. This approach enables them to learn both the conventions of different styles while at the same time practising and learning basic skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 wrote their own stories with an emphasis on the use of adjectives and adverbs and analysed *Macbeth* to summarise it in a few sentences. Teachers provide good opportunities for practising and extending writing skills in other subjects. For example, pupils have written about their experiences in Victorian schools, writing as an air raid warden in World War Two or creating their own Torah scrolls in religious education. In science, they record their work well which aids their understanding of the experiments carried out, although able pupils are not always given enough opportunity to choose for themselves the best way of recording their findings. Pupils clearly enjoy the activities they are given and in some cases become completely absorbed in it. They work hard and take pride in what they do. In one Year 3 class, pupils completed a lot of work during registration, concentrating the whole time as they corrected the "mistakes" deliberately made by their teacher on a piece of written work. Homework is used well to improve spelling and reading especially. Pupils respond well and invariably carry out their assignments. Although teaching is satisfactory there are some weaknesses within this. In some lessons, opportunities are missed to reinforce learning. For example pupils' responses are not always used to deepen their thinking or are accepted without comment. In some lessons, pupils are left too long without their understanding or work being checked. Teachers' marking is inconsistent. Some written comments are very good and help pupils to see how they could improve next time. On the other hand some is no more than ticks and brief instructions or praise.
58. Although the co-ordinator recently left the school, her good monitoring of work and analysis of test results has enabled the school to produce good plans to continue to raise the quality of teaching and learning. The identification of areas of weakness and the steps taken to improve them have paid off and standards are rising throughout the school. Nevertheless, at present the subject is without its own co-ordinator. The headteacher is nominally leading the subject but is combining this responsibility with his many other roles, including leading the management of several other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

59. Results in national tests at the end of Year 6 have fallen since the last inspection. They have been below average most years, and last year they were well below both the national average and the average for similar schools. However, there are encouraging signs of improvement and standards in Year 6 are now better than this, although they remain below average. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys although, in 2002, boys did better than girls.
60. Older pupils started in Year 3 with standards that were in line with national expectations. In relation to these prior levels of attainment, achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards in the current Year 6 are strongest in number skills, although pupils do not apply these skills to problem solving or explaining their work. Little mathematical work involves investigating number problems, so they do not find out about relationships and patterns between numbers. Teachers have identified this as an area for development for the future.
61. The lessons seen and the work in books would indicate that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are working at appropriate levels for their ages, although this still represents underachievement as both year groups attained above average test results in mathematics when they were in the infants. The school is broadly following the *National Numeracy Strategy* format for lessons and this has helped to raise

standards in mental mathematics. Setting arrangements are also helping to raise standards. However, insufficient account is taken of pupils' quite widely differing abilities within these sets and all pupils have the same lesson and activities. Because of the generally good support they receive from teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Although their progress is also satisfactory, the most able pupils do not have the opportunity to extend their knowledge and understanding through more challenging activities.

62. Overall, the teaching and learning of mathematics are satisfactory and in half the lessons observed it was good. The planning satisfactorily follows that outlined in the *National Numeracy Strategy*, although some lessons adhere more closely to the narrower approach suggested in textbooks than the guidance of the *Strategy*, and this limits opportunities to approach mathematical problems in different ways. Where planning is most effective, all sets in the same year group follow the same area of learning. For example, in Year 3, all pupils were learning about directions and compass points and this was reinforced well by an information and communication technology program. Unfortunately, there was also evidence of whole year group planning not being so effective, as when some pupils had missed the introductory lesson to a series of lessons on space and shape because they had been with another group studying fractions.
63. Lessons start with a mental warm up to reinforce basic number facts and teachers usually explain what pupils are expected to learn. Generally lessons end with a suitable time to sum up and evaluate what pupils have learned and understood. Teachers use this to assess pupils' learning and change their future planning to reinforce ideas and correct misconceptions. Teachers give clear explanations and demonstrate how work should be done. Most lessons are well prepared and organised with suitable resources to support pupils' learning. For example, in a very good lesson, half the pupils worked in pairs estimating and weighing different well-chosen items; the other half completed sheets that showed they had a good understanding of how to record mass in different ways including decimals and fractions. Teachers share their plans with the teaching assistants who support pupils who need it. This was particularly effective where the teaching assistant took a small group to clarify the work they were having difficulty understanding. The emphasis on using the correct mathematical vocabulary is reinforced by the displays in each classroom.
64. Pupils work hard in lessons. They are sometimes a little reluctant to answer questions, but with the teachers' encouragement they become more confident. They concentrate when working independently, show interest and work very well in pairs and groups. Pupils' work is well organised and presented neatly. Marking is inconsistent and although most work is marked, teachers' comments offer insufficient guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils are given homework which reinforces the work done over the year. This is well marked and is a positive factor in raising standards. Numeracy is promoted well in other subjects, such as science, design technology and geography. Information and communication technology is used to reinforce some areas of mathematics and each class has one numeracy lesson a week in the computer suite.
65. The subject is well led but the co-ordinator is not currently given enough time to enable her to effectively monitor teaching and follow up weaknesses where these are identified. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues through staff meetings and training days. She monitors planning and pupils' progress, and is working closely with the local education authority to raise standards. The introduction of the *National Numeracy Strategy* has provided the outline of a good structure for teaching and learning. However, in its implementation in the school, there is insufficient emphasis on pupils contributing points for discussion and explaining and demonstrating their methods. The school has itself identified the need to improve numeracy. The careful tracking of pupils' progress, analysis of test results and the appropriate action taken has resulted in an improvement in learning which has begun to show an improvement in standards.

