

INSPECTION REPORT

EMERSON VALLEY SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 131190

Headteacher: Mrs Jill Forbes

Reporting inspector: Mr Rob Crompton
7239

Dates of inspection: March 24th – 27th 2003

Inspection number: 248830

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First and middle
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 - 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hodder Lane Emerson Valley Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK4 2JR
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr G Whitfield
Date of previous inspection:	February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7230	Rob Crompton	Registered inspector	Art and design	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? <i>The school's results and achievements</i>
13874	Jane Chesterfield	Lay inspector		How high are standards? <i>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</i> How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
25778	Andrew Hicks		Geography Information and communication technology Music Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
14989	Rob Pyner	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
4275	Joyce Taylor	Team inspector	English Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language	
27720	Peter Way	Team inspector	Mathematics History French	How well are pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is bigger than other primary schools nationally, with 503 boys and girls aged from seven to twelve. Pupils mainly live locally. The character of the school has changed significantly since it opened six years ago. The reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils have all moved to newly opened schools. There are two Year 3 classes and four classes in most other years. The level of pupil mobility has been very high until this year. A further consequence of the changes has been a very high turnover of teaching staff. The recruitment and retention of teachers is difficult in the area and this has added to the school's difficulty in building a permanent teaching team. Staffing is now much more stable. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average but a significant number who have joined the school recently have special educational needs, mostly relating to behaviour. A small 'nurture' group is taught separately in the mornings to help the most challenging pupils to settle and to learn how to behave appropriately. Across the school, about a fifth of pupils have special educational needs, most of whom have learning or behavioural difficulties. This is around the national average. Four pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is twice the national average. Most pupils are white, with a fifth from other ethnic backgrounds. Thirty-eight pupils (8 per cent) have English as an additional language, about half of whom were at a very early stage of learning English when they joined school. Three pupils who joined the school recently have very little English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (8 per cent) is below average, although the school serves a broadly average socio-economic area. The school achieved the Investors in People standard recently. The school is scheduled to become a junior school in September 2005.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a very sound education for its pupils. Over the last year, there have been many improvements in its work. The school benefits from the strong leadership by the head teacher who has managed changes well during a long period of instability. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. Achievement has fluctuated over recent years but pupils are now making satisfactory progress because the teaching is good overall and pupils are working at a better rate. Standards in writing and mathematics remain below average but attainment in science has risen to a satisfactory level. Considering the long period of turbulence and the rising standards, the school provides sound and steadily improving value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching is leading to better progress than in recent years.
- The school is well led and managed
- Good provision for personal development and good relationships across the school help most pupils to develop positive attitudes.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities that broaden the curriculum and provide new experiences, particularly in music, crafts and sport.
- Parents are well-informed about school life through good quality written information

What could be improved

- Standards in writing
- Standards in mathematics
- The effectiveness of subject co-ordinators

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good overall improvement since the last inspection in February 1998. It has been frustrated in its efforts to raise standards by the many changes it has undergone. Attainment in English and science remain at similar levels but standards in mathematics have fallen since the last inspection. Standards are improving because the quality of teaching has improved. Teachers are better informed and more confident. They plan in more detail and increasingly share their intentions for learning with pupils. Assessment systems have improved significantly. Staff turnover has constrained the development of subject leaders. This remains an area for improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	E	E	D	D
mathematics	E	E	D	D
science	E	E	D	D

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

Standards are improving because the very high levels of pupil mobility and staff turnover are reducing. Although those pupils who had been at the school for at least two years before taking the Year 6 tests in 2002 did marginally better than others, overall, pupils did not achieve as well as they should. A large proportion had taken the Year 2 tests at other schools and joined Emerson Valley during the interim period. Overall progress during this time is well below average compared to pupils in other schools nationally.

The picture is now more positive than the test results indicate. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons. Standards are broadly average in reading, speaking and listening but pupils' writing skills are still below average by Year 6 and below those expected in Year 7. Test results in mathematics rose significantly last year but overall attainment is below average. Pupils are making good progress with basic computation and calculation in Years 3 and 4 but still lack confidence when tackling new problems in the older classes. Pupils are benefiting from the new emphasis given to scientific enquiry. Their understanding of scientific ideas is now sound and attainment is broadly as expected by Years 6 and 7. Higher attaining pupils could be doing better, particularly in mathematics and science.

Pupils who have English as an additional language do as well as their classmates, many being in the higher attaining groups. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys.

Despite the many upheavals over the last five years, the upward trend in test results has been broadly in line with that found nationally. As the pupil population is now more settled, it is possible to set more accurate targets for performance. Given the improvements in teaching and learning, targets for the 2004 tests appear rather low.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The majority of pupils enjoy school and are keen to take part in the activities it offers them

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well but a significant minority find it hard to do so. The level of exclusions is very high.
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Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds get on well and work and play together amicably
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is in line with national averages. Punctuality is good

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 3 – 6	Year 7
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Basic skills in literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) are taught well overall. The teaching of English is good and is leading to improvements in speaking, listening and reading. Writing skills are taught increasingly effectively but opportunities for pupils to write extended pieces are too infrequent. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory, with some good and very good lessons seen. Teachers have a good knowledge of science and teach it effectively.

Teachers usually manage behaviour well and there is a brisk pace to most lessons. Lessons are well planned but higher attaining pupils are too frequently set work which is too easy for them. Teachers generally explain things well but pupils are sometimes confused when explanations are not clear in mathematics. Learning support assistants make a very positive contribution to learning and behaviour, providing good support for children with special educational needs.

Pupils' learning is improving as a result of more consistently effective teaching. Most try hard in lessons and concentrate. They are acquiring the basic skills necessary to increase their rate of progress and they work well independently when given the opportunity.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities. Planning is detailed but work planned for higher attaining pupils is often insufficiently challenging.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Learning assistants provide good support for pupils in class and in small groups. The school ensures that pupils' special needs are identified as soon as possible so that English and mathematics lessons can be modified to provide for their needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The language support teacher gives good direction to the learning support assistants who are an effective team. Language support staff compile helpful information about what the children need to learn next but this is not shared with other staff as widely as it should be.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is effective. Adults establish a caring atmosphere where pupils are respected and valued. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual development
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Arrangements for pastoral care provide for continuity and consistency irrespective of staff turnover. Good procedures are used to record pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics. Targets are set to help individual pupils. Levels of supervision before school are

	barely adequate, given the design of the building.
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The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Written information is very good but opportunities for informal contact between staff and pupils are restricted by the design of the building.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher is a strong leader who has managed the school through turbulent times. She is well supported by the deputy and senior staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors work hard and fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school analyses test results and compares performance with other schools. The priorities identified by the headteacher closely match those emerging from the inspection.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Some subject leaders do not play a strong enough role in the drive to raise standards.

The school now has a good complement of staff. Accommodation is good and resources are adequate. The clear structure for financial planning enables the school to apply the principles of best value well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

(19 parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. 162 of the 503 questionnaires - 32 per cent - were returned)

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They feel the school has high expectations for their children 	<p>A significant minority (30 per cent or more) is dissatisfied with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extra-curricular activities, information on their children's progress, the extent to which the school work closely with parents the provision for homework.

