

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTHMEAD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Guildford, Surrey

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125294

Headteacher: Mr. I.C. Hollingsworth

Reporting inspector: Miss Savi Ramnath
21334

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th June 2003

Inspection number: 248687

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Junior |
| School category: | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils: | 7 to 11 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Grange Road Guildford Surrey |
| Postcode: | GU2 9ZA |
| Telephone number: | 0870 7770111 |
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| Appropriate authority: | Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs Christine Stacy |
| Date of previous inspection: | March 16 th 1998 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
| Miss Savi Ramnath <i>Registered inspector</i> 21334 | Science Geography Educational inclusion including race equality | What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What the school should do to improve further |
| Mrs Sally Hall <i>Lay inspector</i> 19693 | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| Mr George Crowther <i>Team inspector</i> 18814 | Music Design and technology | |
| Mr Jim Howard <i>Team inspector</i> 20875 | History Art and design | Assessment |
| Mrs Patricia Kitley <i>Team inspector</i> 23487 | English French English as an additional language | |
| Mrs Jill Lance <i>Team inspector</i> 29695 | Mathematics Religious education | How well is the school led and managed? |
| Mrs Mary Last <i>Team inspector</i> 17171 | Special educational needs | The provision for and standards achieved by pupils in the language and learning unit |
| Mr David Waxler <i>Team inspector</i> 32712 | Information and communication technology Physical education | How good are curricular and other opportunities? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Northmead is a large junior school for boys and girls aged from seven to eleven years. There are 385 pupils on roll organised in 13 single age classes plus 2 classes in a language and learning unit. The school is popular and over-subscribed. It serves the local area where many pupils come from supportive homes and where there is little social disadvantage. About six per cent of pupils currently receive free school meals, a low proportion by national standards. A very small number of pupils are of minority ethnic origin and no additional support is required. Twenty-two per cent of the pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and this is similar to most schools, but the five per cent with a statement of special education need is above the average for schools of this type. Most pupils special needs relate to speech or communication difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems. The levels of attainment of pupils admitted to Year 3 vary widely and are average overall. Since the last inspection, the accommodation has improved significantly.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some excellent features, of which parents and the community are justly proud. It maintains very high standards and constantly strives to improve them. It is very well led and managed, and staff work as a closely knit and committed team. The overall very good quality teaching enables pupils to achieve very well and attain above national expectations in many subjects. Pupils' very good behaviour and the very good relationships they have with each other contribute to a positive learning environment. Finances are used efficiently and the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is very good overall and outstanding in some lessons.
- The outstanding leadership by the headteacher is a key factor in pupils achieving high standards in English, mathematics and in number of foundation subjects.¹
- Standards in art and design, singing and outcomes of design and technology
- The school provides an environment in which pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour support their learning well.
- Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school provides very good care for its pupils and has established most effective links with parents.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities which is well supported.

What could be improved

- Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The emphasis placed on experiment and investigation in mathematics and science, and all aspects of music and design and technology.
- Teachers' use of regular assessment to ensure work is well matched to pupils' needs in all subjects.

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

¹ Foundation Subjects - Subjects other than English, mathematics and science

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1998. Since then it has consolidated its strongest features and has dealt very well with the one issue raised. The school has invested wisely in computer resources to raise pupils' attainment in information and communication technology, which is now above the levels expected nationally for pupils in Year 6. In addition, the school has effectively improved in other areas. Much work has been done to improve the accommodation and resources. The school successfully integrated 60 pupils into Years 5 and 6 in 2001 due to the closure of local schools and has successfully created a separate language and learning unit catering for 15 pupils. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection due to numerous initiatives, improved resources and continued high expectations.

The staff have been very successful in maintaining the good ethos and the direction of the school that made such a positive impact on the quality of education being provided at the time of the last inspection.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average² point scores in National Curriculum tests.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------|------|------------------------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools ³ |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| English | A | A | A | B |
| Mathematics | B | A | A | B |
| Science | A | A | B | B |

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

Over the last four years, results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have exceeded the national averages. The school's targets in English and mathematics were exceeded in 2002. The school continues to have high expectations and challenging targets were agreed and met for 2003. Although test results at the end of Year 6 indicated that boys performed slightly better than girls, inspection evidence shows little difference in their performance.

Overall, pupils' achievements are very good. Evidence from the inspection shows that Year 6 pupils are attaining well above the expected level in English, mathematics, history, art and design and aspects of music and design and technology. In all other subjects, pupils attain above the expected standards except in geography where there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement. Whilst standards in mathematics are well above and in science above expectations pupils' skills in using and applying their knowledge, aspects of speaking and listening, music and design and technology are less well developed. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in

² Average points score - pupils' levels in National Curriculum tests are converted to points and used to compare a school's performance with schools nationally and with similar schools.

³ Similar schools are those that have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals

their learning; they are very well supported. Higher attaining pupils achieve well overall and make good progress. Although the school does not have a register of gifted and talented pupils the needs of the most able pupils are well met.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils enjoy school, are very well motivated and keen to succeed. They concentrate well and are proud of their achievements. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's high expectations of conduct. Pupils are courteous and respectful towards each other, to teachers and other members of staff at all times. |
| Personal development and relationships | Good. Relationships with one another and with adults are very good and teachers and other adults in the school set good examples of respect and tolerance for others. However, there is scope for pupils to develop their initiative and take more responsibility during lessons. |
| Attendance | Good. Attendance is above the national average. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Teaching of pupils: | aged 7-11 years |
| Lessons seen overall | Very good |

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

The overall very good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and is one of the reasons for the successes of the school. It enables pupils with a wide range of needs to learn effectively.

In English and mathematics, teaching is very good because the needs of pupils are generally well met through setting. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is thorough and systematic with good support for the development of language skills in history and geography and number skills in design and technology and science. In history, art and design and aspects of music and design technology teaching is also very good. In all other subjects where it is possible to make a judgement teaching is good.

Very good teaching is characterised by good planning with clear learning objectives, which are shared with the pupils and good subject knowledge, which enables teachers to extend pupils' understanding. In these sessions, tasks set are challenging and are well matched to the different levels of attainment in the class. This ensures that all pupils make good gains in new knowledge and skills and learn well. Good and sometimes very good subject knowledge and good management of the class help to improve the quality of pupils' learning. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, planning and tasks take insufficient account of the different levels of attainment and some teacher's use of questions does not encourage pupils to contribute.

The needs of pupils identified as having special educational needs are being met well through the good

use of support staff. As a result, these pupils make good progress and achieve the targets set for them in their individual educational plans. The needs of the higher attaining pupils are generally met well in English and mathematics.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good. The school teaches a broad curriculum which is enhanced by the inclusion of French for older pupils, and includes an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | Good. Pupils who have learning difficulties are identified early and are given appropriate support to help them make progress. Learning support staff make a good contribution. Provision for pupils in the language and learning unit is also good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) | Good. Although only very few pupils with English as an additional Language attend the school, their progress in acquiring English and Learning across the curriculum is rapid. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Overall very good. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils' moral and cultural development and opportunities for their social and spiritual development are good. This very good provision results in the very good relationships and behaviour seen throughout the school. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Overall very good. Procedures to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good. Assessment procedures are in place in nearly all subjects and information gained is well used in mathematics to support planning and to help ensure that the work is matched to pupils' needs and levels of attainment. |

Parents are kept well informed about what is taught and the progress their children make. There are very good links with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Very good. The school benefits from the outstanding leadership of the headteacher who shows a very clear sense of direction and a determination to achieve high standards. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and a dedicated staff who work well as a team to plan and implement improvements that help to raise standards. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Satisfactory. The governing body works closely with the headteacher and is knowledgeable and enthusiastic in its support of the school's procedures for raising standards. Governors have an increasing understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and fulfil all of their legal responsibilities. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. There is a strong commitment to high standards. Good checks are made on the areas identified for development and findings are well used to guide effective action that succeeds in bringing about improvement. |
| The strategic use of resources | Very good. Financial planning and day-to-day financial management of the school ensures all educational and spending decisions are considered carefully to achieve best value for money. There has been excellent use of funding to enhance the accommodation and this has |

| |
|--|
| brought benefit to both teaching and learning. |
|--|

Staffing levels are very good and the school maintains the very good accommodation and resources well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents returned 162 questionnaires (42 per cent of those sent out) and 38 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school.• The school has high expectations of their children.• Behaviour and progress are both good.• The school works closely with them.• The teaching and management in the school are both good.• The school is very approachable. | <p>They were no significant issues or concerns raised by parents at the meeting or on the parents' questionnaire.</p> |

The overwhelming response of parents is positive, appreciative and constructive. Inspection findings support all the positive views expressed in both the questionnaire responses and at the meeting with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

This section should be read in conjunction with the section on standards in the summary. What is reported there is not necessarily repeated here. Details about standards will also be found at the beginning of each subject report and through examples given in those reports.

Overall standards are **well above average** and pupils achieve **very well**.

Strengths:

- Pupils do very well in national tests at the end of Year 6;
- Pupils achieve well in basic skills in English, mathematics, information and communication technology and history;
- Pupils produce high quality work in pottery, art and aspects of design and technology and music.

Areas for development:

- More opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving and their research and enquiry skills in science;
- Planned opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking skills.

1. The last inspection in June 1998 reported that standards for Year 6 pupils were at least above or well above expectations in all subjects of the National Curriculum except in information and communication technology (ICT) where standards were at the level expected nationally. Since then numerous initiatives have been put into place to address the weaknesses identified and to improve standards. These include the setting of pupils in groups of similar attainment in mathematics across the school and in English in the upper school, the development of an ICT suite and implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. All of these have had particularly beneficial effects on standards in all subjects, which overall have been maintained or improved since the last inspection.
2. The results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, for 2002 show standards well above the national average in English, mathematics and above average in science. When compared with similar schools (those with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) standards are above average in all three subjects. Since 1999 overall standards in the three subjects, when taken together, have remained well above the national average and the trend for the past five years has been in line with the national trend. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
3. Pupils' overall, achievement (the progress they make in relation to their initial attainment) is very good. The evidence of inspection shows that for pupils in Year 6 standards are well above national expectations in English, mathematics, history, art and design and aspects of music and design and technology. In science, physical education, religious education and ICT standards are above expectations. In geography, there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about standards for Year 6 pupils.
4. The overall standards seen in pupils' work in nearly all aspects of English are well above what is expected nationally. The exception is speaking and listening where standards are above expectations. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a wide and expressive vocabulary, share ideas

and give well-considered reasons for their views when given opportunities. However, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their speaking skills across the curriculum and teachers do not always provide sufficient time for pupils to respond to questions asked. In reading, the majority of pupils have acquired a range of reading strategies that enable them to tackle texts of increasing complexity, and higher attaining pupils confidently talk about the plot and characters and show a good understanding of elements such as inference and deduction. They write effectively for a wide range of purposes, using language in interesting and effective ways. Pupils of all ages develop good handwriting and present their work well.