SCIENCE

66. In the 2002 national tests for science, pupils in Year 6 attained standards that were in line with both the national average and that of similar schools. Standards in national tests have fluctuated over the last few years, and during the time when the school was without a permanent headteacher, standards were low. However, since that time standards have risen and, in the work seen during the inspection, pupils currently in Year 6 attain standards similar to last year's test results. These are also similar to

those reported at the time of the last inspection. When they enter school, pupils have attained standards that are broadly average, and therefore, standards seen represents satisfactory achievement. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

67. Standards have risen due partly to the fact that the school now has more settled management and due partly to the fact that staff have put more emphasis on promoting the skills of investigation and experimenting. This results in pupils in Year 6 being confident in carrying out experiments in friction, for example, and being able to record their findings accurately and scientifically. Pupils throughout the school have a clear understanding of what a fair test means. They understand about varying only one part of an experiment, and in recording their findings in a variety of formats. Pupils are skilled at predicting what they think will happen after an investigation. For example, pupils in Year 3 had thought carefully about which paper would be the most absorbent and then tested their ideas. Pupils in Year 5 have investigated the boiling point of water and have used their numeracy skills to produce graphs to show their findings.
68. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although it is too variable. In an excellent lesson in Year 5, the teacher had planned very well so that all pupils were included, interested and very keen to learn. The teacher had very high expectations of pupils being able to discuss how seeds are dispersed, and then to record their ideas giving clear reasons. The class responded very positively and when a coconut was produced, there was much discussion. By the end of the lesson, the pupils really understood the many different ways in which seeds were scattered. The teacher also explained clearly what the class were going to learn next and how they could find out more before the next lesson. However, this high quality teaching is not consistent across all of the classes, even though teachers in each year group plan closely together to ensure that all of the classes experience the same learning opportunities. In some lessons pupils are expected to devise their own recording formats, whilst in others the teachers are very prescriptive and tell the class how to record their work. Although there were no unsatisfactory lessons seen during the inspection, some lessons lack a brisk pace and no time limits were set so that pupils did not know how much they were expected to get done. In most classes, the purpose of the lesson is shared with the pupils, but in a few this is not the case. This results in some pupils not becoming fully involved in the lesson and not getting enough done. Teachers' marking is also inconsistent. The great majority of work is marked with a tick or an encouraging comment, but much marking gives no indication of what the pupils could do to improve their work. However, work in the books is very neat and pupils use their handwriting skills to make sure that work is presented well. Information and communication technology is used well to encourage the pupils to prepare graphs and data sheets using appropriate programs.
69. The science co-ordinator, who only works part-time, leads the subject well. She provides much support for her colleagues and spends much of her own time looking at planning and at work in books. However, the management of the subject is unsatisfactory as the co-ordinator has no time to observe lessons. This means that the inconsistencies in teaching across each year group, and throughout the school, has not been identified and tackled. There are suitable resources for science and these are used well to support learning in the classes. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although standards have fluctuated over the recent past, they are now rising as the leadership of the school is now settled.

