

INSPECTION REPORT

BROOKSWARD COMBINED SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 132210

Headteacher: Mrs Lyn-Marie Hollinshead

Reporting inspector: Rob Crompton
7230

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 6th February 2003

Inspection number: 248942

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:	4 - 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tower Drive Neath Hill Milton Keynes
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard Nicholls

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7230	Rob Crompton	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Music Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? <i>The school's results and achievements</i> How well are pupils taught?
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?
16971	Roger Hardaker	Team inspector	Science Art Design and technology	How well is the school led and managed?
4275	Joyce Taylor	Team inspector	The foundation stage English English as an additional language Religious education Equal opportunities	
27720	Peter Way	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Geography History French	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school was opened in September 2000 when the existing first and middle schools were combined. It is slightly bigger than other primary schools nationally, with 274 boys and girls aged from four to twelve. Most pupils are taught in separate year groups, but there are mixed age classes in Years 1 and 2 and in Years 3 and 4. Pupils mainly live locally. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that typical of four-year-olds. Over a quarter of all pupils have special educational needs, most of whom have learning or behavioural difficulties. This is above the national average. Five pupils have a statement of special educational need, which is more than twice the national average. Almost a third of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Eleven pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is about average, although the school works in challenging circumstances. There is a high level of pupil turnover, as is common in the area.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Under the very strong leadership of the headteacher, the school enables most pupils to achieve well. Due to good teaching, standards are improving, particularly in English. Very good provision for pupils' personal development is having a strong impact on their attitudes and behaviour. Great efforts are made to help all pupils learn and participate in the wide range of activities offered. There is a strong commitment to success and the school has identified the key areas for further improvement. Parents are pleased with the school. It gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching and learning leads to good progress, particularly in English.
- Very good leadership and management by the headteacher have enabled the school to get off to a good start.
- Very good provision for pupils' personal development results in high standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes.
- The broad curriculum and the very good range of extra-curricular activities have a strong impact on pupils' learning and overall development.
- The school's inclusive approach means that all pupils, including those who have English as an additional language, have an equal chance to improve.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to make good progress.
- Governors know the school well and contribute much to its success.

What could be improved

- Attendance
- The range of opportunities for outdoor and indoor activities at playtimes and lunchtimes
- The level of supervision at lunchtimes

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the school's first inspection.

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			Key
	all schools		similar schools	
	2001	2002	2002	
English	C	B	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	D	D	D	
science	D	C	C	

- Children have very low levels of attainment as they start school. They make good progress in the reception class but most do not meet expected levels at the end of the year in relation to their personal and social development, language and communication and numeracy skills.
- From this low start, pupils achieve well during Years 1 and 2. Although seven-year-olds achieved below average¹ results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in reading, writing and mathematics, this represented good progress. Standards in reading are now broadly average, but attainment in speaking and listening, writing, mathematics and science is still below average.
- When pupils' overall performance in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 is compared with their results in Year 2, this indicates good achievement through Years 3 to 6. Pupils make particularly good progress during Years 5 and 6. The test results in the table are reflected in the current work in Year 6, with the exception of mathematics where the inspection found that standards are now average.
- Standards in science are improving because of the increased emphasis on independent investigative work. Conversely, some pupils lack the confidence to use their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills to solve problems.
- Standards at Year 6 are above expectations² in art and design. In all other subjects, they are in line with those expected, except in information and communication technology (ICT). Although pupils have good general computer skills, they cannot achieve all the requirements of the National Curriculum because the school lacks the necessary equipment.
- Pupils maintain momentum in Year 7 and overall attainment is good.
- It is too early in the school's life to identify trends but the signs are positive. Building on the good progress achieved so far, the school has set appropriately challenging targets for future years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about the opportunities it offers them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in class and around the school. Those who have behavioural difficulties are well managed by staff. Some boys

¹ The term 'average' is used in relation to attainment in English, mathematics and science as measured by National Curriculum Tests at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school's results are compared with national figures.

² Throughout this report, 'expectations' refer to the levels that seven and eleven-year-olds are expected to achieve in each subject. By Year 6, most pupils are expected to achieve Level 4. Where almost all pupils achieve this level, or where a significant proportion achieve the higher Level 5, standards can be described as 'above expectations'. Similarly, judgements about standards in Year 7 are made by comparing pupils' attainment to that expected of this year group.

	behave boisterously in the playground, but this is because they are allowed to dominate the space available.
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Personal development and relationships	Good. Racial harmony and integration are particularly strong. Pupils respect one another and are ready to listen to and appreciate the views and opinions of others.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. It compares unfavourably with similar schools. Parents often take their children out of school for holidays during term-time, or for reasons other than the child's illness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6	Year 7
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