5. In mathematics, standards are well above the expected levels. The grouping of pupils by prior attainment and the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy are having a positive impact on pupils' mental calculations. It has resulted in an emphasis on number and as a result many pupils by the end of Year 6 have good numeracy skills. They measure accurately and draw angles to the nearest degree, understand the relationships between fractions and decimals and use their understanding of place value to multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals with accuracy. Throughout the school pupils have too few opportunities to investigate and solve mathematical problems and this results in lower standards in this aspect of their work.
6. Standards in science are above expectations and by the end of Year 6 pupils make good gains in most aspects of the science curriculum. They have a good knowledge of all aspects of the life processes, such as the functions of the human circulatory system and correctly explain why some materials are better conductors of electricity than others. However, progress is sometimes limited because activities are over-directed by the teacher and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to plan their own experiments, select appropriate equipment or make decisions for themselves.
7. In ICT, standards are above those expected at the end of Year 6 and progress is good throughout the school. The ICT suite, good support by the technician, and staff enthusiasm have helped to raise standards. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have well-developed skills in ICT and use the computers with great confidence. They successfully merge text and graphics, create spreadsheets and are confident in using the Internet to search information sources and to select and print relevant information linked to their work. In religious education, standards are above the recommendations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils recognise some of the significant similarities and differences between major world faiths, such as Judaism and Christianity. In art and design, history and aspects of design and technology and music pupils achieve well above the expected standards. They recognise important features of the style of several famous artists including Georgia O'Keefe; learn to use secondary sources for research in history; demonstrate their skills and confidence in the use of a wide range of materials and techniques and sing harmoniously in tune achieving a high standard of performance. In physical education, pupils develop good skills of catching, throwing and passing in games.
8. The successful introduction of both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is having a positive effect on pupils' progress in all subjects. From Year 3, pupils learn to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in science, history, geography and religious education and this has helped to maintain standards. They produce graphs of their observations and make calculations in science. They write simple reports, poems and posters to describe other work.
9. Higher attaining pupils achieve well overall. The setting of pupils in English and mathematics gives these pupils good opportunities to work at their own speed. As a result, they make good progress and often produce work that is far beyond that expected for their age. The school is successful in the achievements of lower attaining pupils. The pupils from ethnic minority origins

achieve similarly to the rest of pupils.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them. Their progress is evident in lessons where they receive additional support from teachers and classroom assistants, notably in literacy and numeracy lessons. Progress is slower in lessons when teachers' planning does not take full account of their learning difficulties. Very good support is provided for pupils in the language and learning unit enabling them to achieve well and take a full part in school life.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

The pupils have maintained the **very good** standards found at the time of the last inspection.

Strengths

- The pupils have very good attitudes to learning;
- Behaviour is very good;
- The pupils' relationships with staff and other pupils are very good;
- Attendance rates are better than similar schools.

Areas for development

- Pupils do not fully develop skills in using their initiative and taking some responsibility for the way they learn.

11. The pupils' attitudes to school are very good and their enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on their progress. They show a keen interest in their learning. The parents say that their children love coming to school and they particularly enjoy taking part in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities. In the great majority of lessons pupils listen attentively, are keen to answer questions and concentrate on their work. In the very good lessons, the pupils are fired up by the teachers' enthusiasm. One pupil said that '*they teach in interesting ways*'. This was seen in a Year 5 mathematics lesson on estimating and measuring angles held in the ICT suite. Overall, pupils are proud of the school and their successes in the national tests, in sports and in the performing arts. The inspection findings confirm this judgement.
12. The pupils' behaviour is very good both in lessons and around the school. The strong moral ethos helps to create a relaxed yet orderly atmosphere throughout the school and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The pupils know that adults working in the school expect very high standards of behaviour and the pupils behave very well in lessons. The pupils enjoy receiving praise and team points; sanctions are rarely needed. Behaviour in assembly and in the playground is also very good and pupils appreciate and respect their environment. Two pupils were excluded for six periods in the last year for outbursts of unacceptable and violent behaviour. The pupils say that rare incidents of name-calling and bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There have been no racial incidents.
13. In all lessons the behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is at least good and in line with that of other pupils. They are keen to complete their work and try hard to do well often benefiting from support from teaching assistants who help to maintain their concentration and motivation. In some lessons, such as physical education, the pupils with special educational needs are indiscernible from others because they mix well and take a full part in the lesson. Pupils are confident and they speak to visitors with ease; and they are willing to answer questions and are able to talk about their work.

14. The pupils' personal development and relationships are good. The school's good provision for social development enables pupils to develop confidence. For example, pupils are working with the London Chamber Orchestra on a joint performance and others gain important social skills when taking part in inter-school sports and residential visits. When given the opportunity, the pupils reflect and express their feelings. This is seen in the poetry written after a visit to Winterhall, a sculpture park focusing on The Stations of the Cross. One Year 6 pupil's poem contains the following lines.

*I reached the top, to see my mother held back by the soldiers
I could not talk to her that last time
I felt so weak and yet so proud of what I'd done
The nails were so small, yet the pain was beyond belief.*

15. When asked to carry out tasks in lessons and around the school, pupils do so responsibly. They take pride in their roles as monitors in their classrooms, carrying out their duties conscientiously. However, in many lessons, pupils are not given enough encouragement and opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in a library skills lesson, the pupils' task was to copy information from non-fiction books, rather than using the resources to develop their research skills. Teachers often present pupils with facts, thus restricting development of pupils' investigative skills. Overall, there are too few planned opportunities for older pupils to take on responsibility and have involvement in the day-to-day running of the school. Relationships are very good and the pupils work very well together in pairs and groups. Older pupils support younger pupils with reading and pupils help each other, for example when working on the computers.
16. The pupils' attendance is good. The attendance rate for 2001/02 of 95.4 per cent is above that found in similar schools and the unauthorised absence level of 0.1 per cent is broadly in line with the national average. Very few pupils arrive late and the school day starts promptly. The pupils' good attendance and punctuality has a positive impact on their achievement.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Basic skills in English and mathematics are taught well;
- Teachers have high expectations of the standards that pupils will attain in their work.
- The very good teaching has both pace and challenge;
- Teachers make very good use of homework to extend pupils' learning.

Areas for development:

- The use of regular assessment to help plan work appropriate to the levels of understanding of all pupils;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to respond to challenging questions.

17. The very good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and contributes significantly to the quality of pupils' learning, their attitudes and the good and sometimes very good progress that they make. Seventy per cent of lessons observed were good or better. In 33 per cent of these, teaching and learning were very good or excellent. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during this inspection. Examples of good and very good teaching are found in nearly all subjects in every year group across the school.

18. The teaching of English and mathematics is very good and has benefited from the successful introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. It has also benefited from the pupils being organised into smaller groups through the use of an extra teacher during the literacy and numeracy sessions. Overall, lessons are carefully planned with clear learning objectives. Most teachers provide a good balance between whole class and group activities. Guided reading, which takes place outside the literacy hour, is particularly well used to develop pupils' reading skills. Teachers take opportunities to develop literacy in other areas of the curriculum, for example, when they extend pupils' vocabulary by the use of specialist terms in science or geography lessons. Where teaching is very good, teachers explain ideas clearly and, as a result, learning is very good. In the whole-class sessions, most teachers lead discussions well but at times there is too much 'teacher talk' and not enough time is given for pupils to contribute their own ideas. Discussions at the end of lessons are used well to review its main points and to ensure that pupils have a secure understanding of the work before moving them on to the next stage in their learning. In mathematics, teachers explain clearly and, as a result, learning is good. There is an effective focus on the development of mental arithmetic with regular, challenging, quick-fire questioning at the start of lessons and this has improved pupils' recall of number facts. However there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop problem-solving skills.
19. The teaching of science is good because secure teachers' knowledge and understanding ensure that the quality of learning of new skills, knowledge and understanding is good. However, pupils are not always helped sufficiently to develop their experimental and investigative skills and to take more responsibility for planning investigations in science. The improvement in the teaching of ICT, which is now good, has enabled the school to address a key issue from the last inspection. Teachers are now more confident in the teaching of the subject as much has been done through training to raise staff expectations. The teaching of art and design as well as singing is good and pupils make good progress in these subjects throughout their time in school. Good use is made of the teachers' subject expertise to teach the subject throughout the school. In physical education and religious education teaching is good. In all other subjects there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the quality of teaching.
20. Throughout the school, teachers have a secure knowledge of most subjects and this enhances pupils' learning. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 6 art and design lesson on creating fabric pictures in the style of Indian textile. Appropriate technical vocabulary, that was easily understood, was introduced and new techniques were clearly demonstrated and explained. Information was imparted in a lively and stimulating way, which engaged pupils' interest and motivated them well. This led to pupils making very good progress during the lesson.
21. Although the planning of lessons has improved since the last inspection, there is still room for improvement. The best and most detailed planning is prepared for the literacy and numeracy sessions and follows national guidelines. Plans clearly show what is to be taught and learned and tasks organised are generally matched carefully to pupils' learning needs. Therefore, in a Year 5 numeracy lesson on 'calculating percentages of whole numbers' pupils were prompted to think hard when working out 69 per cent of £360. In this very good lesson, effective use was made of calculators and support materials to ensure that work was closely matched to the identified needs of the upper group of pupil. However, this improved planning is not always evident in other subjects and do not routinely identify what pupils of different levels of attainment including those with special educational needs will know and understand by the end of the lesson.