ART AND DESIGN

70. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory so that by the end of Year 6 their attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils have a good sense of how to combine different materials and textures for a wide range of purposes. For example, pupils in Year 6 selected different fabrics well to portray scenes from Greek Myths. These were sewn and attached to a tapestry showing characters such as Persephone, Hades and sea creatures in a variety of settings. They also use these skills to create imaginative and lively abstracts and patterns in both two and three dimensions. Pupils' drawing and sketching skills are appropriately developed and they make accurate and detailed portraits and still life pictures. Pupils have good colour mixing skills and use a limited number of colours well to create the match they want. This is illustrated well in the paintings of fruits made by older pupils. Pupils in all years create patterns using their own templates and reflecting particular genres or ideas. For example, in Year 5 pupils made prints after the style of William Morris, in Year 3 they produced

Egyptian style stencils and, in Year 4, pupils made 'Roman' mosaics. Although pupils know a little about some famous artists, they have not had enough opportunity to work in the style of these.

71. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers encourage pupils to be critical of their own and others' work and to identify how they could improve it next time. This was illustrated well in Year 4 when pupils drew faces, evaluated them, tried again, before once more evaluating and then making a third and final attempt. This resulted in good progress as the drawings improved each time. Pupils are well motivated and speak very enthusiastically about their work. In the lessons seen, they became completely engrossed in what they were doing whether sketching faces in Year 4 or sewing characters on a tapestry in Year 6. Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn and practise artistic techniques and methods in other subjects. Pupils studying the Romans, Egyptians and Victorians have used these as the stimulation for a variety of work involving the colours and patterns these times and peoples developed. Pupils from the school designed and made some much-appreciated murals for a local old peoples' residence. The school's garden area has also been enhanced well by pupils' and teachers' painting and sculptures. The school is brightened by the quality of the displays of work which acts as an inspiration to others.
72. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. Adequate resources are always available and staff given appropriate training. There is a good curriculum with pupils being provided with a wide range of opportunities to learn and practise the required techniques and skills. However standards have not risen since the last inspection because there is insufficient checking of the quality of teaching and learning. There is also no systematic assessment of pupils' progress and attainment to ensure skills are being learned and work planned to build on these.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

73. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory so that by the end of Year 6 their attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils' abilities to evaluate what they have made improve as they move through the school. In Year 3, pupils expressed their opinions about what they liked about the designs of some commercial packaging. Using these ideas they then set about designing and then making their own. These too were evaluated for their aesthetic appeal and revised. By Year 6, pupils evaluate the suitability of the material chosen for a task, the quality of the construction as well as the overall appearance. For example, when studying the designs of different slippers they made well-reasoned criticisms of the comfort, look, sturdiness and safety aspects. Pupils plan their work appropriately, drawing different elevations, compiling lists of the materials and tools they need and describing the methods they will use. They then join and combine these materials in a variety of ways. In Year 4, for example, pupils constructed alarm boxes which required the use of balsa wood, wiring and battery housing.
74. Too few lessons were seen to make a judgement about the overall quality of teaching. In the one lesson seen this was satisfactory. The co-ordinator for the subject is enthusiastic and has drawn up plans which identify clearly how the subject is to be developed. At the moment, however, there is too little checking on the quality of teaching and marking. The assessment of pupils' work is not developed sufficiently to measure how much progress they are making nor to plan work so that it always builds on what pupils have learnt.

GEOGRAPHY

75. In all years, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with national expectations. This is due to teaching, which is at least satisfactory, though the curriculum followed in Year 6 concentrates too much on facts and knowledge, with too little attention given to developing geographical skills and developing geographical experiences.
76. In Year 3, pupils locate their route to school on a local map. They identify the type of shops in the locality. They explore the physical effect of the changing seasons and chart changes in weather over a period of a week. In Year 4, pupils learn about settlements and the development of communities from early beginnings. They compare and contrast modern day living with early community life. Year 4 also do a detailed study of India, with a focus on its physical features and its place in the Asian

continent. They identify Chembakoli on a map and identify its physical features. In Year 5, pupils consider the environmental impact of siting a new airport at Cliffe, near Rochester. The pupils identify the impact the airport would have on the environment, people's lives, jobs, housing, local wildlife and the economic impact on the area. The local significance of the subject matter makes the study relevant and important to the pupils. In Year 6, pupils know the continents of the world and name countries and capital cities.

77. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. A scheme of work ensures full coverage of the national curriculum and good medium-term plans exist to support teachers' planning. The curriculum is *blocked* in Year 5, which means that it is only taught for part of the year and in rotation with other subjects. This affects the rate of learning of skills and the development of understanding within the subject in contrast with the other year groups which teach geography on a weekly basis. Teaching assistants sometimes support pupils with special educational needs but this support is not always available.
78. The subject is well led but inadequately managed. The geography co-ordinator runs a daily weather club, which is supported by the BBC and Powergen, and records and predicts the weather. She has no opportunity for the systematic monitoring of teaching, learning and standards in geography, which hinders her impact on raising standards throughout the school.