- Good teamwork in the reception class between the teachers and learning assistants means most children make good progress.
- Teachers across the school plan lessons carefully and most are good at managing behaviour and motivating pupils to do their best. They clearly explain to pupils what they are meant to learn.
- Progress accelerates in the older classes, especially in Year 6, because pupils rise to the increasing challenges set by teachers.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good teaching and effective support from learning assistants.
- English is taught well throughout the school. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject and successfully teach literacy skills. Mathematics teaching is satisfactory but teachers lack the confidence to use a range of methods, especially in teaching pupils how to use their existing knowledge to solve new problems.
- Teaching is good in science, art and design, design and technology and physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects.
- Pupils with English as an additional language, including those at an early stage of learning English, are supported well by teachers and other adults. Many are among the higher attaining pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Pupils benefit from a rich curriculum and enjoy a very good range of extra activities, including sport, music and art.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good support for these pupil means that they make good progress towards their individual targets. Pupils with emotional and behavioural problems are enabled, as far as possible, to take a full part in lessons.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school takes effective measures to support pupils' learning and as a result they make similar progress to their classmates.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision successfully promotes the aims of the school. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is particularly strong.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school gives pupils good support and guidance. Staff care about the children and are attentive to their welfare. There are not enough midday supervisors to cover a school site of this size at lunchtime. Additionally, the playgrounds are not effectively organised to promote good behaviour at break and lunchtime.
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The school works well with parents. Staff are particularly accessible and approachable, and the home-school diaries are a good means of regular communication. The curriculum is broad and balanced but some elements of mathematics and ICT are given insufficient emphasis.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and provides excellent leadership. The deputy head and subject leaders provide good support.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very well informed and committed, and have a good level of day-to-day contact with the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Governors and senior staff are very well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development.
The strategic use of resources	Funding is carefully allocated and resources are used well.

The school is adequately staffed to meet the demands of the curriculum. Resources for teaching are good overall. The accommodation is spacious. The school seeks best value when making decisions about spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel staff are approachable • Their children are happy at school • They feel staff have high expectations for the children • They feel the school is well led and managed • They are happy with the progress their children make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some feel the school does not work closely with them • Some do not think behaviour is good • Some are not happy with provision for homework.

The inspection team agrees with the parents' positive views. Inspectors find that parents' negative views are only partially justified. Newsletters are infrequent so parents are not regularly informed of what is happening at school. Most reports to parents on their children's progress are good, but there is some inconsistency across the school. Parents have a good number of opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Homework provision is similar to that found in many schools and makes a reasonable contribution to pupils' progress. Behaviour is well managed by staff, but playtimes are not organised well enough to promote good behaviour, especially at lunchtime.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

The Foundation Stage⁴

1. As they start school, many children have poor language skills; they are socially immature and have a weak grasp of early number. Due to good teaching, most make good progress in the reception class, although overall attainment levels by the end of the year are still below those expected. Most children's social skills are still under developed and their language and number skills are weak. Children make particularly good headway in physical development, which is broadly in line with that of other five-year-olds. The few higher attaining children meet or exceed the early learning goals.

English, mathematics and science

2. Standards are below average overall by the end of Year 2. However, from a low level of attainment as they start Year 1, pupils make good progress. Results of the National Curriculum tests were better in 2002 than the previous year. Although the difference was not statistically significant, this positive trend is evident in pupils' current work.
3. When results are compared with those of similar schools,⁵ overall progress is satisfactory during Years 3 to 6. When the low level of attainment on entry, the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and the high level of pupil mobility are taken into account, this indicates good progress overall, and particularly good progress in English.
4. Progress accelerates in Years 5 and 6, due the combination of teacher expertise and pupils' increased maturity. Pupils' attitudes improve and teachers have to spend less time managing behaviour. By Year 6, most pupils have made such good progress that their work in English, especially in writing, is above average. They also achieve well in science and attain standards that are in line with those expected. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in mathematics, they do not do as well as they do in English. This is mainly because they lack the confidence to tackle independent work that relies on their underlying knowledge and understanding.
5. Progress continues at the same good rate in Year 7. Overall standards are above average. The level of attainment in English remains good and achievement in science moves on apace so that standards are also good in this subject. Again, although progress in mathematics is steady and attainment average, pupils lack confidence in problem solving – a necessary skill if they are to achieve higher standards.

Other subjects

6. Standards are above expectations in art and design, particularly in Year 7 where attainment is very good. In all other subjects, they are in line with those expected, because of to the school's determination and success in providing pupils with a broad education.

⁴ The Foundation Stage is from the child's third birthday to the end of the reception year.

⁵ This is based on the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

Literacy and numeracy

7. Pupils' skills in literacy are good and their numeracy skills are average. Pupils' sometimes use their literacy skills in other subjects but, although satisfactory, more could be done to draw on their writing skills in other subjects, such as history and religious education. Similarly, there are limited opportunities for pupils to use and extend numeracy skills in subjects such as science, design and technology and geography.

Achievement of different groups of pupils

8. Higher attaining pupils do well in English and science. They do not progress as quickly in mathematics as some of the teaching is not challenging enough. Pupils who have special educational needs generally make good headway because work is set at appropriate levels. 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 every effort to help them learn, despite the considerable effort involved in keeping them in class rather than removing them. The attainment of boys and girls varies from year to year but there is not an identifiable pattern. For example, girls did much better in the 2002 tests in Year 2 but the opposite was the case in the Year 6 tests. Pupils with English as an additional language do as well as others groups; many are among the higher attainers. The school has identified pupils with specific gifts or talents and these pupils make good progress.