Parents are right to think that the school has high expectations for their children in relation to developing positive attitudes and to behaving well, although some academic targets are rather low. Provision of extra curricular activities is satisfactory, although most of these occur on one afternoon, which restricts the choice available. Reports are good but do not give a clear picture of how well children are doing for their age. The school could offer more opportunities for informal contact between staff and parents. Homework makes a reasonable impact on pupils' learning and is similar to that found in many schools, although there are inconsistencies in the use of homework diaries.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Results of National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils over the last five years have shown that pupils have been about half a year behind those in other schools. The difference was not as great in 2002 but results were still below average. The proportion of pupils gaining the expected levels for their age and the number achieving higher levels did not match those of other schools nationally. Many pupils who achieved average results when they were in Year 2 did not make enough progress and did not achieve as well as they should have by Year 6. When compared to similar schools, results were also below average. Although this comparison is less reliable in relation to this school because of the high level of pupil mobility, weaknesses in results are not only due to the characteristics of the school population. The quality of teaching has suffered because of the high level of staff turnover. Some year groups have had numerous teachers during their time at the school and this is bound to have had a detrimental affect on learning and progress.
2. Work seen during the inspection was better than recent test results indicate but standards in writing and mathematics still have some way to go to reach average levels. Progress has been good in science and pupils are now working at broadly average levels. This more positive picture has been achieved because stable staffing has improved the overall effectiveness of teaching. Pupils' behaviour had suffered because of the lack of consistency in managing lessons but most now have positive attitudes. This is also contributing to improving standards. Attainment in Year 7 follows a similar pattern to that in Year 6, with standards in writing and mathematics below average and those in science broadly average.
3. Standards are broadly in line with expectations in all other subjects, except that year 7 pupils are doing well in history. Teachers have successfully motivated pupils to take a strong interest in the subject and this is paying off.
4. Pupils' are increasingly using their skills in literacy and numeracy when studying other subjects. Reading is improving but pupils still lack confidence and need more practice in written work. Although pupils are reasonably confident in applying their numeracy skills in other lessons, their basic skills in calculating are not developed fully by Years 6 and 7. On the other hand, most have a good degree of expertise when using computers in their studies.
5. Pupils who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Their progress is often good when they work in small groups or within lower ability sets¹ because their tasks are at the right level for them. Their progress is slower in some class lessons when they are given the same tasks as all the other children. Pupils who find it difficult to conform and behave appropriately do not make the same progress as other pupils with special educational needs but teachers make strong efforts to help them learn.
6. Pupils who have English as an additional language do as well as their classmates, many being in the higher attaining groups. The small number of pupils who are at a very early stage of learning English make good progress when they have the

¹ In English, lower attaining pupils are taught separately. In mathematics, higher attaining pupils are taught separately.

individual attention of support staff but they can be left rather to their own devices in some lessons which means they do not always build systematically on this support.

7. Pupils with the potential to achieve better than average levels are not always doing so because the level of challenge in many lessons is too low. Setting arrangements benefit the pupils in the top mathematics sets but there are other higher attaining pupils in the other sets who are not progressing as quickly as they should. Similarly, in the mixed ability sets in literacy, higher attaining pupils are often given similar work to the rest of the class.
8. There is generally no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys because the school ensures that they get equal opportunities. For example, curriculum topics and books are chosen to appeal to boys and girls. Teachers pay equal attention to boys and girls during lessons so one group is not allowed to dominate discussions. Pupils with particular talents and abilities – particularly in sport and music - are given encouragement and support, which contributes to their good progress.
9. Despite being below average, improvements in test results have broadly matched the national picture over the last five years. There was a particularly sharp rise in results last year. Now that pupils are more settled in the school and less likely to move, it is possible to set more accurate targets for performance. Given the improvements in teaching and learning, some targets appear rather low, especially the anticipated number of pupils likely to achieve average results in the 2004 tests.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school has maintained good standards in the areas of pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships since the time of the last inspection. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their learning are usually good. When pupils are taught well they are interested and attentive, and concentrate on their work. The younger pupils are sometimes more easily distracted, but older pupils show a sense of maturity and self-discipline in class. This is because the school makes pupils aware of its high expectations for them and helps them develop good working habits.
11. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory. Most pupils behave well all the time, following school rules and doing as they are told without making a fuss. However, in some classes, there are undercurrents of chat if teachers do not make their expectations clear or tolerate unsettled behaviour. The design of the building does not help here. Classrooms without doors allow noises from outside to intrude and disturb lessons, while cloakrooms with doors mean that boisterous behaviour inside can pass unnoticed. In addition, there are a number of boys at the school, particularly in Years 3 and 4, whose behaviour can be very challenging. The school does what it can to manage these pupils but some find it difficult to conform to normal school life for long. As a result, the exclusion rate for the school is disproportionately high. Last year there were 28 temporary exclusions involving 18 pupils and this year so far there have been 22 temporary exclusions involving just six pupils from Years 3 and 4.
12. Relationships in the school are good. Pupils work and play well together and the different ages and genders get on well with one another. The racial harmony within the school is particularly striking and pupils are genuinely interested in different cultures and traditions. In a Year 4 religious education (RE) lesson, for example, pupils were fascinated by the custom of the Jewish Seder meal and were curious to find out about its symbolism. Pupils are very supportive of one another. In a personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson in Year 5, one pupil helped her neighbour,

who is still learning English, to read and understand the text without waiting to be asked by the teacher.

13. Pupils' personal development is good. The school offers pupils good opportunities to develop personal skills and qualities, and those who choose to make the most of these get a lot out of school life. Pupils were seen to work enthusiastically as a team on their patchwork project, for example, and as prop-builders for the school production. The members of the school council have a very mature and responsible attitude towards their role. They are confident about reporting their classmates' concerns to senior staff and about working with them to design a new playground.
14. Levels of attendance are satisfactory. They are in line with the national average. Most absence is caused by illness and the amount of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Punctuality is good. Most pupils arrive at school in plenty of time each day so that the morning session can begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The standard of teaching overall has improved since the last inspection. Half of all lessons were judged to be good or better. There is good teaching in all year groups and the school benefits from leading teachers² in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
16. There has been considerable movement of teachers in and out of the school in recent times and it has been difficult to maintain continuity and consistent implementation of school policy and practice - for example, a lack of consistency in strategies for improving writing. Recently the school has begun to focus on ways of improving the teaching of literacy and numeracy and this is beginning to have an impact on the rising level of pupil attainment. The establishment of coherent teams under experienced team leaders in each year group has been helpful in bringing stability to the staff.
17. In Years 3 and 4, half of the lessons observed were good or better. Lessons are well planned and teachers are generally successful in motivating pupils to try their best. In a science lesson in Year 3 on soil particles, the teacher used very good questioning techniques to help the pupils see the relationship between soil type and potential for flooding. The teacher had high expectations of both the pupils' ability to work hard and to behave well. Pupils responded well to this. There are several pupils in Year 3 whose behaviour can cause difficulties. Most of the time, the teachers and learning support assistants are able to reduce the impact this has on other pupils.
18. In a very good literacy lesson in Year 3, the lively teaching and stimulating resources enabled all groups of pupils to make good progress. The teacher read the 'real' story of The Three Little Pigs by the 'Wolf' and then encouraged the pupils to write the story from the point of view of the third pig. A good whole class introduction and a well designed prompt sheet encouraged the children to get straight into the task at the earliest opportunity minimising any disruptive possibility. As a result, the work was good and the pupils' behaviour was well managed. In another very good literacy lesson in Year 4 the teacher gave a very good introduction then kept the pupils well focused with good prompting, praising and clarification of the task. As a result, the progress and learning were very good.