HISTORY

79. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in all years so that, by the end of Year 6, attainment is in line with national expectations. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection because of the rich curriculum. Year 3 pupils study the Egyptians. They understand the process of mummification, the deity of the gods, pyramid building and life in Egyptian society. In Year 4, pupils study the Romans and the Tudors. They make comparisons between life then and life now, but some concepts, such as Henry VIII's determination to secure a male successor, are too hard for pupils of this age to understand. Year 5 pupils learn about life in Victorian times and show good understanding of the key differences between then and now. Good opportunities are made in this topic to promote spiritual and moral development, including through drama, when pupils are encouraged to express their feelings about how it would have been to live then. In Year 6, pupils study the Second World War. They understand the impact of the war on changing women's lives through the need to work for the war effort.
80. The subject is well taught, resulting in pupils developing a keen interest in the past. There are a number of very good displays on the subject throughout the school that enhance pupils' learning in the subject. Teaching assistants often support pupils with special educational needs but this help is not always available. The more able pupils get opportunities to research information on historical subjects but this activity is rarely identified in teachers planning.
81. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable about the subject but gets no opportunity to systematically monitor teaching, learning and standards in the subject for which she is responsible and this severely limits the impact she is able to make in managing the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

82. Standards in information and communication technology are good throughout the school, which represents very good improvement since the last inspection when standards in information and communication technology were unsatisfactory. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is above national expectations. Resources have been updated and good links exist with other subjects. Teachers' knowledge and confidence have improved considerably since the last inspection.
83. In Year 3, pupils learn how to program a floor robot using a series of commands. They program a computer using *logo* to give a sequence of commands that create mathematical shapes on the screens. They send email to friends. Some pupils are able to add attachments to the email. Year 4 pupils use a word processing program to insert apostrophes that are missing in a piece of text and are able to use *pen up* and *pen down* commands when programming a screen *turtle*. Pupils in Year 5

successfully interrogate a database using *and* and *or* commands and use the subsequent information to support their work in Science. Pupils searched a database containing information on all the planets of the solar system. Year 6 pupils use the internet for searching for information. Pupils found an interesting web page on Sikhism that supported work they were doing in religious education. Pupils have used the school's digital camera to make multimedia presentations of themselves and aspects of the school. Work is often printed out and displayed in folders as well as on wall displays in classrooms. Pupils demonstrate skills in changing font size, using colour, cutting and pasting, using a *spellchecker*, using the *find* and *replace* facility, and using the computer to write headlines and resizing pictures.

84. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the effective support of teaching assistants. More able pupils make good progress due to opportunities given to them to apply their computer skills, knowledge and understanding to tasks contained in worksheets rather than in the teacher's planning. Class based computers provide support to learning across the curriculum as well as opportunities to practise skills learned in the computer suite.
85. The subject is taught well throughout the school resulting in pupils developing a keen interest in computer applications. Strengths are in teacher knowledge and confidence. The school embarked on a major programme of training following the last inspection, led very effectively by the co-ordinator, that raised the profile of information and communication technology within the curriculum. The addition of a dedicated networked suite of sixteen computers enhanced the opportunities for pupils to make good progress. Pupils work in pairs in the suite on most computer work and display high levels of motivation and discuss their work with enthusiasm. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and the considerable investment in resources has had a positive impact on pupils' learning.
86. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has overseen developments since the last inspection. However, insufficient time is made available to the co-ordinator for systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and standards within the subject. A part-time technician provides effective support to the network and the school.