Trends and targets

9. It is too soon in the school's life to identify trends but the signs are positive. Results of National Curriculum tests improved from 2001 to 2002 and the work seen during the inspection suggests that standards are steadily rising. Challenging targets have been set for future years. If the school can sustain the current momentum and increase attendance levels, there is every likelihood that they will be achieved.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The school is successful in achieving high standards in this area of its work. This is particularly creditable given the fact that most pupils start school with poorly developed social skills, but leave as mature and well-rounded individuals. The school works very hard to promote pupils' personal development and this pays dividends. Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy coming to school and are interested and involved in their lessons. They are very keen to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered and are very happy to take on responsibility. Those who are 'buddies', monitors or members of the school council, for example, take their roles seriously and carry out their duties purposefully.
11. The behaviour of most pupils is good. They follow the school's rules and routines, move around the buildings sensibly and do as they are told in lessons. A number of pupils have considerable behaviour difficulties and find it very hard to conform to what is acceptable. They are usually very well supported in class by staff so that disruption to other pupils is minimal. Behaviour in the lower playground is good, but in the upper playground it is only satisfactory. This is because ball games take up all the space available, and this means that boys tend to dominate the whole area with girls mainly left around the edges. As a result, outside play is often boisterous and physical, and

there is little mixing between the two genders. There have been one permanent and four temporary exclusions over the last year.

12. Pupils' relationships and personal development are good. The most striking feature here is the very strong racial harmony and integration throughout the school. Pupils from all races, cultures and religions get on well, accept one another completely, and value one another's traditions. Racist incidents are very rare. The school teaches pupils to respect one another and this is very evident in the way pupils relate to others. Pupils from the school council who were interviewed, for example, listened with interest to what older and younger council members had to say and acknowledged their points of view. Similarly, in a Year 7 circle time session, classmates were very attentive and supportive as an audience while two of their number performed a dance routine they had created themselves. Although there is little contact between boys and girls in the upper school playground, this is caused by the activities available rather than any antipathy between them; they work together effectively in class.
13. The level of pupils' attendance at the school is unsatisfactory. It compares unfavourably with similar schools nationally. The reasons for the low levels of attendance are many and complex, and the school does not always receive the support it should from parents over this. Most absence is caused by pupils' illness, but sometimes pupils are kept at home because their parents or siblings are ill, or because their parents' arrangements mean they are unable to bring them in. Sometimes pupils stay at home because they have problems at school. Punctuality is satisfactory. Most pupils arrive on time each day so that the morning session can begin on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Good teaching in most classes means pupils progress well. About two-thirds of the lessons observed were good or better, with a quarter being very good.
15. Many children in the reception class are immature for their age and find it difficult to settle. The teacher and support staff work extremely hard to help children to concentrate. This is most effective when adults work with small groups and set tasks according to the children's stages of development - for example, when working on various counting activities. Children's learning is well supported as adults ask them questions, although this approach could be extended to encourage children to repeat sentences and phrases more accurately. The large space is used well to enable children to learn through practical work with a good range of appealing resources. Overall, the teaching provides a good foundation for children's personal and intellectual development.
16. A strong feature of teaching in Years 1 and 2 is the promotion of good behaviour. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils, they plan lessons carefully and use resources well to support learning. For example, pupils in Year 1 made very good progress when they used the stimulating resources that the teacher had made, together with a computer program to learn about the sounds of letters. Most lessons move at a brisk pace but occasionally teachers spend too long explaining things at the beginning which leaves too little time for pupils to work by themselves.
17. The teaching in Years 3 and 4 is good overall but there are some weaknesses. Some pupils have severe behavioural problems but most teachers manage this well. For example, during a successful English lesson in the Year 3/4 class, the teacher skilfully sustained the attention of most of the class whilst support assistants worked with

those pupils with behaviour problems in a valiant attempt to include them in the lesson. When these pupils were removed, the classroom became very calm and quiet. In the Year 4 class, the teacher successfully used role play - acting as a professor - to keep everyone interested. Such strategies are not evident in the Year 3 class where some pupils are allowed to dominate. For example, a well-planned lesson on poetry was spoiled because of unruly behaviour and constant calling out. On another occasion, the teacher's explanation of the properties of prisms confused the pupils and restricted their progress.

18. Pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 benefit from consistently effective teaching. Teachers structure lessons carefully and clearly explain to pupils what they are meant to learn. Pupils respond well to the high expectations in regard to effort and behaviour. They are interested in most lessons because the teachers use a variety of resources to sustain their attention and involvement. Relationships are good and there is an atmosphere of mutual respect. Boys and girls work in pairs without fuss, as do pupils from different ethnic groups. Progress accelerates in these classes, especially in Year 6, because teachers set demanding tasks. Homework is used well to consolidate and extend learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
19. Reading and writing skills are taught well. Pupils are taught letter sounds in the younger classes and teachers help them to build on this knowledge successfully to become fluent readers. Writing is taught particularly well in Years 5, 6 and 7. Older pupils are taught a wide range of skills, including note taking and extended writing. They enjoy writing but are not given sufficient opportunities to use these skills in other subjects.
20. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory with some good teaching in Year 6. Although most teachers have a reasonable background knowledge of mathematics, some lack the confidence to challenge pupils to solve problems independently.
21. Teaching in all other subjects is at least satisfactory with good teaching in science, art and design, design and technology and physical education. Teachers are mostly confident in teaching ICT. The teaching of ICT to support learning in other subjects is evident in Years 1 and 2 but there are missed opportunities in Years 3 to 7. The exception is the good link with music in Years 3 and 4.
22. In most lessons, teachers set work at appropriate levels to enable all pupils to move forward. This means that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Learning assistants make a valuable contribution to teaching, either in lessons or when working with small groups outside the classroom.
23. Pupils with English as an additional language also benefit from extra support. Those who are at an early stage of learning English are often helped individually by an adult or by a willing classmate.
24. Teachers assess pupils' progress systematically in reception and Years 1 and 2. This helps them to spot gaps in pupils' learning and, if necessary, to modify their plans. Although satisfactory in other years, there is less evidence of assessment being used in these ways – for example, to move pupils between mathematics sets in Years 3 and 4. Marking is inconsistent through the school; some provides good quality feedback but other marking simply consists of ticks. Some pupils' mathematics books have page upon page of correct work, indicating that they can cope perfectly well with the work set. Such pupils would benefit from more challenging tasks which would allow teachers to assess their levels of attainment more accurately.

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

25. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities and very good enrichment through extra-curricular activities. It meets statutory requirements in all aspects of the National Curriculum. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy are used to guide teaching in English and mathematics and this has led to improvements in pupil attainment in these subjects. There are particular strengths in curriculum provision in art but omissions in some aspects of ICT. All pupils have full access to all parts of the school's curriculum and equal opportunity to join in all aspects of school life.
26. Work has been planned throughout the whole age range to ensure that pupils experience a variety of topics giving them a good grounding in all subjects. Much of the work is steered by national guidelines, which have been modified by the subject leaders. Plans are detailed and provide staff with good guidance on learning objectives, activities and resources.
27. The school ensures that pupils' special needs are identified as soon as possible so that lessons can be modified to provide for their needs. Curriculum plans do not always show how pupils with special educational needs will be supported in their learning but the help which these pupils receive in class is good. Some teachers use learning materials which have been specially prepared. More usually, support comes directly through the adults working with the groups of pupils.
28. A significant strength of the school exists in the provision of many extra-curricular opportunities, which are open to all pupils throughout the school. A very good range of clubs is offered in music, sport and environmental education. Many children take advantage of these opportunities and the school is successful at encouraging participation.
29. The school makes a very good provision for pupils' personal development. Provision for spiritual growth is very good. In assemblies, moments are provided for pupils to reflect. Themes of assemblies enable pupils to explore values and beliefs, with the result that as pupils get older they have a good understanding of their own and others' beliefs. In assemblies teachers share their feelings and emotions with pupils and encourage them to reflect on their own feelings. Lessons in PSHE provide opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of human feelings and emotions and the way these impact on people. Teachers sensitively lead pupils in discussions on a range of issues, for example a class of Year 1 and 2 pupils discussed things that make people feel happy or sad. The emphasis in science on investigative and experimental work is encouraging pupils to ask the questions 'why' and 'how' and to develop enquiring minds. Teachers consistently use a range of strategies to reinforce self-esteem of pupils; for example, pupils' work is carefully displayed around the school for others to admire. Work which reflects much effort is given due recognition, sometimes in front of the whole school.
30. Similarly, provision for the development of moral values is good. Assemblies have moral themes, for example, pupils are taught that the more fortunate have a responsibility to help those that are less fortunate. Pupils are also encouraged to reflect on the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are given opportunities in lessons to explore wider moral issues, for example those that relate to the care of the environment. The effective behaviour policy is backed up by a code of 'Golden Rules'. These are displayed in classrooms and in other areas around the school and they are regularly drawn to the attention of pupils. Teachers consistently apply them in

classrooms. Good use is made of 'circle time' to explore issues related to pupils' feelings and the broader aspects of living in a community.