² Leading teachers are recognised by the local education authority as having particular expertise. Part of their role is to share good practice with colleagues and teachers in other schools.

19. In years 5, 6 and 7 just over half of the lessons seen were either good or very good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and draw on what they already know when introducing new work. This was exemplified during two lessons in Year 5 in which teachers made good use of children's ideas allowing them to explain their thinking. Very good management of behaviour and a quick pace to lessons ensures that pupils are kept busy and challenged. An excellent history lesson in Year 7 involved presentations by the pupils. Very confident teaching within a very good atmosphere for learning enabled pupils to develop their maturity in argument, presentation and speaking and listening skills, underpinned by a secure grasp of the subject.
20. Teaching of the basic skills in literacy and numeracy is now generally good. However, the grouping arrangements in English and mathematics mean that some pupils are not making as much progress as they should because the work is not well matched to their needs. The teaching of mental strategies in mathematics is not secure in the younger classes and pupils are not given sufficient time to write in English lessons and other subjects in order to improve their writing skills.
21. Teachers' management and use of resources, time and support staff is mostly good. In literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers set work at appropriate levels to enable most pupils to move forward and make good progress. In other lessons, pupils with special educational needs have the same work as the rest of the class and their learning is slower on these occasions. Overall, their progress is satisfactory. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to teaching, either in lessons or when working with small groups outside the classroom.
22. Pupils with English as an additional language also benefit from extra support and this helps them make good progress. Those who are at an early stage of learning English receive good support from language support staff but other teachers lack skills in devising appropriate activities for these pupils. One or two are placed in special needs groups. These pupils do not have the same degree of learning need as the rest of the group and opportunities for them to improve their fluency and understanding in English are too limited.
23. There were many examples in the inspection week of good and very good teaching. The particular strengths common to most of these lessons were the clear explanations of tasks and ideas, a good pace to the lessons, tasks that were well matched to pupils' abilities and good management of pupil behaviour. In the lessons which were satisfactory, the principle areas for improvement are the teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, some areas of insecurity in subject knowledge which lead to confusing explanations and a better use of time during the lesson, with more focus on pupil activity rather than teacher talk.

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

24. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities that are relevant to pupils' needs and contribute well to their academic and personal development. Special focus weeks and activity sessions add good variety to normal routines. Sport and physical education have particularly benefited from this approach. Pupils enjoy the activity sessions because they can practise over a longer period of time, 'to get good at something you like doing'.
25. Curriculum plans are detailed but do not include enough opportunities for pupils to practise and develop literacy skills in other subjects. Skills in numeracy and ICT on

the other hand are often woven into lessons in subjects such as geography and science.

26. The school ensures that pupils with special educational needs are identified as soon as possible so that literacy and numeracy lessons can be modified to provide for their needs. Pupils receive good support from learning assistants. The language support staff compile helpful information about what the pupils at an early stage of learning English need to do next. Teachers are not always made aware of it however, so opportunities to support these pupils in class are missed. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils, and new arrangements are being introduced to ensure that their needs are fully met.
27. The school provides a reasonable range of extra-curricular activities, although most of these occur on one afternoon, which restricts the choice available. Good use is made of the local community, for example, through educational visits to places such as the local lake for environmental work. A wide range of specialists such as artists, musicians, poets, sports coaches visit either on a regular basis or during the special focus weeks. They contribute much to the broad and varied curriculum that pupils enjoy. Pupils enjoy taking part in school productions. At the time of the inspection, a musical play involving more than 100 pupils in performing or helping backstage was imminent. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments. The school orchestra recently performed in a youth music festival at the Royal Albert Hall.
28. The school has good relationships with others in the area. There are effective arrangements for the transfer of personal and academic information, especially for pupils with special educational needs.
29. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development, including a programme of PSHE and citizenship. Teachers used the week's theme of *Work hard, aim high* well in lessons to help pupils set realistic but challenging personal targets such as to 'improve my handwriting' or to 'be more helpful'. Sex and relationships education, health education and drug awareness issues are treated appropriately in PSHE and other lessons such as science and physical education. School productions, residential visits and taking part in sport also contribute well to pupils' personal development; they provide opportunities for pupils to develop self-confidence and to work constructively with others.
30. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. In assemblies, pupils reflect on matters such as conflicts between countries and develop their self worth and personal esteem through celebrating their achievements. Subjects such as art and English contribute further to pupils' spiritual development, for instance through opportunities to express themselves creatively in painting or poetry.
31. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. All adults establish a caring atmosphere where pupils are respected and valued. Pupils help to set their own rules for behaviour and the school's system of sanctions and rewards is clear. Pupils know what is expected of them. The school encourages pupils to show initiative and to accept responsibility, for example, the Year 7 pupils say that they get a lot of personal satisfaction and pleasure through the chance to work and play with their 'buddy' in Year 4. Each new pupil, including those who come from other countries and have very little English, is assigned a pupil mentor. This promotes pupils' understanding of how they can be 'good citizens' within the school and wider community.

32. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Links with a Kenyan school, for example, are used well to teach pupils about life in a developing country. Displays of work on immigration to the United Kingdom just after World War 2 contribute well to pupils' understanding of life in multi-racial Britain. In thought provoking 'letters home to the Caribbean' one pupil wrote, 'I went to school yesterday. All the boys started making fun of me. I think it's because I am different.' In religious education, pupils learn about major world faiths and celebrate festivals such as Diwali. However, more use could be made of the local community to support this work, for example, by visiting mosques and other places of worship.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Pastoral care for pupils continues to be a strong feature of the school. The key to its success in this area lies in the very good systems for recording and monitoring incidents and concerns, and in the very good structures for dealing with pastoral issues, such as discipline or absence. The headteacher and senior staff know pupils very well and try to look at their problems in context. They liaise closely with parents and support services to find the best possible solutions for each individual.
34. Procedures for child protection are good. The headteacher is responsible for this and there is clear guidance and regular training for staff. Children are taught about keeping safe through their PHSE programme. The school has guidelines on safe use of the Internet. First aid arrangements are very good and pupils are well looked after if they are ill or injured. The school makes good provision for those pupils who join part way through the year, with a learning support assistant responsible for helping them to settle in and acting as a first port of call for any worries they or their parents may have.
35. Systems for addressing health and safety issues are good. Daily routines run smoothly and pupils are usually well supervised. Occasionally, however, there are not enough staff around the site at lunchtime to keep an eye on all the pupils, despite local guidelines on the appropriate adult/pupil ratio being followed. This is because so much of the school premises is used for eating lunches. As a result, opportunities are created for pupils to behave inappropriately without being noticed.
36. Many pupils arrive very much earlier than the time the school takes responsibility for their supervision – some as early as 8.00am. Arrangements for pupils to enter the school ten minutes before lessons begin, where they are under the supervision of teachers, are well known to parents and pupils. The fact that there can be many children in the playgrounds before the published time, raises a dilemma for the school. A member of the staff monitors the outdoor areas from 8.30am but the number of pupils arriving too early means that some are not directly supervised.
37. Pupils' indoor shoes sometimes pose a health and safety risk. Despite frequent reminders from staff and the weekly newsletter, a number of pupils wear footwear which is not sensible, such as slip-on mules; some wear broken or outgrown plimsolls or walk around in stockinged feet.
38. The school promotes attendance and monitors absence well. Systems for recording absence and lateness are particularly good and this means that senior staff can be alerted quickly to any potential problems. Computerised reporting, close partnership with the Education Welfare Officer and awards to pupils for good attendance have helped to ensure that the school has maintained its attendance around the national average. This is despite a number of prolonged or regular absences for a variety of legitimate reasons.

39. Behaviour is well managed overall, although there are some inconsistencies. Rewards and sanctions work very well in practice. In a Year 5 class, for example, the teacher went through the report cards of a small number of pupils at the end of the day, discussing how well they had done and how they could improve. As a result, the day ended on a positive note and pupils' self-esteem was lifted. In most classes, this good practice is the order of the day. Work in the nurture group for the youngest pupils is helping them learn to listen and work quietly. Some of the sessions are particularly effective and the expertise of the special educational needs co-ordinator helps the children to be calm and think of others. Any instances of bullying or other unacceptable behaviour are taken seriously by the school and handled firmly, in co-operation with parents where necessary. All incidents are carefully recorded and monitored.
40. There are good procedures for monitoring and recording pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Much better use is being made of the data available than at the time of the last inspection. Careful analysis allows senior management to track the progress of groups of pupils and to modify teaching approaches. A good example of this is the recently devised whole school approach to improving writing in English and written calculation methods in mathematics. Some subject leaders have little involvement in reviewing pupil progress and using this information to adapt work however. Setting overall targets for attainment is beginning to have an impact on raising standards. Some good examples were seen of teachers using assessment information to guide their planning for the next lesson. Individual target setting is being used increasingly effectively, although the marking of work rarely indicates what pupils need to do to improve.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has not been able to maintain the strong partnership with its parent community which was noted in the previous inspection report. Parents' views of the school are satisfactory overall, although a significant minority of parents is dissatisfied with many aspects and this is unusual. It seems that many parents are discontented generally because of factors beyond the school's control, which they feel disrupt their children's education. They are tired of the frequent changes in the character of the school and the implications this has for staff turnover and pupil groupings.
42. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Senior staff and teachers are always willing to see parents as soon as possible if there is a problem and office staff are very friendly and welcoming to everyone entering the school. Unfortunately, the layout of the building means that it is difficult for parents and teachers to meet and chat at the classroom door at the end of the day and build up an informal relationship. As a result, parents often only see their child's teacher at formal parents' evenings or when there is a problem. This distance between parents and staff is not helped by the inconsistent use of homework diaries across the school. While parents at the lower end of the school have the chance to build up a helpful dialogue with their children's teachers through their reading records, this opportunity is not available to parents with older children. Homework diaries have been started and abandoned in some classes, which creates confusion for parents.
43. Written information for parents is good overall. Reports to parents on their children's progress are good. They focus well on attainment in all subjects of the curriculum and set informal targets for improvement. However, they do not give parents a clear picture of how well their children are doing for their age and sometimes they use jargon. The school's published literature, such as the prospectus and the governors'

annual report to parents is excellent. The content and presentation of these documents are outstanding and they are very readable and easy to use for reference. Written information for parents on the curriculum, through curriculum newsletters and year handbooks is very good. These documents set out clearly and at length the details of what pupils will be covering each term and how their parents can support them. The weekly newsletter is also very good. It keeps parents up-to-date with everything that is going on and it celebrates the successes of the school and its pupils. The quality and quantity of written information is particularly helpful given the nature of the parent community, many of whom work outside the home and are unable to have daily contact with the school. It is a good example of the school working hard to meet the needs of parents and forge a partnership with them.

44. Most parents attend parents' meetings, ensure that homework is completed and are supportive of their children's education. A small number work actively for the school, as governors or members of the Friends' Association, or as helpers with activities or trips.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The school is well led. The headteacher has steered the school through considerable and continuing change since the school opened. This has included an explosive growth in pupil numbers leading to a deficit budget, staff recruitment issues and changes in the structure from a combined school to a middle school. These factors have been very difficult to manage and required the strong and resolute leadership displayed by the headteacher. The local education authority has changed the procedures for opening new schools based on the difficulties experienced at Emerson Valley.
46. The scale of change and turbulence suffered by the school has been a distraction from raising standards. This is now being addressed because all the elements are in place to concentrate on this issue. The deputy headteacher does not have a class commitment and supports the headteacher well in the general management and day-to-day running of the school. Team leaders for each of the five year groups have a management and pastoral role, providing good support for teachers and pupils.
47. Many co-ordinators are new to the role and, although they have gathered useful information and have made useful suggestions, they have not yet begun to consistently monitor teaching and learning. As a result, their understanding of the progression and continuity of each subject across the school is not as clear as it could be. This was a key issue from the last inspection and has not yet been resolved, mainly due to the high staff turnover.
48. The special educational needs co-ordinator gives good direction to the learning support assistants who are an effective team. They are deployed well and they provide good value for money when measured by the amount of progress pupils make. The coordinator has introduced new, clear systems to write and review many of the learning plans but is not sufficiently involved in monitoring how well the children learn.
49. Governors make a valuable contribution to the work of the school. They have confidence in the headteacher, but ask pertinent questions about standards and school development. They have been a great support during the period of change since the school opened. The wide experience of many governors and the commitment shown by all, supports the work of the school well. Governors are kept

well informed about the school's performance through the detailed analysis and evaluation by the headteacher and deputy.