22. The quality and use of day-to-day assessment by teachers is variable but is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good or better, teachers often use questions well; for example, carefully targeting questions to check and challenge all pupils' thinking and understanding, and to ensure that there are equal opportunities for both boys and girls to answer questions and make contributions. Good examples were seen during an ICT lesson in Year 6 where the teacher's effective questioning on how to load photographs for a computerised presentation led to pupils making very good progress. However, this good practice is inconsistent and at times, the questions used do not encourage extended responses. Teachers evaluate their lessons and the best of these evaluations includes helpful assessment information. Most make regular notes on individual pupils' development of skills and understanding. However, not all consistently amend their teaching accordingly. A scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that marking is often minimal, with little evaluative comment or pointers on how pupils might improve their performance. Whilst there are some good examples of helpful marking, these are not typical.
23. Time was used well in most of the lessons observed and in the best practice, for example the mental mathematics sessions; not a minute is wasted. Some teachers use time targets well to inject pace and urgency into pupils' working, giving them five minutes to complete a task or reminding them that they have only 15 minutes left. Teachers make good use of learning support assistants, involving them fully in the main part of the lesson; so that targeted pupils have constant help from adults. This enables those pupils to seek advice and develop confidence.
24. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes is good overall with many strengths. In the very best lessons teachers challenge the pupils to reflect on how they might improve their work by giving them hints and clues as to suitable strategies. Teaching assistants are generally highly effective particularly where they know the pupils very well and are able to adapt the work provided by the teacher to meet at the needs of the pupils. However, in some lessons the teachers do not always plan effectively for the most efficient use of such support staff and there is some time wastage when they are not actively involved in supporting or observing pupils. In a small number of lessons there was insufficient planning which identified a range of needs in the classroom: this resulted in all the pupils doing the same work with limited opportunities for some lower attaining pupils to be successful.
25. The teachers' knowledge of issues concerning special educational needs is varied. The school has successfully covered several important aspects during training days. Nevertheless, in a small number of lessons teachers do not have the necessary skills and knowledge to support the range of ability in the class. In these cases they either rely upon the skills of the teaching assistants or supply only very basic work for the pupils

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

Overall, the school has a **good** curriculum and makes **very good** provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Strengths:

- The imaginative content and organisation of the curriculum in particular the high quality programme; focusing on the creative arts;
- The excellent range and quality of extra curricular activities;
- Very good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE);
- Strong moral code and high expectations of good behaviour;
- Very good cultural development especially through art and extra-curricular music.

Areas for development:

- Time given to the range of music skills and to the design aspects of design and technology;
 - Opportunities for pupils to develop speaking skills and to investigate and solve mathematical and scientific problems;
 - Opportunities for pupils to reflect and explain their own thoughts, ideas and opinions.
26. The school provides a good curriculum. Responding to a weakness identified at the last inspection, the school has improved significantly its provision for ICT, as a result of which Year 6 pupils now reach standards that are better than those expected nationally. The development of an imaginative curriculum with a strong focus on the creative arts and technology has led to high standards particularly in art, pottery and singing. This has been achieved by implementing a well thought out timetable involving art, textiles, pottery, singing, printing and design and technology that maximises the use of the specialist skills of teachers. The school also provides good opportunities for pupils to learn French as part of the curriculum.
27. In promoting a positive ethos in the school and making the creative arts a focus of excellence, the school has however not met fully all aspect of some areas in the National Curriculum. Although the school provides a good, broad curriculum, in a few subjects there is not enough emphasis placed on some aspects of learning. Not enough time is devoted to the design elements of design and technology and all aspects of music. In a few classes there is not enough focus on mathematical problem solving and science investigations.
28. The National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are having a positive impact on learning in English and mathematics. The setting of pupils by attainment in both subjects has in many classes helped to match work more closely to needs and created smaller classes for those who most need extra support. In the most successful lessons, for example a small Year 6 mathematics lower set planning and costing holidays, pupils with specific learning needs have benefited from clearly targeted support and were observed to make good progress.
29. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which are open to all year groups. The school is particularly successful in competition at local and national level in all these sports and takes a lead role in organising many of the local events. Pupils take part in musical activities utilising its very strong choir. A wide range of visits, including a residential trip to the Isle of Wight for Year 6 pupils, is used well to enrich the curriculum. A particularly good feature is the homework club which currently operates twice a week and is planned to extend to 3 days a week from next term.

30. Pupils with special educational needs follow the same curriculum as other pupils in the school and have full access to National Curriculum subjects. Their attainment on entry is well below national expectations and they are therefore working at levels below those of their peers. The grouping of pupils into ability sets caters for their needs in reading and literacy groups. The ability range is mostly manageable in terms of the pupils' needs so that the teacher is able to organise activities for the whole group. Overall the wide range of pupils' needs is met and evidenced by good progress through the National Curriculum. The most successful pupils have succeeded in moving from working within level 1 to Levels 3 / 4.
31. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. Sex education is taught in Years 4 and 6 with outside expertise available. There is a well-planned drugs education programme that is taught in Years 3, 5 and 6. The local police team visits the school and work with Year 6 pupils as part of their drugs awareness programme. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award for the third time.
32. The contribution made to pupils' learning by the community is very good. There are close links with a local church and useful links with local business and groups from the surrounding community. The school has strong links with the Emmanuel Church; for example in supporting the after school care club (OASIS). A youth worker from the local church comes to the school at lunchtimes and runs a football club. The school premises and facilities, for example the all weather pitches, are let out for the use of local community groups.
33. Overall, the school has good relations with partner schools. In particular there are very good links with the Kings College, the main local secondary school to which pupils transfer and have established very good curriculum links and works closely together. There are good transfer arrangements with individual discussions for new parents beforehand. Special Education Co-ordinators from the two schools work together to ensure relevant information is shared, and pupils take part in an 'Adventure Day'. Links with feeder primary schools are less well established and the school is aware of the need to develop relations that are more effective.
34. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Some good practice was seen during the inspection, for example in a Year 3 religious education lesson on courage, the pupils were spellbound as their teacher told the story of David and Goliath. The teacher then skilfully encouraged the pupils to talk about their own fears and they discussed their own ways of overcoming them, including asking God or friends for support. Daily acts of worship make a sound contribution to spiritual development. Staff leading the assemblies explore carefully chosen themes such as 'Achievement', and there are good opportunities to celebrate the pupils' and others' successes. However, not enough time is given in assemblies or lessons for pupils to gather their thoughts, reflect, and explain their ideas. For example, in a Year 6 geography lesson, the teacher explained how cliffs and arches were formed. However, she did not encourage the pupils to reflect on their recent trip the coast, nor give them opportunities to present their own opinions on how these features evolved.
35. The school's provision for the pupils' moral development is very good. This is not a highly regimented community but one where there are high expectations of good and respectful behaviour. Adults in the school provide good role models for pupils. The school's strong moral code and feeling of community enable the school to operate in a safe and supportive learning environment. For example in a Year 4 class discussion on bullying, the teacher carefully explored pupils' feelings and made particular reference to reduced confidence and where to get help. The school encourages pupils to think of others and pupils are keen to organise fundraising events for charities both locally and internationally.

36. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' social development. Members of the school council are keen to make improvements to school life and have successfully introduced a favourite food week and a reading club. However, due to staff changes the council has not met for 4 months, reducing its effectiveness. The sense of community is strong and is fostered through whole school productions, team sports, the choirs and other musical groups as well as residential visits.
37. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. The school is particularly successful in providing the pupils with valuable insights into other cultures. Stunning displays of the pupils' artwork celebrate a wide range of cultures such as Indian printing on textiles, the work of Georgia O'Keefe and pottery models of Tudor houses. Pictures of role models such as Ghandi and Mary Secole reinforce the pupils' multicultural awareness. Pupils study a range of world faiths and visit different places of worship. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of their own culture is developed very well throughout the curriculum for example in English. History topics are enhanced through visits to historic houses where pupils experience life in other ages. The school musical groups produce high quality performances for local and national musical events, as well performing at school concerts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Overall, the school cares **very well** for its pupils.

Strengths:

- Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported;
- Effective policies and procedures safeguard pupils' welfare and encourage good behaviour;
- The health and safety procedures are very good;
- Pupils' attendance is monitored very effectively.

Areas for development:

- Assessment information is not always well used to help plan lessons in some subjects.
38. The school has very good procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. There are adequate arrangements for child protection and the school has drawn up a sound policy. There is a designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection who has received relevant training and carries out the duties effectively. Staff are aware of the school's procedures and know to report any concerns. Procedures for pupils in public care have not been formalised
39. The school pays very good attention to health and safety. Staff are vigilant of any potential hazards and the local authority has undertaken a risk assessment of the premises. Governors make regular checks of the building and any issues are rigorously followed up. Appropriate procedures are in place for emergency evacuations and testing of electrical equipment.
40. The arrangements for first aid are good. Several members of staff have received basic first aid training and pupils who are ill or injured receive good care and attention. There are very good procedures for informing parents and administering medication.
41. The school provides good educational and personal support for its pupils. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. Some Year 6 pupils said when they left they would 'miss the teachers because they are friendly and helpful'. Teachers keep track of pupils' personal, social and emotional development through listening to pupils, especially

- through circle time (whole class discussions). Other adults including support staff and office staff also make significant contributions in caring for pupils. Pupils' personal achievements are celebrated in assemblies and teachers make helpful comments in the pupils' annual reports.
42. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and guidance. Staff and pupils enjoy good relationships and as a result pupils try hard to please adults. The special educational needs co-ordinator shares information effectively and has highly relevant plans for improving the support to all pupils. Staff generally work to agreed policies and practices but there are sometimes difficulties over the deployment of teaching assistants.
 43. The school's arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Registers are completed correctly. The parents make good use of the absence phone line and the school swiftly follows up any unexplained absences. The school successfully promotes punctuality and addresses any persistent lateness. The school works with the educational welfare officer on the rare occasions when attendance or punctuality is a concern.
 44. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. This is not a highly regimented community, but one where the school's ethos and charter emphasises treating everyone with courtesy and consideration. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of good behaviour and are very good role models. Rewards are effective and pupils enjoy receiving praise and merits. A consistent and effective system of sanctions is in place, but is rarely needed. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good and the school has a clear anti-bullying policy. Bullying is discussed in assemblies and whole class discussions and pupils say that rare incidents of anti-social behaviour are dealt with effectively.
 45. The systems for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory. In addition to compulsory tests and assessments, the school also makes effective use of optional National Curriculum tests to build up a picture of its current level of success. Procedures are most developed in mathematics, where they are good. A new system of tracking pupils' progress has been developed. Using data from this, teachers track individual pupils' progress and set appropriate targets. In time, it is planned that this system will be extended to include all subjects. Subject co-ordinators analyse test results to identify areas for improvement and the curriculum is modified accordingly.
 46. The arrangements for assessing progress in other subjects are more informal. In some instances, they are more a record of work that has been covered than a record of pupils' achievements. The school is developing its assessment procedures to meet identified areas for development. This is indicative of the school's continuing commitment to improvement. The current assessment action plan includes plans for staff training on assessment in information communication technology. There are already very good examples of pupils' self-evaluations of their work. These are well thought out and ask probing questions. For example, a history assessment required pupils to evaluate which part of their topic work had provided the best opportunities for them to organise and present their ideas and to demonstrate their research skills.
 47. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational make good use of a range of methods including standardized tests in reading and spelling. The school is continuing to add to its strategies for tracking the progress of pupils with special educational needs as comprehensively as possible.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

The school's has maintained the **strong** partnership found at the time of the last inspection.