31. Very good provision is made for cultural development. The school values all cultures and pupils are introduced to these especially through religious education, music and art. Visitors to school enhance the cultural lives of the pupils, for example musicians visit both to play music and to conduct music workshops, visiting artists work alongside pupils and pupils have opportunities to experience live theatre. A special feature is the week when pupils study the culture of Ghana through art, dance and story telling.
32. The provision for social development is good. Pupils are provided with a range of opportunities in lessons to work together in pairs or groups. For example, when working in science they are frequently engaged working in pairs or small groups. When they do so they are often reminded by teachers of the importance of co-operating well and helping each other to achieve the tasks which are given to them. The school council provides excellent opportunity for those involved to see themselves as important parts of the whole school community. A 'buddy system' gives older pupils an opportunity to participate in some aspects of the running of the school and to exercise responsibility in helping look after younger pupils. Older pupils learn to live with each other over longer periods than just the school day on a five-day residential 'adventure' course. More could be done to promote social interaction during breaktimes.
33. There are good arrangements for pupils to develop their understanding in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The 'Health for Life' scheme includes topics on sex education and the misuse of drugs.
34. Strong links have been forged with the secondary school. Pupils benefit from many activities funded and initiated through its Arts College status including, for example, performing a dance routine recently at a specialist presentation at Tate Britain. The school takes part in the Milton Keynes schools' art exhibition and entered the design technology challenge organised by the Institution of Civil Engineers. Additional learning opportunities are provided through visits to support geography, history and outdoor activities. Good use is made of visiting specialists, such as artists in residence, theatre, dance, professional sporting and music groups. Pupils enjoy a rich and diverse curriculum as a result.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. Pupils' well being is very important to the school and the attention given to their welfare is almost always good. The school's arrangements for child protection are very good. Staff at all levels are very aware of what to look out for and what to do, and there is regular training for them. Notices around the school help remind everybody of the procedures to follow and pupils of all ages are taught about keeping safe through their well-planned programme of PSHE. The headteacher is well supported by the governing body on child protection issues. There is clear guidance on Internet safety and use for staff and pupils. Staff care about pupils, respect them and treat them well. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to discuss things that concern them during circle time, and those who have particular needs get close attention from the learning support assistants. Racial equality is a priority of the school and one of its strengths in practice.
36. Arrangements for pupils who are unwell are good. In particular, the role of the welfare assistant means that children in Years 1 and 2 get consistent and caring attention if

they are injured or unhappy, and they have the comfort of knowing who to turn to in these circumstances. Supervision for pupils in the playgrounds at lunchtime is not satisfactory. This is because there are too few midday supervisors to cover a site with two playgrounds and two dining areas adequately. The midday supervisors are caring and conscientious, but there are simply not enough of them to be able to ensure that playground rules are properly kept or to organise activities for the pupils regularly.

37. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are satisfactory. Systems for rewards and sanctions are very good. They are clear, sensible and well known to pupils and parents. Most importantly, they are evident in the way most children behave towards others. The school has very good systems for recording, monitoring and acting on the behaviour of individuals, when they do something which is not acceptable. Bullying is taken very seriously and handled firmly.
38. What the school has not yet done is to organise the playgrounds in such a way as to promote good behaviour when the children are outside. This means that playtimes and lunchtimes are not always a positive experience for all pupils. Both playgrounds lack quiet areas where children can sit down and talk to one another or take part in quiet activities. In the upper school playground, ball games are allowed to dominate the whole of the available area, and no space is set aside for other activities. As a result, those pupils who do not want to play football, mainly girls but also some boys, are marginalised. Pupils do not have regular access to indoor facilities such as the library or the ICT suite at break or lunchtime. The problem is compounded by the low number of staff employed to supervise at lunchtime, although the school has begun to look at ways to improve outdoor facilities.
39. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. The school records and monitors absence carefully and makes very good use of the data available to pursue individual cases. It works very closely and productively with the education welfare officer to do this. As yet though, the school has not given attendance a high enough profile amongst pupils and parents as a whole. There are no weekly competitions for best attendance by classes or individuals, for example, although the school has good plans to introduce certificates for improved attendance. Pupils' attention is not constantly drawn to attendance, for example by displays around school or announcements in assemblies. The infrequency of newsletters means that the school misses an opportunity to remind parents regularly about the importance of attendance. Finally, the school does not point out to all parents the link between their own child's level of attendance and level of attainment.
40. Good developments have been made in the school's procedures for assessing the progress and achievements of pupils. Teachers are beginning to use assessment information in grouping the pupils. More use should be made of assessing pupils' performance against the National Curriculum levels to provide more specific information on their individual learning needs. Pupils need to know more about what they have to do in order to make progress. Although improvements are being made, information given to pupils in the marking of work, for example, very rarely indicates the exact improvements that are required.
41. The assessment system in English provides a good model for other subjects. Regular assessment of pupils' written work is matched to National Curriculum levels. A clear portfolio of work is a considerable benefit to this subject and although other subjects are beginning to build portfolios, the work is not yet matched to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Basic assessment checklists are used in ICT and mathematics, and there is an annual record sheet for all subjects. The emphasis is on assessment

at the end of a unit of work rather than it being used during the teaching programme. This means that opportunities to modify work according to pupils' developing understanding or their misconceptions are limited