50. Development planning is effective. The school's main priorities are appropriately being the development of the monitoring of teaching and learning, target setting for individual pupils and the management of behaviour. Plans show actions to be taken, costs, deadlines, success criteria and evaluation.
51. Financial planning is good. The chair of the governors' finance committee is experienced and gives good support. Budget monitoring is regular and detailed and well supported by the work of the school's bursar. Each year the strategic group, governors and the bursar spend time considering the school improvement plan, the budget and resource needs for the next year. This helps to ensure developments can be appropriately resourced.
52. Despite the high turnover of staff, there is a commitment to teamwork and improvement. Teachers are deployed appropriately and bring a range of curricular strengths to the school. The systems for the induction of new staff, including newly qualified teachers are good. Performance management and appraisal of staff are satisfactory.
53. The accommodation is good and used to enhance pupils' learning. Outdoor facilities are good but playgrounds are bare of features which could enhance the environment. Teaching and administration staff make good use of the Internet and other information technology (IT) resources. Plans are increasingly shared and modified using the school's Intranet. Attendance is recorded using computer facilities and publications such as reports are produced efficiently and attractively using IT. Resources overall are adequate and of good quality.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to improve standards, the school should:
 - 1) Raise standards in writing (paragraph 55) by ensuring that the good practice evident in some classes is developed consistently throughout the school. Improvements are needed in monitoring and evaluating, planning, pupils' work and the quality of teaching.
 - 2) Raise standards in mathematics (paragraph 62) by:
 - a. improving teacher's expectations of pupils' capabilities and their own subject knowledge;
 - b. ensuring that work is better matched to pupils' abilities, particularly that for higher attaining pupil;
 - 3) Improve the effectiveness of subject leadership (paragraph 47) by enabling coordinators to have more impact on the day-to-day teaching and learning across the school

Minor issues for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for informal contact between staff and parents, including the more consistent use of homework diaries (paragraph 42).

- Improve the level of supervision of pupils before school, at lunch time and in the cloakrooms to ensure that they are always adequately monitored (paragraphs 35 and 36).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	69
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	9	26	31	1	0	0
Percentage	3	13	38	45	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	503
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	40

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	84

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	37

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	16	15	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	9	14
	Girls	10	13	14
	Total	18	22	28
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	58 (66)	71 (81)	90 (80)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	12	11
	Girls	12	14	13
	Total	21	26	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (70)	84 (78)	77 (84)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Note that the school no longer has Year 2 pupils.

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	69	58	127

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	45	47	58
	Girls	43	40	46
	Total	88	87	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (63)	69 (49)	82 (75)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	43	36	51
	Girls	41	37	40
	Total	84	73	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (38)	58 (55)	72 (50)
	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	398	24	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	20	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4	0	0
Chinese	12	1	0
Any other ethnic group	16	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	10	2	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 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	30

Education support staff: Y3 –Y7

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	328

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2
	£
Total income	1383392
Total expenditure	1309361
Expenditure per pupil	2347
Balance brought forward from previous year	-42748
Balance carried forward to next year	31283

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	23

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	4.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	503
Number of questionnaires returned	162

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	47	11	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	34	49	11	3	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	59	9	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	48	24	7	1
The teaching is good.	22	63	9	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	16	49	27	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	35	50	10	5	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	49	4	2	1
The school works closely with parents.	16	51	24	7	3
The school is well led and managed.	24	59	9	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	22	61	10	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	41	26	10	5

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

ENGLISH

55. Standards in Years 6 and 7 are average overall in reading, speaking and listening but below average in writing. When these children started Year 3, their standards were average or below. As they moved through the school their progress slowed, due to changes of teachers and other disruptions. Over the past eighteen months children have begun to make good progress and their standards have recovered in reading, speaking and listening. Writing remains a weaker aspect but is strengthening and progress is good in some classes. The consistently below average standards in writing bring the standards of English to below average overall.
56. Across the school, pupils use an appropriate range of skills to read. These skills are taught well and pupils automatically think about how unknown words are constructed. They sound out letters individually or in groups to make sense of the text. This was seen in Year 7 when one lower attaining child read *glup* and then corrected it to *gulp*. Another child, reading a novel, corrected her use of a pronoun when she realised the clothes mentioned in the text were those of a girl, not a boy. This ease of reading means that the children can use their skills to make sense of work in other subjects. In religious education, for example, the Year 5 children searched rapidly and effectively through a range of written information about different religions to identify points of particular interest. From Year 4, the children study a class novel. This works well and provides good opportunities to study text in detail. The children are beginning to understand what the author is implying rather than actually saying.
57. Speaking and listening are taught well in most classes. Teachers use helpful strategies to extend pupils' skills. Several lessons include partner talk for example. In Year 5, pupils were asked to refine sentences about aspects of seed dispersal by trying them out with a partner. Their discussions enabled them to extend a simple sentence *the bee goes into the flower for nectar*, to *the bee crawls into the flower in order to feed on nectar*. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to offer suggestions as the teacher writes up a good example of text on the board. They see how spoken language is transformed into the appropriate style of written text. This is less successful when teachers demonstrate writing without considering pupils' suggestions.
58. Writing is the school's main focus for development. Already, good improvements are in place and pupils write for a wide range of purposes. A particular strength of the teaching is the way basic skills are taught through worthwhile activities. The children in Year 4, for example, are learning how to take notes and then expand them into accurately sequenced explanations of how to build inventions. In one lesson, the teacher quickly demonstrated how notes could be made while pupils advised and improved written work. One child, for example, insisted that *consequently* should be changed to *as a result*. During discussions, pupils know what they want to write and have a reasonable vocabulary. However, when they begin to write, weaknesses appear. They work slowly, handwriting is immature for about a quarter of pupils and the quantity is often insufficient. Almost half struggle to put their thoughts down because they need more practice to use the skills they are learning.

59. Pupils still have a lot of learning to make up. Despite this, in many cases the writing part of the lesson only lasts for about twelve minutes. There are too few opportunities for pupils to produce extended pieces of written work that require detailed planning and take time to complete. In Year 3, pupils use too many worksheets and have insufficient opportunity to write for themselves. The independent work they produce is often of a low standard. In this year group, basic skills are taught mostly separately, rather than through interesting tasks. The fastest progress, linked to very good teaching methods, is particularly noticeable in Years 4 and 5. Good teaching is evident, though less consistent, in Years 6 and 7.
60. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support in English lessons. They often work as a separate class or have an effective learning support assistant at their side. These children are making steady and sometimes good progress. In other lessons, their learning slows and some become restless. The children with English as an additional language receive good support from the language support teacher and language support assistant. They gain an appropriate level of fluency and understanding of English. Some children who are at very early stages of English are placed temporarily in special educational needs groups because they find it difficult to cope in class and misbehave. The quality of teaching in these small withdrawal groups is generally satisfactory but it is more effective when pupils' individual needs are clearly identified and provided for.
61. The school has monitored and evaluated teaching and learning to identify what needs to be done. Subject leaders have worked well to introduce new methods, such as children discussing in pairs in order to clarify their thinking and improve their speaking skills. The developments needed to raise the standards in writing are clearly identified by the co-ordinators. The quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress could be strengthened through stronger intervention from the subject leaders and senior staff.