MUSIC

87. Standards in music are broadly in line with national expectations and are similar to those reported at the last inspection. The school has done well to maintain the standards as there is at present no subject co-ordinator and no-one on the teaching staff with music as a specialism. All pupils join in and sing tunefully and enthusiastically in assemblies. In lessons, younger pupils play percussion instruments to represent the characters in *Peter and the Wolf*. They choose the instruments they think most suitable and understand how to play together. By Year 6, pupils add tuned instruments to their compositions and develop ideas to convey mood and feelings. They write their music in a variety of forms. Pupils who have instrumental lessons use musical notation to indicate the rhythm. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
88. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' planning includes opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively. In the most effective lessons, teachers listen to pupils' ideas and appreciate their efforts. This encourages the pupils to work well together and perform confidently. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils composing and performing skills were in this way developed well. Lessons were well organised with a good range of instruments ready for the pupils to use. Teachers develop pupils' skills in small steps. For example, they built up from clapping a simple beat to adding more complex rhythms. Where teaching was not successful, pupils were unsure of what they were expected to do and the subject knowledge of the teacher was unsatisfactory. Teachers make good use of recorded music to support their lessons but no taped music is played at the beginning and end of assemblies so opportunities are missed for learning about composers.
89. The school has had difficulty in recruiting a teacher with expertise in music and this has meant the arrangements for leadership and management have been unsatisfactory. There are suitable arrangements for instrumental tuition and several pupils learn the guitar, clarinet or saxophone.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

90. It is not possible to make an overall judgement about standards in physical education because inspectors were only able to observe a very limited range of activities. In the physical education lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' standards were at least in line with those expected for their age. Their sporting achievements indicate that the more able pupils achieve well in games, athletics and swimming and they have a good track record of victories in inter-school sports competitions in football, netball, athletics and swimming which suggest standards that are above those of other schools. In Year 3, pupils show a good understanding of balance. They link their balancing movements to build up imaginative sequences. Year 4 pupils make appreciable progress in their first attempts at badminton. In the dance lessons in Years 5 and 6, pupils, for the most part, worked well together to create imaginative dance sequences and interpreted the music well.
91. The quality of teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and ranged from unsatisfactory to very good. Teachers manage their classes well and relationships are good. In all lessons, pupils worked well in pairs and in groups. Lessons are generally well planned and pupils know what they are going to learn because it is written up on the board in the hall. Where the teaching was very good, there was a strong emphasis on learning correct techniques and the teacher had high expectations of pupils' performance. Lessons move at a good pace and pupils are given time to practise and develop their skills before moving onto the next part of the lesson. The pace slows where pupils have to sit and wait for their turn on the apparatus. Basic skills of games are well taught and good use is made of demonstration both by the teacher and more able pupils. Pupils learn effectively because they enjoy their lessons and participate with enthusiasm. They listen carefully and make sound progress because of clear explanations.
92. The curriculum includes all aspects of physical education. Swimming lessons take place in the summer term. They have recently been changed from Year 5 to Year 6 so at the time of the inspection there were no records of swimming achievements. Provision for outdoor adventurous activities is not as good as it was at the time of the last inspection because Year 6 no longer have a residential visit. However, this is catered for to a lesser extent by visits to the local sports centre. The school is aware that this is an area for further development. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator supports her colleagues by helping with planning and has observed the work in some classes. She has a clear plan for developing the subject and is in the process of updating the scheme of work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

93. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards in religious education that are in line with those expected and outlined in the locally-agreed syllabus. This is similar to the standards reported during the last inspection and represents satisfactory improvement since that time. Throughout the school, pupils learn about a variety of religions. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils know about Christianity and understand some of the beliefs of Muslims, Sikhs and Jews.
94. The quality of teaching in religious education is satisfactory overall. Lessons are carefully planned so that pupils in each parallel class have the same learning opportunities and experience similar activities. For example, pupils in Year 4 learnt about Jesus' disciples and each of the classes were able to discuss the important qualities and attributes of a friend. Pupils in Year 5 learn about the *Qur'an* and the significance of the *Five Pillars of Islam*. Teachers have high expectations of pupils being able to record their work in a variety of forms. This results in neatly presented work in which pupils take an obvious pride. Pupils in Year 6 have written thoughtful accounts of what life was like for Jewish people in Nazi Germany, for example, and this work is linked very effectively to learning about Anne Frank. Pupils in Year 3 have made posters that demonstrate a good understanding of what *Remembrance Day* means. Such work contributes well to pupils' spiritual development.
95. Teachers' marking is generally encouraging for the pupils, but does not give any indication as to how the work could be improved. In lessons, teachers use resources, such as whiteboards, effectively to assess what the pupils already know. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils wrote words to describe a good friend and all held them up to share with the rest of the class. This resulted

in the teacher being able to see who had understood the purpose of the lesson. However, there is no formal assessment of pupils' work.

96. The headteacher has taken on the role of religious education co-ordinator, in addition to his other roles within the school. The last co-ordinator was very well-organised and the school has continued her work. This results in satisfactory leadership, but unsatisfactory management as work is not monitored, nor are lessons observed to ensure that good practice is shared amongst the staff.