Strengths:

- The school has developed very effective links with its parents and carers;
- It is very welcoming and encourages parents to become involved in their children's education;
- Parents have very positive views of the school and are very supportive of the work of the school.

Areas for Improvement:

- The quality of pupils' annual reports.

48. The parents and carers hold the school in high regard and they expressed extremely favourable views at the pre-inspection meeting and through the Ofsted questionnaires. They say that their children love coming to school. The parents have confidence in the way the school is led and managed and feel that the staff are very approachable. They say that their children are expected to work hard and are making good progress. They consider that teaching is good are impressed with the standards of behaviour and the developing confidence of their children. The inspection team agrees with these positive views. Parents raised no significant concerns.
49. The school's links with parents are very good. The staff have worked hard to reach out to parents and the vast majority of parents feel that the school works closely with them. Parents feel that the school is very welcoming and staff are approachable if they have concerns. The school website provides parents who have access to the Internet with a good range of news and information such as policies and newsletters. The school values parents' opinions and conducts regular surveys. A recent questionnaire has resulted in plans to redesign the foyer and reception area to make it more welcoming. The school has organised useful computer courses for families, which are proving very popular.
50. The information, which the school provides for parents, is good and helps parents to support their children's learning. New parents are well informed about the school through visits, meetings and a helpful prospectus. A useful calendar and handbook gives parents very timely and relevant information throughout the school year as well as publishing pupils' work. The weekly newsletter also informs parents of future events as well as celebrating the school's successes. The school sends parents valuable information each term about what their children will be studying and invites parents to helpful information sessions, for example on science. Termly consultations with teachers provide parents with good opportunities to discuss their children's progress. The pupils' annual reports are satisfactory and the school recognises the need to make improvements.
51. The parents' involvement with the work of the school is very good and has a positive impact on many aspects of school life. The active parent teacher association raises valuable funds for educational purposes as well as organising social events. All parents have signed the home-school agreement. Parents enjoy supporting special events such as concerts and productions.
52. The parents' contribution to their children's learning is very good. The school values the help offered by parents who assist in the classrooms each week. Others help with trips and after-school clubs. The parents are very interested in their children's education and attendance at parent consultations is very high. Most parents give good support at home by listening to their children read and ensuring that homework is completed.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Overall, the standard of leadership and management is **very good** with some outstanding features.

Strengths:

- The headteacher provides dynamic, visionary leadership;
- Very good relationships support the management of the school;
- Use of the school's finances to support educational priorities;
- The accommodation provides very good facilities for learning.

Areas for development:

- The role of the governing body in taking a more active part in planning the development of the school and acting as a critical friend;
 - Checking the quality of teaching and taking action to improve learning in some subjects.
53. The headteacher continues to give a very good, clear educational direction to the school, as he did at the time of the last inspection in 1998. The long-term future of the school is managed very effectively to make changes that are necessary to improve both provision and performance. The school development plan gives a clear vision for the school's future direction. This comprehensive plan contains appropriate priorities, time scales, clearly identifying what needs to be done, and how the school plans to bring about changes. This is a similar finding to the last inspection. The school's aims and values are fully reflected and recognised within the plan, as well as through the very good relationships that exist within the school. Parents clearly appreciate the leadership provided by the headteacher. In their questionnaires, nearly all parents indicated that they considered that the school was well led and managed. The headteacher is well supported by all senior managers who undertake their delegated responsibilities effectively to provide a good lead to staff teams. They have effective systems in place for monitoring the quality of teaching in order to achieve consistency of practice. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, and areas for further improvement have been identified. Year group leaders and subject co-ordinators give good support and informal guidance to colleagues. They monitor teachers' plans and pupils' work to ensure coverage of the curriculum and are largely effective in their management of the subjects.
54. The governors share the headteacher's vision and are committed to maintaining the school's strengths and improving it further. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is satisfactory overall. Members of the governing body, which includes several new members, have a good commitment to the school and every confidence in the headteacher, whom they support well. The chair of governors meets frequently with the headteacher and governors meet regularly to oversee the work of the school. The committee structure is well established and working effectively. They visit the school on a regular basis and are kept informed by subject co-ordinators. Although governors are kept well informed by the headteacher and school staff they do not yet understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well enough to help them guide the school forward more rigorously. Overall, governors play only a limited role in monitoring standards within the school.
55. The school's monitors its performance well. There is a shared commitment to improvement with appropriate structures and procedures in place to monitor standards. This is particularly strong in English and mathematics where the headteacher and his staff analyse the attainment of pupils in tests. External advisors are also involved in checking on standards. The school uses the results to identify aspects of the curriculum that need development and then takes effective action to deal with the issues identified by the process. For example, it has recently implemented change in the organisation of teaching of English in Year 5. In some other curriculum subjects, for example, science and geography although leadership and management are satisfactory the

- evaluation following on lacks enough critical response to bring about further improvement in the development of teaching.
56. The leadership and management of the special educational needs provision is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has a good understanding of the main issues concerning better opportunities for pupils with special needs to be supported in all areas of the curriculum. She is particularly aware of the need to provide relevant information about successful methods to all staff. Overall, the issue of staff training is a priority for the SENCO and forms part of the school's continuing planning for improvement.
57. The organization of teaching and learning within the language and learning unit is good. The procedures for reviewing statements and liaising with parents meet requirements. Some difficulties over staff deployment are being addressed. The specialist staff have are continuing to support staff so that they improve their strategies to meet pupils' needs. This issue of staff training is a priority for the SENCO and forms part of the school's continuing planning for improvement.
58. Arrangements for developing the expertise of the staff are very good. The school regards this aspect of its work as a high priority, which is reflected in very good management by the deputy headteacher and senior staff of all matters concerning continuing professional development. The school is currently working towards 'Investors in People' status, which will recognise its commitment to valuing and improving the staff's contribution to the pupils' education. Comprehensive arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers support them very well during their first year of teaching at Northmead. Training is also provided for teaching assistants, and they are keen to improve their skills. Performance management is well established and staff say that it is a very valuable process. Whole-school targets, such as improving teachers' expertise in ICT, have been very successful and have contributed to raising standards in the subject since the last inspection. Governors have set the headteacher's performance targets and regard them as a useful way of influencing and monitoring the work of the school. In all these areas, there are exemplary links between priorities in the school improvement plan, individual teacher's performance targets and opportunities for developing teachers' skills.
59. The school is very well staffed with a team of teachers and teaching assistants that has a good level of expertise. This contributes significantly to the pupils' very good achievements. Specialist teachers in a number of subjects, particularly the creative arts, help pupils to reach very high standards, for example in the clay modelling seen. Teaching assistants play a valuable role in supporting learning, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs. Staffing resources are used imaginatively and effectively to ensure that pupils' learning benefits. For example, the group size for some lessons in English, mathematics and practical subjects are deliberately reduced so that pupils can have more support from adults. The way in which less-experienced staff are given significant responsibilities, to develop their management skills, is a good way of strengthening the leadership and management of the school.
60. The accommodation is very good. Since the last inspection, the original buildings have been extensively renovated and extended. These major works have resulted in very high quality provision including specialist areas for dance / drama, ICT, technology, library provision and a language and learning unit. The classrooms are of good size and pupils move safely and easily around the school corridors and common areas. The building is well maintained and in a good state of repair. Display spaces are used effectively for pupils' work and stimulate their interest with many three-dimensional examples from art and design or design and technology. The grounds are well cared for and provide excellent opportunities for work and recreation. Some

minor problems of access remain where classes have to share with others or share facilities but overall the improvement since the last inspection is very good.

61. The management and use of financial resources are excellent because the knowledge and understanding of the headteacher and the financial staff are very high, in both the acquisition and the allocation of resources. Very good use is made of resources, including specific grants. Educational priorities are supported well through effective financial planning, which is linked well to the school's development plan. All initiatives are costed and built into the school's annual budget. The training costs are also estimated accurately. Good use is made of technology, both in the school office and in the ICT suite. This has a positive effect on pupils' progress in acquiring ICT skills and shows good improvement since the last inspection. Specific grants to support pupils with special educational needs are used well and they make good progress. The school applies the principles of best value well, by comparing its performance with similar schools; analysing its needs effectively and ensuring that it gets competitive tenders for work carried out. It also monitors well the effect of spending decisions on standards and the quality of education provided.
62. The school uses its resources well to provide the best possible provision to support pupils' learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. Northmead is already a very good school and standards are already very high. Therefore, what follows are areas that governors, headteacher and staff should consider when seeking to raise standards further and to enrich pupils' learning still further.

❑ **Increase opportunities for pupils to show initiative when learning independently by:**

- providing more opportunities for pupils to make decisions in their work, put forward their own ideas, select materials for some tasks and take the initiative in a range of situations;
- providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to reflect quietly and think of problems and solutions.

[paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 15, 18, 34, 87, 91]

❑ **Review the organisation of the curriculum to ensure that all aspects of science, design and technology and music are covered across the school.** *[paragraphs 27, 91, 99, 120]*

❑ **Improve the quality and use of regular ongoing assessment by:**

- developing teachers' questioning skills to enable them to assess pupils learning in lessons;
- ensure that regular ongoing assessment information is used to influence daily lesson plans in all subjects;
- improving the quality of marking so that the pupils have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work.