42. Good work has been done on analysing the progress that pupils make through the school. The school has a wide range of test data in aspects of English and mathematics. A start has been made in analysing the progress of particular groups of pupils and the apparent differences in performance between subjects and pupils in order to provide a better indication of strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum for improvement planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Parents are happy with the school and with what it offers their children. Those parents around and about the school during the inspection, mainly at the lower end, chatted easily with staff and appeared to feel at home. They were welcomed by staff who were interested to hear what they had to say about their children. Relationships are good, because staff are so accessible and approachable, and are always ready to discuss parents' concerns. Parents acknowledge and appreciate this.
44. The school has created good links with parents, through both staff contact and written information. The new home-school diaries are a particularly good means of communication and are starting to be used well as parents become accustomed to them. They are helpful for parents throughout the school, especially for those who do not see their child's teacher on a daily basis. Study guides are also a good way of keeping parents informed about what their children will be covering in class. They are detailed and sent out regularly by each class teacher. The school's newsletters are friendly and welcoming, but they are sent out very infrequently, which means that it is difficult to keep parents up to date with events and activities. As a result, some parents feel that they do not know what is going on. The prospectus is attractive and well presented, but it omits some details required by law. There is nothing about the provision for special educational needs, and parents are not told of their right to withdraw pupils from religious education and collective worship. The governors' annual report does not show attendance data in a way that can be clearly understood by parents. This is significant in a school where attendance is a problem and parental support is needed for improvement.
45. Reports to parents on their children's progress are usually good. Teachers work hard to make them full and comprehensive. Most reports state clearly what children can do, how well they are doing for their age and what they need to do to improve. This is useful and helpful for parents and gives them a clear picture of how their children are getting on. The good practice found in many classes is not consistent throughout the school, however. Some reports use jargon - for example 'CVC words' or 'positional language' - or contain mistakes. This is off-putting for parents.
46. Support from parents for the school's work and for their children's learning is good. They want the best for the children and most make sure that their children read regularly at home and that homework is completed on time. Attendance levels at parent-teacher consultation evenings are very high, and staff make sure they contact parents who are unable to come. Some parents are able to give their time to the school as governors, PTA members and classroom helpers, and the school values their contribution. It recognises though that many parents are unable to do this as they have work outside the home or younger children to look after. The parent community does not always give the school the support it should over the issue of attendance.

Many families routinely take their holidays during term-time and sometimes parents do not ensure that their children always attend school when they should. As a result the children miss out on valuable lesson time and this affects their progress.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. Overall, leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership. She has a clear vision based on striving for continuing improvement, which she successfully communicates to all staff. It gives the whole school clear direction and purpose. This is reinforced by a clearly defined improvement plan, which is well monitored and regularly evaluated by the very effective governing body.
48. Since its inception in September 2000, the school has developed well. The quality of teaching and learning are good and this has contributed to the raising of standards in literacy and numeracy. The school's aims and values are wholly appropriate and reflect a strong commitment to equal opportunities. Brooksward is a caring and effective school.
49. The senior management team, including the deputy headteacher, make a good contribution to management. Standards are monitored systematically. The headteacher observes teaching in all classes, gives teachers feedback and advises them on areas for further development. Subject co-ordinators support colleagues effectively. With the headteacher and the governing body, they analyse the attainment of pupils in tests and the results are used to identify aspects of the curriculum that need developing. The headteacher and governors compare Brooksward results with similar schools both locally and nationally. Analysis by subject managers is not as fully developed but a start has been made.
50. The special educational needs co-ordinator is new to the role and already giving good direction to the learning support assistants who are an effective team. The work of this team is a strength of the school. Assistants are effectively deployed and they provide good value for money when measured by the amount of progress pupils make. The SENCO and governor with responsibility for this aspect of the school's work liaise effectively and are mutually supportive. Adequate release time is given to the SENCO to fulfil the leadership and management responsibilities.
51. The school's strategy for teacher appraisal and performance management is very good. The headteacher has regular reviews with teachers to discuss their professional development and agree future targets. Direct lesson observation is part of this review. The whole process contributes to the good quality of teaching.
52. Governors receive very full reports from the headteacher, which they carefully scrutinise and question. They are actively involved in monitoring standards. As a result, governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to play an effective part in strategic management. Most governors are in good position to make decisions because they know and talk about relevant issues with good understanding. With the exception of some minor omissions in both the school prospectus and the annual report to parents, the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well.
53. Financial planning is very good and resources are carefully managed. Guided by priorities outlined in the school development plan, the budget is set by the finance committee after consultation with the headteacher and then submitted to the governing body for approval. Money is appropriately allocated and kept under constant review by

the finance committee. Almost ten per cent of funds were carried over to the current year. This money is earmarked for imminent projects. However, some funds need to be allocated urgently to improving resources in ICT.

54. The school uses funds designated for particular purposes well. For example, money designated for providing for pupils with special educational needs significantly contributes to the good progress these pupils make. The use of grants to increase teacher support in classrooms is making a significant contribution to raising standards. Funding is also used well to support the school's very successful induction process for staff new to the school.

55. Teachers are deployed well, according to their experience, strengths and development needs. Most classrooms and other areas of the school are maintained as stimulating and interesting environments. Attractive displays of pupils' work and other stimulus displays are on show in some classrooms and corridors. There are four dedicated work areas and these are used particularly well for craft and other activities. Resources are very good for physical education and they are good for teaching English, art and music. There are some gaps in resources for teaching ICT, for example, there is no data logging equipment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to improve standards, the school should

1) Improve attendance (paragraph 13) by:

- raising the profile of attendance within the pupil and parent community;
- Introducing more incentives to encourage better attendance by individuals and class groups.