MATHEMATICS

62. The standards attained by pupils in Year 6 are improving but still below average. Progress is improving but is still too slow. The standard of work by pupils in Year 7 is also below the expectation for their age group. Five of the twelve lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good and this proportion needs to be increased in order to raise pupils' attainment further.
63. Pupils are making good progress in basic calculation but their range of strategies for applying what they have learned are not sufficiently well developed by Year 4 to enable them to make quicker progress in Years 5 and 6. There is a reasonable range of investigation work but too much of this is on squared paper in books, which is limiting pupils' freedom to think and explore number more openly through jottings. Pupils do need to be neat in their recording but not at the expense of having more mathematical practice. Although, pupils frequently use individual white boards and markers to jot down ideas, when working in books, writing and underlining the date and title takes some of them far too long and reduces the amount of time spent on mathematics.
64. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some good and very good lessons were seen in years 5, 6 and 7. However, the way in which the pupils are grouped means that there is still a wide range of attainment and teachers find it difficult to meet the needs of all the pupils. In the groups which contain mainly higher achieving pupils, the learning is usually good. Some teachers' subject knowledge is not strong and consequently in a number of lessons the explanations are confusing and do little to help pupils with their understanding. In some cases, the logical sequences of calculation are not well

followed and links with previous work are more difficult for pupils to see. In other lessons, too many methods are being used to achieve the same end and pupils are not secure in any of the strategies. Although work is mostly planned using the national strategy for guidance, too many pupils are experiencing work which is either too difficult or, for the higher achieving pupils not in the top sets, more usually too easy. Progress is therefore not as good as it could be. Teachers are not clear about the key objectives which they are teaching and are unsure about the most appropriate methods for helping pupils to acquire them.

65. Most lessons get off to a good start with some brisk calculating involving all of the pupils. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils rose to the challenge of performing one of the four operations on different pairs of decimal numbers. A very good start was seen in a Year 6 lesson with the top set in which pupils held up numbers which were accepted or rejected by the teacher; pupils had to guess the rule which was frequently quite complex such as 'even numbers in the 9x table'. This was a good example of encouraging pupils to use number knowledge in a quick and imaginative manner.
66. In most lessons there is a good emphasis on pupils giving explanations of what they are doing. This enables teachers to check on pupils' understanding and correct errors. In the satisfactory lessons, learning is adequate but not good enough for the pupils to move ahead sufficiently rapidly to reach the expectations for their age. The closing session is sometimes used well to find out what pupils were learning and to revise the main points of the lesson. In a Year 7 lesson, it was also well used by the teacher to check on pupils' understanding to determine the content of the next lesson. In other lessons across the school, the final summary is not used to bring the learning to a memorable conclusion, thereby losing the opportunity to secure children's understanding.
67. Weekly planning clearly identifies the things which are to be learnt, the key vocabulary and the resources which will be required. The range of attainment in some lessons is too large, preventing the teacher and pupils from being able to focus on the key learning points. Learning support assistants are well deployed during the lessons and make a very valuable contribution to pupils' progress, particularly when working with small groups and individual pupils.
68. Pupils record their work very tidily and have a good attitude towards mathematics. Year 6 pupils working in pairs on a number problem were so engrossed that they were reluctant to stop at the end of the lesson. Higher attaining pupils speak with confidence about the methods which they are using. Most pupils work well in pairs and groups and can work for long periods with sustained concentration. Homework is used to support class work and provides an opportunity for pupils to extend their learning.
69. The co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A good start has been made, for example, in training staff on a whole school approach to written methods in mathematics. Appropriate plans have been made for additional monitoring of teaching and reviews of pupils' work by the co-ordinator. Performance data is analysed and this is beginning to determine curriculum improvements.

SCIENCE

70. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Attainment by Year 6 is now average and standards in Year 7 are in line with expectations.

71. Pupils are taught to consider scientific enquiry and the notion of a 'fair test' and, by and large, pupils understand why this is important. When investigating how solids dissolve, Year 4 pupils discussed in some detail how they could make their experiment valid to produce reliable results. When testing whether salt, sand, flour, powder paint, rice would dissolve, the pupils decided that they needed to use the same amount of each substance, the same amount of water and to stir the liquid the same number of times or for the same time period. The pupils understood the reasons for this and participated in the experiment co-operatively. This 'hands on' approach is leading to improvements in progress.
72. Average standards are evident in Year 6 where pupils name the parts of a plant and use a branching key to identify a fruit. They understand and can draw food chains. They understand how to separate mixtures and solutions by sorting, sieving, filtering or evaporating. In work on light, pupils explain how light is reflected from a shiny surface in a different direction.
73. In Year 7, pupils explain that vertebrates are classified into the five groups of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish and that each has different features. They understand that certain plants prefer soil with a particular level of acidity. When learning about acids and alkalis pupils make predictions and then test substances such as vinegar, limescale remover, milk, bicarbonate of soda, lemon juice, washing up liquid and tomato ketchup for their level of acidity.
74. Teaching is good. Teachers know the subject well and devise questions that extend pupils' learning. In a Year 3 lesson, where children were learning about soil types, the teacher skilfully asked questions which led the pupils to understand how soil type can directly affect them in terms of the flooding of the local playground. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace enabling pupils to build upon their understanding in a logical way. However, work set for higher attaining pupils is generally no more demanding than that of others. The analysis of work shows that, by and large, all pupils in a class complete the same written tasks. In lessons observed, there was some difference in the work set for less confident pupils but this is not a strong feature of the teaching. As a result, some pupils do not make enough progress. Presentation of work is generally good with neatly labelled diagrams and charts. Marking of work by teachers is regular with generally supportive comments.
75. Subject leadership is good. The two co-ordinators have tailored planning for each year group based on the national guidelines. Observation of teaching in Years 4, 5 and 7 has begun this term. The emphasis during training sessions on teaching skills of scientific enquiry is having a positive impact. The co-ordinators have a clear idea of the priorities in order to improve standards further.

ART AND DESIGN

76. Standards are in line with expectations by Year 6 and Year 7. Most pupils enjoy lessons and try to improve but their progress is no better than satisfactory because skills are not taught systematically through the school. Some individual pupils, who have a talent for drawing, produce good work and this is displayed to good effect around the school. Where specific skills are effectively taught, pupils show that they are capable of doing really well.
77. All pupils have a sketchbook but these are used inconsistently from class to class. Year 3 sketchbooks contain little work but in Years 4 and 5 more attention is given to teaching techniques such as shading to achieve three-dimensional effects. This was

evident also during a good lesson in Year 4 when the teacher provided a range of African statuettes for pupils to draw. She demonstrated how depth could be achieved using lighter and darker shading and most pupils got the idea and made a good attempt.