[paragraph 22]

In addition to the key issues, the governors should consider the following additional less significant issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- providing more opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their speaking skills by discussing, questioning and analysing information in pairs and in small groups;

[paragraphs 4, 77, 78]

- developing the role of the governing body by continuing existing initiatives and ensuring that all members effectively share in the knowledge of the life and work of the school. *[paragraph 54]*

THE PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS IN THE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE UNIT

64. It is not appropriate to report on the improvement of the Language and Learning Unit since the last inspection because the nature, focus and curriculum have all changed. The unit caters for pupils with learning and language difficulties. Overall responsibility lies with the SENCO but the teacher in charge manages the unit on a daily basis. Staff within the unit are also responsible for ensuring that the needs of all pupils with special needs are effectively met within lessons and around the school.
65. Pupils behave well when taught in the unit by specialist staff. They show interest in their work and want to do well. Work on communication and language is good and helps pupils understand the importance of body language, eye contact and using appropriate volume and tone.
66. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils benefit from staff who know them well and understand how to promote their confidence, self-esteem as well as their subject knowledge, skills and understanding. Where pupils are able to benefit, staff equip them with strategies to manage their own communication and therefore their learning. For example, teachers help a pupil to read an unknown word quietly saying 'short vowel, no magic e', so that the pupil is able to read the word 'can'.
67. Most pupils with language and communication difficulties are, however, frequently dependent upon adult support. During unit classes, this adult support is gently persuasive rather than challenging. Teachers avoid telling pupils they are 'wrong' or that they do not know something, rather they encourage pupils to try again and provide clues to maximise success. Whilst this boosts the pupils' self-esteem, it occasionally results in a lack of challenge for some pupils to do more or better work.
68. The teachers plan lesson content to respond to the pupils' needs and to a lesser extent, in response to project work in the classroom. Some valuable work, such as a focus on specialised subject vocabulary is a clear strength and helps pupils improve their understanding in lessons. However, during the inspection not all planning was consistently linked to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. As a result, staff are not always able to identify precisely what the pupils have learnt in regard to National Curriculum coverage.
69. By the end of Year 5, pupils' confidence and ability has improved. They contribute to discussion during lessons in the unit and in the school. In some lessons, such as physical education, pupils with language difficulties integrate so effectively that they are indiscernible from other pupils. In the playground, several pupils approached inspectors and confidently engaged in polite and appropriate conversation.
70. Statemented pupils regularly work towards specific targets set for them at annual reviews. Such targets are reviewed twice yearly and teachers, parents and other relevant adults contribute to identifying tasks designed to maximise pupils' progress. Whilst the vast majority of targets place a clear emphasis on the pupils' needs, a minority are not consistently expressed through measurable outcomes or broken down into small achievable steps. Nevertheless, over time, higher attaining pupils make good progress, entering the school with below national expectations and leaving in Year 6 with significantly improved all round skills and knowledge.
71. Whilst their achievements are impressive, the nature of the pupils' targets and the school's methods for recording individual pupils' progress are not sufficiently specific. For example, a strategy, which aims to 'continue to include pupils in the weekly language group', does not

specifically identify what the pupils will learn within the given time. Similarly, whilst pupils' achievements are regularly recorded, some opportunities are missed to record precisely what they have successfully learnt. Their record may identify success in mathematics as being able to 'give change from small amounts'. This does not always provide enough detail for the pupils' learning to be precisely identified so that achievements can be built upon at school and at home.

72. The work of the speech therapist is a major focus of teaching and learning in the unit. Language and communication targets are identified, based on the therapist's input, but they are not yet integrated with other targets in the pupils' individual education plans. While systems are developing well, they do not yet guarantee that each pupil receives consistent and focused support when taught by other teachers within the school. During observed lessons there were several occasions where the communication skills and strategies the pupils had practised in the unit were not always known or reinforced by all other staff.
73. The monitoring of such teaching by the specialist teachers and speech therapist is not yet fully in place and opportunities for the pupils to generalise their communication skills across all subjects of the curriculum are limited.
74. The pupils are taught within the unit for about half their time at school. At other times, they work alongside pupils in mainstream classes. The work of the teaching assistants is a major strength of this work. They provide good support and in some subjects, such as science, have produced good quality resources to support the pupils' work.
75. The unit staff know the pupils well and are highly effective in striking balance between caring for them and providing learning support. Statutory arrangements regarding the Code of Practice are fully met and staff discuss pupils' progress prior to annual reviews so that parents receive a detailed account of activities and work. Liaison with parents is good and external advice is readily available from other experts such as the educational psychologist.
76. The leadership and management of SEN provision are good with many developing features. There is a good understanding of areas for development, which will improve the quality of support for all pupils. Staff hold regular meetings to discuss the pupils' individual progress and liaise effectively with partner schools.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 80 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 36 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 3 | 23 | 30 | 24 | - | - | - |
| Percentage | 4 | 29 | 37 | 30 | | | |

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

Information about the school's pupils

| Pupils on the school's roll | Y3 – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 385 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 24 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Y3 – Y6 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 19 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 88 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 10 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 70 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 18 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 4.5 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.1 |
| National comparative data | 0.5 |

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

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

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year: | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2002 | 64 | 55 | 119 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|--|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above | Boys | 53 | 52 | 60 |
| | Girls | 50 | 48 | 51 |
| | Total | 103 | 100 | 111 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above | School | 87 (88) | 84 (90) | 93 (98) |
| | National | 75 (75) | 73 (71) | 86 (87) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above | Boys | 44 | 49 | 54 |
| | Girls | 48 | 47 | 49 |
| | Total | 92 | 96 | 103 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above | School | 77 (86) | 81 (93) | 87 (94) |
| | 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 school year***

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| White – British | 359 | 3 | 2 |
| White – Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 2 | 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

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

| | |
|--|--------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 19.22 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 20 : 1 |
| Average class size | 30 |

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 12 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 307 |

Financial information

| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Financial year | 2002 |
|-----------------------|------|

| |
|----------|
| £ |
|----------|

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 1 174 613 |
| Total expenditure | 1 152 814 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 2 750 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 12 415 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 9 384 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 7 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 1 |
| 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

| |
|-----|
| 385 |
|-----|

Number of questionnaires returned

| |
|-----|
| 161 |
|-----|

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 60 | 37 | 2 | 1 | - |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 56 | 42 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 49 | 48 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 42 | 50 | 7 | 0 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 66 | 34 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 43 | 50 | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 63 | 31 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 78 | 21 | 1 | - | - |
| The school works closely with parents. | 54 | 38 | 7 | 1 | - |
| The school is well led and managed. | 73 | 25 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 61 | 34 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 54 | 42 | 4 | - | - |

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

ENGLISH

77. Overall attainment in the current Year 6 is well above national expectations. Compared with their attainment when they join in Year 3, pupils' achievements are very good in reading and writing, and good in speaking and listening where there are fewer planned opportunities to raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs, taught in main school lessons, make good progress because of the good support they receive from adults in lessons. The small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language are making very good progress.
78. Standards in speaking and listening are above expectations. Teachers extend pupils' vocabulary through very good demonstration and discussions, which focus on words and alternative choices. In many lessons, there are planned activities for pupils to discuss, question and analyse information in pairs and in small groups. As a result, they are challenged to think hard and give very thoughtful responses to their teachers' questioning. However, in some lessons there is too little time for pupils to express their answer in a structured situation. These are missed opportunities for teachers to reinforce the skills required to speak with clarity to a wider audience. Although pupils are encouraged to give out notices and share information in assemblies, few are audible. Pupils have opportunities to take part in scripted drama during assemblies and end of term productions. For example, Year 5 pupils' assembly made good use of mime and freeze frame techniques in their re-enactment of the murder of Thomas Becket. Pupils' good speaking and listening skills support learning in many subjects because of the discussions that take place. For example, pupils in Year 6 speak French together with good intonation and inflection because of very good teacher example of the target language. In religious education, pupils in Year 5 gave high quality responses about the purpose of ritual in Islam. Pupils with special educational needs in the class were very well supported by a learning support assistant. As a result, the teacher could reinforce their sense of achievement by calling on them to answer.
79. Because of its development of the literacy strategy, the school has introduced more direct teaching of reading to whole classes and small groups. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now well above expectations. Pupils experience a wide range of high quality stories, poems and information texts. They read with confidence throughout the school. Teachers use questioning well to get pupils to explain and to identify telling phrases and words. Very good use of an interactive whiteboard⁴ helped pupils in Year 3 to use punctuation to improve their expression. High quality discussion of language in a guided reading group enabled lower attaining pupils in Year 6 to improve their fluency of expression when reading 'The Butterfly Lion' by Michael Morpurgo. Many parents enjoy books with their children at home and in school. Reading record books are filled in regularly and create a valuable dialogue between parents and teachers. This has a positive impact on maintaining very high standards. Pupils have a good understanding of the library classification system and know how to locate information in books. They make their own information books linked to work in various areas of the curriculum.
80. Standards in writing are well above national expectations. Work is well planned so pupils learn the characteristics of many different kinds of writing including stories, poems, letters,

⁴ Interactive whiteboard – this is a whiteboard that is linked to computer controlled projector. A large image is projected and teacher, or pupil, is able to control the screen in much the same way as they would the mouse.

instructions and brochures. As a result of the school's focus on reading and the introduction of word work into the literacy hour, there is a progressive development of language that enables pupils to write with imagination and impact. Higher attaining pupils in Year 3 understand that a pronoun does not give enough information about a character in a story opening. In Year 4, pupils have written very persuasive letters to the headteacher asking to wear trainers to school. Pupils with statements of educational need in Year 5 described their feelings about some of the activities they enjoyed at Merchants Hill and gave reasons why they would recommend it as a place to visit. Higher attaining pupils explain how language is chosen for effect in 'The Highwayman'. The best writing for all groups of pupils in Year 6 is produced as a result of educational visits. Vocabulary associated with castles is used imaginatively to produce a glossary and young person's guide to Carisbrooke castle. Pupils' choice of language creates mature and evocative poetry about the Crucifixion written at Wintershall. It is poetry of an exceptionally high standard.

81. Very good opportunities are taken to develop pupils' writing skills through other subjects, such as science, history and religious education, and work is displayed well in classrooms and around the school. The school has maintained a good standard in handwriting and spelling, and pupils' work is well presented in books. The library is attractive, well stocked and used frequently although not enough use is made of this resource to develop pupils' independent research skills. The librarian is knowledgeable about children's literature and has introduced ICT to monitor stock and identify borrowing patterns. Reading areas in classrooms are less stimulating and have not been improved since the last inspection. The use of ICT is increasing, and most pupils have examples of work that use their skills in word processing well.
82. Overall, teaching is very good, and teachers have very good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, pupils have a clear understanding of what they are expected to do and they work with confidence. For example, average attaining pupils in a Year 5 lesson learnt a lot about rhyme and rhythm and understood the need to count syllables when writing their own onomatopoeic poems. Even though a high level of discussion takes place in the opening activities, occasionally this goes on for too long and the pace of learning slows. As a result, not enough time is left for pupils to use and make choices about their work that show what they have learnt. Classroom assistants work effectively with groups of pupils and individuals in lessons. Valuable additional literacy support and booster classes have been introduced for pupils in Years 5 and 6.
83. The curriculum is well planned and ensures that pupils experience a wide range of activities. Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed in reading and writing, but the assessment of speaking and listening remains an area for development. Teachers mark work regularly and set pupils individual targets for improvement. However, not enough use is made of this information to plan work with more variation for pupils at different levels of attainment. Management of the subject across the school is good. The information gained from monitoring and evaluating procedures is used well to share very good practice and promote consistency in maintaining very high standards as pupils move through the school.