2) Improve facilities and the organisation of both playgrounds at break and lunchtime (paragraph 38) so that:

- boys do not dominate the hard play surfaces in the upper school playground;
- pupils have a wider range of activities to pursue outdoors and indoors.

3) Increase the number of midday supervisors so that there are enough to cover the two large sites at all times (paragraph 38).

Minor issues for improvement

- Improving pupils' skills in carrying out independent mathematical investigations (paragraph 78)
- Enhancing resources for control, monitoring and data logging in ICT (paragraph 109)
- Extending opportunities for pupils, particularly in Years 5, 6 and 7 to use their good writing skills to extend learning in other subjects (paragraph 72).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	13	19	17	2	0	0
Percentage	0	25	37	33	4	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 about 2 percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	274
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	77

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	39

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	50
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.4

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	11	27

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	15
	Girls	10	10	11
	Total	22	22	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (79)	81 (74)	96 (94)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	15	13
	Girls	10	11	10
	Total	22	26	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (68)	96 (91)	85 (82)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	16	25	41

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	14
	Girls	19	18	22
	Total	30	30	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (68)	73 (68)	88 (93)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	10	12	14
	Girls	18	18	22
	Total	28	30	36
Percentage of pupils	School	68 (61)	73 (63)	88 (80)

at NC level 4 or above	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)
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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	189	4	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	9	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	4	0	0
Black or Black British – African	13	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	7	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	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: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers	12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29
Average class size	25

Education support staff: YR – Y7

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	233

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	709567
Total expenditure	746646
Expenditure per pupil	2629
Balance brought forward from previous year	100587
Balance carried forward to next year	63508

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years ¹	14.4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

¹ Although many teachers transferred from the original First and Middle schools, all staff were new to the Combined school when it opened in September 2000.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	274
Number of questionnaires returned	56

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	41	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	50	2	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	59	11	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	68	16	0	0
The teaching is good.	39	55	4	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	50	9	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	43	5	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	52	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	46	21	4	0
The school is well led and managed.	45	43	2	0	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	61	4	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	66	4	2	7

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

57. Children make good progress, particularly the potentially higher attaining pupils who reach average standards in most areas of learning. On-going assessments play a regular part in recording children's levels of attainment but are not used to set targets for the next level of work. Almost all of the children frequently work at literacy and numeracy tasks in a large group. These sessions stretch the thinking of the higher attaining children but do not always match the needs of the whole group. As a result, some of the average or below average attaining children work through some aspects of the curriculum at an uneven pace when they could accelerate if their tasks were more appropriate.
58. About a fifth of the children in the reception class have special educational needs. Some are very difficult to settle and sometimes cannot conform to the behaviour expected in school. They are given good support to develop their personal skills, and they sometimes settle down to productive learning when working in very small groups alongside a member of staff. Several children speak English as an additional language with a few at a very early stage of understanding and using English. These children are given good support to practise speaking and are helped to understand through work in very small groups. They make good progress and have settled well into the routines of the classroom.

Personal, social and emotional development

59. About three quarters of the children enter school lacking in confidence. They are unsure about each other and many are unsure how to make friendly approaches. There are good opportunities for them to socialise informally with one another or with adults in small groups. The teaching is good and there is a wide range of occasions for children to work and play together. They make good progress in developing personal skills. Most now play alongside one another reasonably comfortably but are unable to resolve problems that arise from, for example, wanting resources being used by another. Children tend to snatch, or sometimes, hide pieces of equipment they value. This was seen in the water play, when a certain funnel was perceived to be the best one and several children wanted it. About three quarters of the children now concentrate on activities for a short length of time without support if they are sufficiently interested. The behaviour of the children is satisfactory overall with consistently good behaviour from about a third of them. The friendly and supportive approach of the adults creates a positive response from the children who try to please. However, some children cannot be left for more than a few minutes before they become restless and occasionally noisy or destructive. The staff cope well in these situations. They are careful not to provoke confrontations but they insist on acceptable behaviour even if children have to be removed to quiet areas until they gain some composure.

Communication, language and literacy

60. Children make good progress, particularly in recognising the sounds that letters make. Higher attainers achieve at a very good rate. The teaching in this area is good overall, although some aspects of organising the learning are not always successful and need reviewing. The staff provide an appropriate range of play opportunities where the children can talk together and chat in a relaxed situation. They discuss the learning activities with the children and give very clear and careful instructions that help children make sense of their work. However, there are too few occasions when the adults engage the children in conversation and provide examples of how to structure sentences. The children frequently speak in part-sentences; for example, a child who planned to transfer a paddle wheel from the sand said 'try it in the water' meaning 'I will try it in the water'. On some occasions children call out inappropriately and shout single words, in reading groups for example, when the adult asks a general question.
61. Children are introduced to books through story times and reading sessions. These are useful and effective occasions. Children turn the pages and use the pictures to try and make sense of the story. They are interested at story time and listen well as their teacher reads to them. They think about the events in the story and contribute ideas when questioned. About two thirds of the children recognise a few letters and name the sounds they make. The higher attaining children can read simple words. When working in small groups, children talk with the staff about the books they use and learn how pictures are linked to words. They follow the print as the adults point. These early opportunities are speeding the children's progress although sometimes they are fractious during these sessions, as they have already been sitting in a large group for other literacy tasks. Early writing skills are taught through an appropriate range of play and direct teaching activities. There is an opportunity experiment with writing and many children spend time using the pens and pencils provided. The children have made good progress from a very low starting point. About a quarter can form some letters and write their names without support. About half can use their pencils appropriately and draw almost recognisable features and the rest are still at the early stages of mark making.