78. Teaching is satisfactory. When teachers provide appropriate resources and give specific guidance, pupils' learning accelerates. This happened in a good Year 6 lesson on perspective, where the teacher supported pupils' understanding by distributing landscape pictures, asking them to identify the 'vanishing point' and to draw in lines of perspective. Most pupils had little previous experience to build on but made good progress. Conversely, during a Year 3 lesson, pupils were given insufficient guidance and did not make any appreciable progress in creating patterns. During a Year 7 lesson, pupils' enthusiasm for practical activities was obvious as they became fully absorbed in creating landscape collages. This level of interest was also evident during the activity afternoon when pupils were enjoying working with clay to produce sculptures of animals. For standards to improve, these activities should feature more in day-to-day lessons. To some extent, the annual 'creativity week' compensates for the lack of a stimulating programme of practical work but until skills and techniques are taught systematically through the school, standards are unlikely to rise.
79. The co-ordinator is aware of the areas for improvement in the subject but art has not had a high priority because of the school's focus on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. She has led a training session on display, which has had a positive influence on the way work is displayed around the school. Art work during 'Black Culture Month' provided good opportunities for pupils to increase their understanding of cultural diversity.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

80. Pupils make steady progress and attain standards in line with those expected by Year 6 and by Year 7, as they did at the time of the last inspection.
81. Year 3 pupils use syringes and plastic tubing to make models that work using pneumatics. Pupils use tools to assemble, join and combine materials in a range of ways. In Year 4, pupils have made well presented books showing how to make models that include hinge joints, sliding mechanisms, pop-up features and rotating and swivelling joints. They have also investigated the properties of chairs and planned and made model chairs for various fictional characters. Work is developed in Year 6 to include making vehicles from balsa wood with motors and switches. In Year 7, pupils have made games promoting healthy life styles and shared them with their Year 4 'buddies'.
82. Teaching and learning are good. Planning is clear and detailed. During a Year 4 lesson when pupils were making wallets out of fabric, the teacher used good questioning to reinforce sewing techniques and safety issues. Pupils sustained concentration and could explain the plan for their wallet, the techniques to be used and how to sew using backstitch. The learning support assistant provided good support
83. The subject is managed by a capable co-ordinator. She has adapted national guidelines to good effect and is currently working on a project for Year 7 pupils using a computer assisted design (CAD) computer program with two local secondary schools. The co-ordinator has not yet used the time allocated for monitoring teaching to carry out this role so her knowledge of how pupils are doing across the school is

limited. The effective use of facilities is constrained as the two food technology areas are used for many other purposes.

GEOGRAPHY

84. Pupils' progress and attainment are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6 and Year 7. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection.
85. Pupils have a sound understanding of river systems. They use a good range of language such as 'watershed' and 'erosion' and draw diagrams to show what is meant by a river basin and describe how features such as waterfalls and ox-bow lakes are formed. Geography contributes well to pupils' understanding of how people live in other areas of the world. Pupils use ICT well to research information on the Internet, for example to find out how the River Nile has influenced the development of Egypt. They know, for example, that the Aswan Dam was built 'to generate hydro-electricity and to control the amount of water for farmers.' Year 7 pupils explain how earthquakes and volcanoes are formed and understand the impact that earthquakes have on human life.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Some teaching is good. Lessons start well, often with lively discussions that show what pupils already know, for example, about how their school differs from the Desai Memorial School in Kenya. These discussions are a good starting point for the work that follows. Teachers use pictures and photographs well to stimulate discussion. Class management is generally good. Where necessary, teachers manage classes firmly to ensure that pupils behave well and that lessons get on without undue interruptions. However, teachers often take too long to explain what pupils are to do, which leads to fidgeting and inattention. All pupils make satisfactory progress because teachers and support staff work effectively with them. Work is generally matched satisfactorily to pupils' prior attainment but more could be expected, particularly of higher attaining pupils. For example, diagrams could be neater and sketch maps are sometimes incomplete, for instance, missing suitable keys to explain the symbols pupils have used.
87. Planning is satisfactory, and draws appropriately on national guidelines. However, there is no system for tracking pupils' progress at present. The co-ordinator is new to the school this year, and has already begun to revise planning to include more practical work and field trips. This is paying off, for example in Year 5, where study of the local environment includes a visit to the nearby Furzton Lake to explore the leisure amenities that it offers and how they could be improved.

HISTORY

88. Pupils achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 6. Pupils in Year 7 are achieving better than the expected standard.
89. Understanding of historical ideas is developed through a range of carefully chosen topics. There are strengths in most year groups on making comparisons between life today and life in the past - for example, Year 3 pupils compare Ancient Greek schools with their own. This is developed further at a higher level in Year 6 when pupils compare good and bad aspects of life in the 1930s and put themselves in the place of others. Through this work, they are beginning to understand about changes in the world. Some good opportunities are used for pupils to write longer accounts and develop writing skills as well as historical understanding. In Year 7, there are some very good pieces of writing on the feudal system and life in a village for example. There are some opportunities for writing in different formats for example in the newspaper on the Peasants' Revolt.
90. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 3 to 6 and good in Year 7. Artefacts, documents and pictorial evidence are used effectively to help pupils distinguish between primary and secondary source material and to begin to evaluate its reliability as evidence. In Year 4, pupils can recognise key features of past civilizations through their work on invaders and settlers. By Year 6, this is brought closer to their own lifetime with a study of the 1960s and a very different range of sources of evidence, including living eyewitness accounts, on which to base judgements about what life must have been like. By Year 7, pupils are starting to extend their thinking into the broader, more generalised, topics of social structures through the impact of medieval systems on the way people lived and worked. The topics have been well planned to allow these themes to be developed as the pupils move through the school and as their own thoughts mature. During an excellent lesson in Year 7, pupils showed that they have built good study skills and are capable of good independent research.
91. The co-ordinator monitors planning but has not yet taken up the opportunity to observe lessons. Planning is in hand to extend the range of first hand experience with more trips and visitors. There is a good example of an Ancient Greek 'hands-on' day in Year 3. Some links are made with other subjects, mainly English and geography, and there is increasing use of ICT, such as an Internet search for information on Dr Barnado for the Victorian work in Year 5.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

92. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now in line with those expected by Year 6 and Year 7. Pupils make good progress because the school has good computing resources to support their learning and, more importantly, teachers' confidence and subject knowledge have improved as a result of staff training.
93. Pupils have good computer skills. Many log on to the network and work quickly without any adult support. Across the school, pupils use a range of word processing and other presentation software well. There are many examples of well-presented work on display around the school on topics such as the Titanic, fire safety and healthy eating. Year 4 newspapers and magazines, often several pages long, are a skilled combination of text and pictures. The best are well above the standard expected. Year 6 and Year 7 pupils combine text, pictures and sound to create attractive multimedia presentations on themes such as insects or cats, or to present argued cases about issues such as how National Lottery money could be used to finance a new sports centre.

94. Work in other strands of the subject is less extensive, but still up to the standards expected. For example, Year 5 pupils use computers to analyse the data arising from geography field studies and to produce graphs of their results. By the end of Year 6, pupils use the Internet effectively for research. They use spreadsheets to explore simple mathematical models such as budgeting for a party and they have a sound grasp of how to write short control programs, for instance, to make traffic lights follow the correct sequence.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good, an improvement since the last inspection. Classes are often split into two groups so that pupils can work individually at a computer. This is a good working arrangement and allows pupils to work to the best of their ability. Teachers explain new ideas well. A Year 3 lesson began with a good review of how to use a card database to find out, for example, which aliens had more than 10 toes and then moved on to the computer-based equivalent. The teacher used pupils' ideas well in the discussion so that they were actively involved in the learning and were clear what to do in their own work that followed. Teachers support pupils with special educational needs well in practical sessions. They make a point of questioning pupils closely to ensure that they understand their work and visit them frequently to check on progress. These pupils make the same progress as others in the class.
96. Lessons generally move on briskly because most pupils, especially the older ones, behave well, they enjoy their work and concentrate well on what they are doing. Some younger pupils have not yet developed good work habits. They are easily distracted and work very slowly. However, firm class management ensures that they behave satisfactorily and that the lesson flows smoothly without undue interruptions.
97. The three coordinators lead the subject well. They have a good understanding of what needs to be done to continue the drive for improving standards. For example, they have good ideas to develop the use of ICT to support teaching and learning across all subjects, to set out a clear system for assessing pupils' progress and to develop their own role in monitoring the work of colleagues throughout the school. Planning helps pupils to develop skills and knowledge systematically as they move through the school. The best planning identifies links with other subjects and accounts for much of the good work seen in using computers to communicate information.