MATHEMATICS

84. Overall, standards in mathematics are well above national expectations. They are similar to the findings of the last inspection and match the test results of 2002. All pupils, including those with special educational needs achieve very well with a particular strength in number and algebra, shape, space and measure.
85. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a very good understanding of number. Analysis of past work shows that most use a range of strategies when calculating and applying the four rules of

number. Higher attaining pupils use their understanding of place value to multiply and divide whole numbers and decimals by 10, 100 and 1000 and accurately calculate fractional and percentage quantities and measurements. Average attaining pupils know the names and properties of different triangles and use a protractor to accurately measure angles, having first estimated the size. They understand a wide range of number facts, using decimals and large numbers. Pupils with special educational needs are given work closely matched to their levels of attainment. They receive good support. They confidently use calculators to solve problems, using the four rules of number, choosing the appropriate operation.

86. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall and has improved since the last inspection. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that there are high expectations. Pupils are taught in sets, according to prior attainment and this helps to ensure that their needs are well met. Teachers use very good subject knowledge, including their understanding of the National Numeracy Strategy, to structure their lessons well. The best planning makes provision for individual need within the set, builds on prior learning, with a sound balance between teacher exposition and practical work. Lesson aims are clearly explained and learning gains are discussed at the end of the lesson. This helps pupils to develop a better understanding of what they are doing and why. Consequently, pupils make rapid progress. The recent focus on the teaching of mental mathematics motivates pupils so that they learn well, as seen in a Year 5 set of more able pupils, where the teacher used resources well to help pupils find the percentage of large numbers at speed. Good use is made of mathematical language and the best teachers are consistent in asking pupils well-focused questions, such as 'Can you explain how you reached the answer?' Teachers use time effectively. In a good lesson on fractions in Year 3, the teacher gave pupils a clear indication as to how long they had in which to complete each part of their work. Timely reminders such as these helped to focus pupils' attention, with the result that all pupils made good progress during the lesson.
87. Where teaching was very good, the choice of activity was challenging. For example, in Year 4, lower attaining pupils made very good progress when the teacher challenged them to think hard about devising strategies and to make counting money easier. The lesson was delivered in a stimulating fashion that greatly enhanced the pace of learning. In this session, probing questions were asked and pupils were encouraged to work in pairs, which enabled them to learn from one another. Teachers set clearer expectations of what pupils should achieve and provide tasks that are more challenging for the more able pupils in the upper sets. The best teaching makes further provision for the differing needs of the pupils within their set. Although basic skills are well taught there is sometimes an over reliance on teacher input, which sometimes prevents pupils improving and reinforcing learning through problem solving and open ended investigations. Teaching assistants provide valuable help during group sessions in lower ability sets.
88. The overall good and often very good attitudes that pupils display towards mathematics contributes significantly to their learning. They are competent learners, communicate well and capably apply their knowledge to new situations. Pupils are well motivated, co-operative and listen attentively to the teachers and to each other. The pupils work well both individually and in groups. Older pupils sustain concentration for longer periods. Their behaviour is good. The air of mutual respect, which prevails between pupils and staff, has a positive effect on pupils' learning.
89. Leadership and management are very good. The senior management team, have established a sound system to review planning, monitoring teaching and sample work. The overall quality of marking is satisfactory but the best practice in marking pupils' work, where advice is provided to move their learning on, has yet to spread throughout the school. Good use is made of formal assessments to move pupils within sets during the school year. The school has invested heavily in staff to teach and support mathematics. The adult: pupil ratio is very good. Resources for

learning are good. Some good use is made of ICT to develop the pupils' levels of understanding in most classes and there are good curricular links to other subjects and areas of personal development. The overall picture in mathematics is positive and indicates good improvement since the previous inspection.

SCIENCE

90. Standards are above the levels expected nationally at the end of Year 6 and are similar to those achieved in the 2002 National Curriculum test. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Standards were reported as well above expectations in the last inspection and during the period 1998-2001 pupils' performance have remained well above the national average. Test results indicate that boys are doing slightly better than girls but inspection evidence shows no significant gender differences in pupils' learning.
91. By the end of Year 6, all aspects of science are covered and previous work demonstrates that pupils have an above expected level of knowledge in their independent writing about the solar system, forces and human biology. They understand the formation of shadows and know that friction including air resistance is a force that slows down moving objects. Pupils understand the functions of the human skeleton and how important organs such as the heart and lungs work. Knowledge about the parts of plants and their functions are good and pupils describe accurately the life cycles of flowering plants and a frog. Although, the quality of work is good and above national expectations, there is however insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative and experimental skills to the same depth as in other aspects of science. However, a scrutiny of pupils' work provided evidence that teachers in the lower juniors place a good emphasis on developing skills of scientific enquiry. For example, in Year 3 pupils observe what happens when flour is mixed with water and investigate which sieve is best for separating a mixture of salt and wild rice. In Year 4, they investigate whether the pitch of sounds produced by vibrating objects can be changed and record the various sounds heard at different times of the day. In the lesson seen, pupils in Year 4 were confident in making predictions about the changes that occur when materials are heated. More able pupils use appropriate vocabulary to describe the changes of wax from transparent to translucent. In Year 5, pupils have a good understanding of physical processes such as evaporation because the teachers provide them with good opportunities to experiment by boiling salt solutions. Most used scientific terms such as 'solution' and 'condensation' accurately, following the good example set by the teachers. Despite these instances of good practice, older pupils, have too few opportunities to select their own resources and plan their own investigations. In all classes there is good evidence that work in science has contributed to pupils' literacy skills through writing, but the opportunities to write independently and the challenge for the more able pupils is limited by the number of worksheets and of writing frames which are used as a means of supporting recording activities. Numeracy skills are developing well through the use of tables to present findings and graphs to display information.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, teachers have a secure understanding of the science curriculum, which enables them to teach the lesson confidently, answer questions from pupils correctly and make the relevant teaching points. This was particularly noticeable in a Year 3 lesson on light sources. In most sessions pupils are given a clear explanation of what is expected during the lesson and this helps them to develop a better understanding of what they are doing and why. Questions are carefully targeted. These not only enable pupils to consolidate learning from previous lessons but also enhance participation and promote learning. For example, this led to an interesting discussion in Year 5 when pupils were engaged in finding out what happens to some solids when mixed with water. In all sessions, teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking and this helps them to

clarify their understanding. As a means of supporting recording activities, 'writing frames' are often provided. Whilst these provide a good framework of support for lower attaining pupils, they restrict those with more ability in writing and those who are able to record results in tables and charts for themselves. In addition, worksheets do not always provide for the range of the levels of attainment in each class. When teaching is less effective, pupils are not clear about what they are going to learn and why. Too much time is spent planning a range of hypotheses and there is inadequate emphasis for pupils to carry out their own experiments. Although pupils with special educational needs often receive additional adult support, which gives them the skills and confidence to participate, teachers do not always, adapt work sufficiently to meet their needs.

93. Management of the subject across the school is satisfactory and there is a developing awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement in the subject. A helpful scheme of work supports teachers' planning well in each year group and ensures good coverage of all aspects of the subject. However, lesson plans do not make reference to the National Curriculum levels or identify the provision for pupils of different levels of attainment including those with special educational needs. Teachers' planning and pupils' work are regularly monitored. The very good resources including the extensive school grounds are well used to support the teaching and learning of science throughout the school. Pupils apply their mathematical skills to science using measurements and data recording. The use of ICT as a tool to support work or to improve presentation is developing well.

ART and DESIGN

94. Standards and achievement in art and design are very good throughout the school and well above the standards expected by the end of Year 6. This was also the finding at the time of the last inspection. Since that time, there have been major changes to the curriculum and it is a significant achievement to have maintained this high quality of work. The standard of clay work is outstanding. The importance of design is not neglected. A Year 6 class, for example, designed prints for a paper bag that could be used in the London Zoo Gift Shop. From their early days in the school, pupils are given opportunities to paint and draw, using a wide range of materials and media. They experiment with colour and pupils use their knowledge to produce attractive illustrations, often to support their work in other subjects. Year 4 pupils, for example, produced clay tiles as part of their study of the Ancient Greeks. The use of ICT in art and design is developing. The school has recently increased its resources in this area. Work on textiles is also of a high standard. The local education authority has acknowledged the very high standards achieved in art and design by including the school on its 'Good Practice' website.
95. The quality of observational drawing is a strength in the subject. Pupils are taught to practise and refine specific techniques using their sketchbooks and most produce work of high quality. The use of sketchbooks is variable. Some classes use them very well; pupils design their projects, practise, and refine specific artistic techniques. However, in other classes, limited use is made of them. The school has identified this as an area for development. Another strength is pupils' bold and imaginative use of colour. From a young age, pupils are encouraged to experiment with their use of colour and to seek the exact shade to create the desired effect. Three-dimensional work is of outstanding quality. Year 6 pupils, for example, have produced very attractive Tudor houses and figures from clay. The school places high value on art and pupils' paintings and drawings are displayed carefully. The quality of these displays does much to create an attractive and colourful environment. Appropriate emphasis is given to the enjoyment to be derived from art and design, and many pupils unhesitatingly name it as their favourite lesson.

96. In addition to their practical work, pupils also learn about famous artists and use examples of their work for inspiration. Many pupils speak with authority about a range of artists. They not only express personal preferences, but also compare and contrast the artists' use of colour and form. Year 6 paintings in the style of Georgia O'Keefe are particularly eye-catching. Tapestry wall hangings are similarly attractive. One is based on traditional Indian fabric designs. Other artists studied include Van Gogh, Klee, Matisse and Bridget Riley. The range of artists and designs studied makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development.

97. The quality of teaching is very good. The school makes good use of specialist teaching to strive for the highest standards. A particular strength is the teaching of artistic techniques, which is made possible by the very good subject knowledge of the teachers. Very clear instructions, coupled with effective demonstrations, result in pupils of all levels of attainment making very good progress throughout the school. Teachers are alert to opportunities to reinforce learning in other subjects. In a textiles lesson, for example, the teacher effectively reinforced pupils' understanding of reflective symmetry and discussed the properties of materials in a pottery lesson.
98. The subject is very well led. There are schemes of work in art and design, and textiles that ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed systematically. The curriculum is carefully thought out to provide a stimulating range of experiences for pupils as they move through the school. The school is constantly seeking to improve and develop its provision and is very well placed to improve further.