FRENCH (taught in year 7 only)

98. Pupils in Year 7 are generally attaining the expected standards. They are making particularly good progress with written French and their workbooks contain more recording than might usually be the case with pupils of this age. Many read simple phrases and ask and respond to questions, although their pronunciation and spoken work does not yet have any French intonation. Most of the pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. The classrooms display a range of French vocabulary to support the work in the lessons. Work is supported by a residential trip to France in the summer term.
99. All classes are taught by the same teacher who visits on one day a week. Lessons tend to be lively with a reasonable focus on oral work but more audio and video material could be used to help improve pupils' accent and intonation through listening to native French speakers.
100. Leadership, resource purchasing and development planning have not been fully resolved as the teacher is relatively new to the post. There are no established links

with the modern languages departments in local secondary schools to help ensure that pupils' learning is cohesive through Years 7 and 8.

MUSIC

101. Pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve the standards expected by Year 6 and Year 7. Standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. Pupils who learn to play instruments are taught well by visiting specialists. They make good progress and perform at standards higher than those expected for their age.
102. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons include an appropriate mix of singing, playing, composing and listening. Pupils listen to recordings of their work and make sensible suggestions for improvements, such as pronouncing words more clearly or adding a rhythm accompaniment. Teachers and pupils use musical terms such as 'ostinato' (a repeating phrase or rhythmic pattern) naturally in their discussions to describe what they are doing. Where pupils are directed well, they sing well. In a good Year 6 lesson for example, the class performed the song 'Waterloo' confidently in two parts, with great panache and obvious enjoyment. The teacher focused well on supporting small groups of pupils to help them improve the quality of their performance.
103. Planning is satisfactory and work is sometimes linked to other subjects. For example, group compositions are linked to science and geography through themes such as space or water. Pupils write down their compositions and rehearse them over several lessons to improve the quality of their performance. They achieve satisfactory standards in playing and singing. Teachers generally ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in lessons. Most pupils behave well, but in lessons where the teaching is unimaginative, pupils are unresponsive. A small number of pupils lose interest and cause unnecessary interruptions.
104. The school makes good provision for pupils to learn to play instruments. This is very popular and demand often outstrips what is available. An excellent recorder lesson in Year 4 was a lively mix of practical music making that developed pupils' abilities to play, to read music and to listen carefully. The orchestra plays well. Pupils read from conventional music notation and have appropriate techniques for the length of time they have been learning.
105. Pupils have good opportunities to display their musical talents in concerts and school shows. A rehearsal of 'Blast Off', a musical play to be performed shortly after the inspection, was clearly enjoyed by the large cast, orchestra and choir. School shows such as this make a good contribution to pupils' personal development because they develop their self-confidence and ability to work effectively in a team.
106. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum is enriched by instrumental lessons and opportunities to perform in public. However there is no system at present to track pupils' progress and teachers do not make enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning. The school is adequately resourced for class music lessons and both the large music room and school hall are good spaces for performance.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

107. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations at Year 6 and appropriate for Year 7 pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
108. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with good teaching in Year 7. Lessons are usually well planned with an appropriate balance of activities. Teachers are good at motivating pupils to try hard. In a dance lesson for Year 7 pupils, the teacher encouraged pupils to concentrate on the various aspects of a dance sequence in order to build towards a performance. Pupils worked well together in pairs or groups using their bodies to convey precision, control and fluency. The teacher managed the pupils very well to enable demonstrations by pairs and groups to model ideas and sequences. This approach enabled pupils to assess and evaluate their own dance sequences and improve them.
109. In a lesson with a Year 4 class, pupils participated in a warm up session sensibly and understood why the activity was important. They co-operated with each other to develop 'mirror' movements and moving these into stretch activities with fluency and precision. However, the pace of the lesson slowed when pupils became a little noisy when moving equipment.
110. There is a broad and balanced range of activities including football, hockey, cross-country, netball and swimming. Skills are developed further during the effective activities afternoon for year 5, 6 and 7 pupils. During this time, a coach from Wimbledon Football Club works with pupils to improve skills.
111. Management is good. The coordinator has been in post for a year and has a brief to raise the profile of physical education and sport within the school, which is being accomplished. He has clear priorities for the development of the subject, including an audit of staff expertise and monitoring of teaching. As well as developing the curriculum, he is linking with sporting organisations to improve the opportunities available to pupils including competitive sport for teams and individuals. Pupils with individual talents are very well supported. For example, homework is provided when pupils are chosen to represent Britain in gymnastics and golf. Pupils who participate at local and county level in cross country running, downhill skiing and football are given every encouragement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

112. Standards are in line with those outlined for Year 6 and 7 pupils in the locally agreed syllabus. A suitably broad range of activities make the content interesting and much of the teaching and learning is practical. Standards are likely to rise further once the pupils' tasks provide more opportunities to explore the meanings, attitudes and values that lie behind the stories they hear and the resources they use. The subject leader has identified this need and is already considering the changes that the revised syllabus will introduce in the new school year.
113. Pupils cover a range of topics, for example key lifetime events, as they move through the school. These are studied in relation to major world faiths and pupils gain a good insight into features of different faiths and how people organise their lives accordingly. The teachers plan work to challenge pupils and, for the most part, use an appropriate range of strategies to interest them. However, in Year 3 and to some extent in Year 4, there are too many worksheets for the children to fill in. This prevents pupils from identifying and investigating aspect they find interesting. In other year groups, more opportunity for exploring ideas is provided. In Year 5, for example, pupils discussed how death and funeral arrangements related to different faiths. They were particularly moved by the final words spoken to God by dying people of the Jewish faith. They

confidently compared Christian and Jewish traditions, identifying significant similarities and differences. Similarly in a good Year 4 lesson, the children compared religious ceremonies and festivals.

114. Religious education is linked well to the English curriculum. In a Year 6 lesson for example, pupils' skills in note taking were employed as they collected a good range of useful information. In this lesson, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language were supported well, with a generous amount of time from the teacher, to ensure their work was completed properly. In some lessons, the focus becomes confused if literacy is overemphasised. This happened when the oldest pupils studied the features of a text about Sikhism rather than understanding the importance and value of the religion. Across the school, pupils are very curious about the religions they study and are full of respect for different cultures and ways of worship.