DESIGN and TECHNOLOGY

99. As at the last inspection, pupils make finished products of high quality. In this aspect of the subject, pupils' achievements are good and, by Year 6, they reach standards that are well above national expectations. In the designing and evaluating elements of the subject, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Too little emphasis is given to evaluating a range of products before pupils start to design their own. Although there is discussion about how finished products could have been improved, pupils rarely record their evaluations. Pupils' designing skills are not developed systematically, and so there are only a few examples of Year 6 pupils producing step-by-step plans, labelled sketches, or trial models to test their ideas. In these aspects of the subject, attainment is close to national expectations.
100. Pupils tackle a series of projects, work in a variety of materials, and develop a good range of making skills. For example, Year 3 pupils make a moving picture using a pivot mechanism. They draw designs, select the one that they like the best and think carefully about where to place the pivot. The pupils' finished products are of very good quality, for example a sun appearing from behind a cloud. The products work well and are finished to a good standard. In Year 4, pupils use a practical task to focus on developing a number of making skills. Their wooden picture frames are carefully constructed, and written accounts show how they made a template for the frame, learned how to design it so that it is sturdy, and used cutting and jointing skills in its construction. Very good links with work in textiles, where the pupils made padded felt animals, led to finished products of good quality. Animals such as a lion, leopard or rhinoceros are mounted in the frames along with background illustrations of their grassland habitat. Year 5 pupils have extended the work from Year 3 by making moving pictures with a more complex mechanism. Using levers and a pivot, their products have two moving parts, such as the elephant whose legs move in opposite directions. Once again, these products work well and are finished to a high standard. Skilfully constructed motorised buggies and mechanical toys, made by pupils in Year 6, show very good skills working in wood, using cogs, cams and axles effectively. Design drawings for the buggies are of good quality.
101. In the one lesson observed, for Year 6, the quality of teaching was very good. A helpful review of previous work, and a clear outline of the tasks to be completed in the lesson, ensured that the pupils knew exactly what they had to do. A good demonstration of how various shapes of cam would affect the movement of the toy the pupils were making prepared them well for the practical task of constructing their own axles and cams. High expectations of work rate, accuracy and safety all ensured that the pupils completed the task successfully. A minor weakness was that the pupils were not given sufficient opportunity to plan their own process or

to relate their making to previously prepared designs. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and shared their ideas and the equipment very maturely. Specialist teaching in textile and pottery work, which contribute, to pupils' skills development help to make the subject a strength of the school.

102. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enhanced by links with a local secondary school that has particular strengths in technology. Work with food is now much better represented than at the last inspection. The time allocation is less than in many schools and, whilst it allows pupils sufficient opportunity to make some high quality products, teachers do not have time to cover the design and evaluating aspects as thoroughly as they would wish. Strong links with art provide opportunities for pupils to design and make in a range of materials. Links with other subjects are also exploited well, such as when, following work in science, Year 5 pupils make a game using an electrical circuit and ICT software. Procedures for assessing pupils' skills are satisfactory and improving alongside better whole-school systems. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a good understanding of the strengths in the quality of teaching and learning and recognition of areas that need to be improved. At various times during the year, all pupils benefit from effective specialist teaching. The school has done well to maintain the strengths identified at the last inspection and should now be able to improve even further.

GEOGRAPHY

103. During the inspection, few lessons were observed in the subject. Due to the school's practice of teaching geography or history in alternate terms, the geography topic for pupils in Year 6 had only just started and as a result, there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement about standards for the oldest pupils. This applies also to changes since the last inspection.
104. Pupils in Year 6 have a secure knowledge about physical features of the landscape such as the formation of caves, arches and stacks. Research skills are used well for pupils to gain a greater understanding of the geographical features they encountered during their recent residential visit to the Isle of Wight. In Year 5, pupils build on the work covered in the previous year when they deepen their understanding of the local area. Using maps, they accurately identify the nearby counties and learn about the position of Guildford in relation to other counties and towns. The same pupils appreciate that features of places and aspects of life may be similar to or different from those of their own locality, and develop their understanding of this when comparing Shere with Guildford. In Year 4, most pupils effectively develop their understanding of the use of keys and symbols on maps and successfully use secondary sources such as books, globes, atlases and the Internet to access information about the different types of animals and vegetation found in the different climatic regions and their suitability to these areas. In the lesson observed in Year 4 pupils demonstrated suitable understanding of work covered in recent weeks and have a good understanding of terms such longitude and latitude which they used successfully to identify the location of places on a world map. In Year 3, pupils study life in the Indian village of Chembakolli, contrasting aspects of the lifestyle and environment with their own. The school makes good use of literacy and art and design in geography. Pupils apply literacy skills effectively in communicating geographical facts and writing accounts of visits.
105. Although it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching and learning the teaching observed during the week of inspection was satisfactory with some good practice. In all lessons, teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is secure to ensure that geographical knowledge is appropriately developed. Where teaching is good expectations are high, lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and pupils are well managed. The attitude and behaviour in these lessons are good. A strength in the curriculum is the good use teachers make

of the local environment. This was well demonstrated in a Year 5 lesson when contrasting the village of Shere with Guildford. The well planned activity stimulated pupils' interest and they responded well whilst developing good geographical skills of interpreting information from Ordnance Survey maps. Effective questioning as demonstrated in a Year 4 lesson on world environments led to the consolidation of the use of appropriate geographical vocabulary associated with map reading.

106. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Adequate support is given to colleagues; though there is limited monitoring of pupils' achievements matched against National Curriculum requirements to ensure coverage of key skills and areas of study. Pupils' attainment and progress are assessed satisfactorily in some classes through self-assessment at the end of a unit of work. Pupils' work and teaching are not checked rigorously enough to identify what needs improving. Resources are adequate and used well. The subject contributes positively to pupils' moral and cultural background. Good use is made of ICT to support learning and work is very well presented in pupils' books.

HISTORY

107. Judgements are based on a scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' plans and discussions with teachers and pupils. Standards of attainment are well above those expected nationally by the end of Year 6 and have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress throughout the school. The curriculum is well planned so that knowledge and skills are developed systematically.
108. Through their work in history pupils develop a good sense of the passage of time. They confidently distinguish between events that took place in the recent past and those that happened long ago. They are developing an understanding of why people in the past acted as they did and older pupils make links between cause and effect. They make good use of the school library, pictures, CD ROMS, videos and the Internet to develop their research skills. By Year 6, most pupils accurately distinguish between historical fact and legend. They relate stories that they have heard, for example about Henry VIII, and they understand that the world in which he lived was very different from their own. Pupils develop a good factual knowledge of the periods of history that they study. They discover how we learn about the past and distinguish between different types of historical evidence.
109. Work in history plays a significant part in pupils' social and cultural development. Frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to work co-operatively and collaboratively. Through their study of British and world history pupils gain a broad understanding of the cultures of this and other countries. Literacy skills are promoted well through work in history. In learning how to carry out historical research, pupils are taught the skills of skimming and scanning to locate specific information, and the techniques of note taking to record what they learn. Different styles of writing for particular purposes are encouraged, including letter writing and factual reporting. Pupils present their written work carefully, taking a pride in its content and appearance. Some outstanding art and design work supports work in history. This includes beautifully constructed Tudor houses and a range of Tudor and Aztec figures. Good use is made of ICT to support work in history.
110. It is not possible to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching as no lessons were seen. However, from the quality of the work that is produced and the understanding demonstrated by

pupils in discussion, it is clear that they have been well taught. A major reason for the high standards achieved is the success of teachers in bringing the subject to life and making learning exciting. Good use is made of visits to support learning. These include Fishbourne Roman Palace, Preston Manor and Hampton Court. Special events are organised, such as a Greek Day and a Victorian Day. From discussions, it is evident that work is largely teacher directed. Pupils have too few opportunities to develop and use their own ideas. The school has already identified this as an area for development, and it has been included in the subject leader's action plan.

111. The subject is well led. Areas for further development are identified and action planned to address them. The quality of teaching and planning is monitored and a sample of pupils' work is scrutinised.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

112. The school has made significant progress in improving its provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in response to the key issue identified in the last inspection. Consequently, standards by the end of end of Year 6 are above those expected nationally and pupils achieve well. All aspects of the subject are covered and pupils have many opportunities to practise, refine and develop their skills. A comprehensive action plan was devised, identifying the introduction of an effective scheme of work, further training for staff to improve their subject knowledge and confidence and improvement of the school's facilities as the most important priorities. These priorities have been met and the action plan has recently been reviewed and further modified in the light of the rapid progress made in the past two years. This includes the updating of the optional national guidelines, which the school uses as a basis for planning and teaching the curriculum.
113. The school is now very well resourced with appropriate hardware and software. This includes an interactive whiteboard, data projectors⁵, Internet access both in the suite and in classrooms and digital cameras. During the inspection lessons were observed where good use was made of these resources, for example pupils in two Year 6 classes had loaded photographs they had taken with the digital cameras onto the computers and were using these as a basis for creating their own designs. In all other subjects ICT is used satisfactorily to support teaching and learning.
114. In Year 6, most pupils make significant gains in confidence and good progress in their learning, developing a good range of basic skills. The computer suite is also timetabled for other areas of the curriculum; for example, spreadsheets were satisfactorily used in a Year 4 mathematics lesson for more able pupils to enhance their knowledge of using formulae. Pupils enjoy rich learning experiences due to the benefits of these developments. They are provided with an effective balance between direct teaching of skills and their own involvement. Progress and standards in computer modelling, text, graphics and data processing are good. For example, Year 5 pupils used photos for a computerised presentation of their recent residential visit to the Isle of Wight. Pupils with learning difficulties from the language and learning unit in one Year 5 class were effectively paired with more able pupils to produce a new slide and as a result made good progress, attaining expected levels. The recent acquisition of robotic software has had an immediate impact on pupils' learning and attainment in computer modelling and developing open-ended problem solving skills. For example, in Year 6, pupils successfully programmed a sequence to establish a wake up alarm with music, to propel a model Lego person from its bed. Most modified the programme by adjusting the speed at which this happened while more able

⁵ Data projector – a projector connected to a computer to aid teaching.

pupils confidently created a loop to reverse the actions. Pupils are introduced to the use of e-mail and Internet from Year 3 and demonstrate good progress in these areas.

115. Pupils clearly enjoy ICT, especially when using computers. They are highly motivated and have positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoy their sessions in the computer suite and are reluctant to leave when the lesson ends. They talk with enthusiasm about their many successes and want to learn more. When working in pairs, pupils learn to share ideas and help each other to use the computer. This contributes well to their attainment. They confidently ask questions of their teachers understand about taking care of equipment and do so responsibly.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they have benefited from a well-planned programme of school-based training. Teachers use the data projector with increasing confidence to demonstrate new skills and build well on previously acquired skills. Lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and this enables pupils to achieve much within a relatively short space of time. Teaching is enhanced by valuable technical help. In one classroom-based science lessons, the teacher made skilful use of a brief video extract, through the data projector, showing in slow motion the effect of melting materials. Although teachers are developing the use of ICT to support other areas of the curriculum they are not always giving full consideration to the extent to which some tasks enhance pupils' learning.
117. The subject is well managed. Support and training has significantly improved teachers' confidence. Monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' planning has enabled areas for further development to be identified and the scheme of work has recently been updated to consider this. Although there are procedures in place for assessing individual pupils' coverage of work at the end of the year the school is aware of the need to refine and extend them in order to assess more accurately individual pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

MUSIC

118. Since the last inspection, high standards in music have been maintained and overall attainment at the end of Year 6 continues to be well above national expectations. All pupils have music lessons, take part in singing and contribute to musical performances. A significant proportion of pupils are involved in additional musical activities, such as learning an instrument or being a member of a choir or the orchestra. The high standard of extra-curricular music raises the profile of the subject within the school, motivates younger, aspiring musicians and lifts the overall attainment of the pupils. For example, during the past year, a group of ten violinists have taken part in a special project with tuition from members of the London Chamber Orchestra. Their outstanding performance, seen during the inspection, represents excellent achievement. However, pupils' learning in class music lessons is satisfactory. Whilst the overall achievements of the pupils are good, there is a very wide range of achievement. The school recognises that the quality of class music lessons needs to be improved so that all pupils achieve well, and has plans to make more use of teachers' specialist skills.
119. The enthusiasm and quality of pupils' singing is a great strength. During a whole-school singing assembly, the pupils sang a variety of songs with gusto, ranging in style from '*On Ilkley Moor Baht'at*' to a '*Hymn to Shiva*'. They held both tune and the rhythm well, even when singing in two parts. Particularly impressive was how quickly the pupils learnt a new song with a conservationist message, '*Right to Survive*', which was skilfully taught. The very good musical skills of many of the pupils provided a firm lead for everyone. The boundless enthusiasm of the two teachers leading the session, and their musical skills, did much to motivate the pupils.
120. In the three lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good in one, satisfactory in two, and not as strong overall as at the last inspection. These lessons were planned carefully, but some of the teachers lacked the subject expertise to develop and extend pupils' skills appropriately. Where teaching was good, the emphasis was on practical musical activities, with each pupil

having a xylophone or glockenspiel and the teacher gradual introducing a series of tasks to develop skills in listening, playing and eventually composing. Terms such as unison, harmony and canon were explained clearly, so that the pupils were able to use these effects in their compositions. In one of the satisfactory lessons, too long was taken explaining the task of creating sound effects for a story, with too little emphasis on music skills. Musical terms such as dynamics were introduced, but explained incorrectly. In the other, activities finding pentatonic scales were too difficult for the pupils. Planned work does not take enough account of the wide range of attainment in each of the groups.

121. Over 30 pupils are learning a musical instrument, taught by visiting specialists. The school orchestra (taught by two talented volunteers) provides an opportunity for many of these young musicians to practise and extend their skills. The orchestra's performance of a piece by Paganini, including an impressive violin solo, was of a high standard. Over 50 pupils sing in either the junior or the senior choir. In a session observed, the senior choir was rehearsing for an end of year concert, tackling successfully a very challenging song with a wide range of pitch and difficult tempo. Many pupils also learn the recorder. A group of advanced recorder players showed their very good skills when they played *The Entertainer*, in three parts, showing a good appreciation of balancing their notes against others. Musical performances are part and parcel of school life. These range from regular concerts in which musical groups perform for parents, to whole-school productions such as *Jubilee Jam*, performed at Guildford Spectrum in front of packed audiences. All these activities contribute significantly to high standards within the school.
122. The current organisation of class music lessons is unsatisfactory because, as the subject is part of a carousel of creative arts' lessons, pupils have too little time to develop and consolidate their skills. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and social development, creating uplifting moments and opportunities for collaboration in a range of activities. Pupils' cultural development is promoted very well through experience of music from their own culture, and from many other cultures, for example through the Indian Music and Dance Day. Leadership of the subject is good, aiming for and achieving high standards in many areas. Management is satisfactory, and is shared by a number of staff, including the headteacher. The school is right to celebrate its strengths, and also has plans to improve weaker aspects of provision.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

123. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. The school's provides a broad, balanced and often enriched curriculum. Detailed and effective schemes of work for dance and gymnastics have been specifically developed by teachers with particular expertise in these areas and have been well received by the rest of the staff. The school continues to offer a broad range of extra- curricular activities and excels in local and national competition. The school allocates approximately 10 per cent of the overall curriculum time to physical education to make it a priority and the recent award of the national Activemark Gold to the school, reflects the effort that is being made.
124. Pupils make good progress and achieve well. During the inspection, lessons were observed in four areas, dance, gymnastics athletics and games. In a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, pupils skilfully demonstrated increased control and precision as the lesson developed, working in pairs to combine a series of asymmetric movements starting with floor exercises and applying these to work on the large apparatus. Pupils of all levels of attainment made good progress. In dance and gymnastics, pupils combine a series of movements with accurate control and change of speed and direction, showing very good awareness of space. In a Year 3 athletics lesson, pupils demonstrated very good co-ordination, fluency and control in sprinting. Swimming takes place in Years 3 and 4 and by the time pupils start Year 5, almost all are confident swimmers, able to

- swim the expected length of 25 metres.
125. Pupils' responses in lessons varied from satisfactory to excellent, with the majority being good or better. Pupils are very enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons. They demonstrate a good level of co-operation, working willingly in pairs and small groups. The slight exception to this is small groups of immature boys who sometimes find it difficult to work together. Pupils confidently appraise their own and others performances. Attention to health and safety issues is of a high quality. Year 6 pupils put away the apparatus, paying due attention to safety in carrying equipment, in a minimum of time without teacher intervention. Particularly impressive is the manner in which pupils move swiftly and quietly across the playground from the studio to the hall within the same lesson.
126. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good or excellent lessons seen during the inspection. A particular strength is the good subject knowledge demonstrated in all areas of the subject and the additional expertise from outside the school, which complements this. As a result of excellent teaching in a Year 3 dance lesson, pupils were encouraged to produce a very high quality performance. The teacher built up a sequence of movements, demonstrating correct control and movement, stopping frequently to evaluate, making constructive comments whilst allowing pupils to appraise and modify their performances. In lessons where teaching was seen to be less effective, insufficient attention was paid to taking time for pupil demonstration and evaluation to improve performance and the pace of the lessons slackened.
127. The subject is strongly and enthusiastically led. Outside expertise is utilised well. This includes parents who organise clubs in netball and hockey, local youth workers who support football, street hockey run at the local centre and visits from Chelsea Community Football Scheme. The school is particularly well resourced on both the grounds and facilities and the equipment needed for the wide range of activities that are available. The school is aware that its methods for assessing pupils' attainment are not sharp enough. Staff are working on systems that will help track pupils' progress more clearly and assist in identifying where improvements in learning are needed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Standards overall at end of Year 6 are above the expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus and are similar to those reported at the last inspection. The achievement of both boys and girls is good. Pupils in Year 6 learn about a range of world religions and this helps them to be reflective and understand the views of others. Effective learning helps to foster the very good relationships, which exist within the school. Teaching and learning are linked closely with the personal, health and social education programme and assemblies. Consequently, the subject makes a major contribution to the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
129. Teaching and learning are good overall. In the lessons observed teaching was satisfactory or good. Teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations of work and behaviour encouraged pupils to develop their thoughts and kept them focused and interested. Good teaching met the full range of levels of attainment in the class. This was evident in Year 3 when the story of 'David and Goliath' was used effectively to help pupils identify and resolve their own fears. In Year 5, pupils spoke confidently about the Christian faith and the Islamic faith. Work scrutiny shows that teaching over time is good. In Year 6, many pupils have written reflective poems after visiting 'The Stations of the Cross at Wintershall'. Pupils demonstrate a secure knowledge and respect for religious objects and customs. They understand, for example, that Muslims use a prayer mat to pray, five times a day and that the Bible is a sacred book, which forms the basis of the Christian faith. This gives pupils an ability to appreciate cultural

diversity and to value racial equality. Written work shows good progress over time in knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and of other major world religions.

130. Pupils show a positive attitude towards the subject. Learning is enhanced by their good and sometimes very good literacy skills. They are curious to learn more about beliefs and customs different to their own and have the skills to ask for, or research for, the answers to their questions.
131. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, with strength in very good subject knowledge and commitment to high standards. The revised Locally Agreed Syllabus has been adopted and is working well. From this, the school is gradually drawing its own scheme of work. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are not fully in place which makes it difficult for teachers to match work to the needs of individuals, particularly the higher attainers. However, the monitoring of planning, teaching and work samples generally ensures that pupils receive the full breadth and balance of the curriculum and that learning develops systematically from year-to-year. A very good range of religious artifacts and resources effectively support teaching. Good use is made of visits to the local church, Cathedral and local alternative faith communities and visitors are used very well to help pupils learn. There are good curricular links to other subjects, which contribute well to pupils' social development, and developing use is made of ICT to enhance learning.

FRENCH

132. French is taught very effectively to pupils throughout the school. The aims of the course are clear and ensure a progressive understanding. In Years 3 and 4 teachers work informally with their own classes, however in Years 5 and 6 pupils are taught by teachers with very good subject knowledge. These teachers speak French fluently and deliver lively lessons. A high standard is set in modelling pronunciation and intonation for pupils and they enjoy the lilt of the language when they repeat things together. This gives less confident pupils an opportunity to practise questions and short phrases before speaking on their own in café scenes. At the end of the summer term Year 6 pupils '*become French for the day*'. They come to school in costume, buy food for their picnics using the target language, play games and have their own version of the '*Tour de France*'. This helps to a better understanding of the French language and culture.