Mathematical development

62. The children make good progress in numeracy and satisfactory progress in mathematics as a whole. Many start from a low level and now their standards are average, overall, in numeracy. In other aspects of mathematics, such as knowing about and understanding shapes and measures, the children show limited understanding and their standards are below average. Teaching of mathematics is good although, as with aspects of literacy, children sometimes sit for too long in a large group. There is a range of practical and more formal opportunities to develop children's skills and understanding. Some of these activities are structured and the staff work with the children in small groups, helping them count. During the inspection, individual children counted notes played on chime bars. They identified the numbers of the teacher's fingers shown on the overhead projector and the highest attaining children calculated how many fingers had been taken away. Almost all the children are able to identify numbers below ten and find the correct number symbol.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

63. Children make satisfactory progress in this area and reach the expected standard in aspects linked to science, construction and information and communication technology. They have below average standards in understanding how the passage of time affects their lives and about the place they live in. Teaching is good. There is an effective range of interesting activities to help extend children's learning and staff work hard to provide an interesting and practical range of experiences. The children explore natural materials such as sand and water. Their lessons are also linked to subjects such as religious education and science. In construction, the children learn practically while they play and make birthday cakes, for example. One little boy was very pleased when another approached him with a cake (made from interlocking plastic cubes) and 'candles' and sang the whole of 'Happy Birthday'. The candles were blown out and both parties returned, very satisfied, to their play. The children are familiar with the computer and about three quarters of them can use the mouse confidently to complete their programs.

Physical development

64. Through good provision and teaching, children achieve well and improve their standards in finer movements and control of small objects. They refine their skills through work and play in the classroom and through physical education lessons in the hall. The staff provide plenty of opportunities for the children to practise their manipulative skills through using a range of tools, equipment and materials. They handle clay and play dough in art sessions and turn the pages of their books in reading groups. Standards are now average overall, although many children do not yet show satisfactory pencil control and some still hold a paint brush as though it were a dagger. These aspects need continued attention. The children use the outside areas for regular sessions to run about and use larger resources. This provision is satisfactory. During a dance lesson in the hall, the staff used effective strategies to teach children how to use a range of movements such as running and stopping as though frozen.

Creative development

65. Children's standards in dance are satisfactory. There are good opportunities for art and these standards are above average. In imagining situations and making up events standards are well below average. Teaching is satisfactory and good in art. Teachers provide role-play situations and creative play and exploration areas. However, the children are not confident about pretending to be someone else. Few children create imaginary situations when using construction toys, for example, in presenting the 'birthday cake' to another child. The children have appropriate opportunities to sing and reach average standards. Their progress is good overall although they still have some lost ground to make up.

ENGLISH

66. Standards in Years 6 and 7 are above average in all aspects of English. In Year 2, standards are average in reading but below average in speaking and listening and writing. The children's starting point is very low, especially in writing. They make good progress as they move through the school. Reading and writing standards have improved during the past year because of more direct teaching. Pupils' achievement is very good in Year 1 but slows a little in some classes in Years 2, 3 and 4. In Years 5, 6 and 7, the children begin to progress at a faster pace and during their last two years in the school, they are learning and progressing particularly well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well in relation to their abilities because of the individual work plans which guide their learning and because of the

good support they receive. Children who are at the early stages of learning English are given good support, often in small groups, and they make good progress.

67. Reading and writing skills are taught well. Teachers plan literacy lessons well, with a clear outline of what pupils will learn. These objectives are shared with children at the beginning of the lesson but they are not always clarified in a way that ensures the children know what is expected of them. There is a good emphasis on the learning of letter sounds in the early years so pupils approach their reading and writing confidently. In a Year 1 class, children enthusiastically picked out their teacher's deliberate mistakes in a way that showed their good reading and spelling skills. When she wrote 'He went 2 the house', they eagerly said 'It's the wrong 'to' it should be a 't' and an 'o'.
68. About three quarters of the pupils in Year 2 are fluent and confident readers. They can check brief statements, such as 'Can a crab clap?' and show their understanding of the text. They read text from the board and are putting expression in their voices. About a third of the pupils in Year 2 do not reach average standards in writing. However, writing skills are taught appropriately. Pupils learn how to spell effectively; they generally use capital letters correctly and they write for an appropriate range of purposes. An average attaining child wrote, about Red Riding Hood, 'She had a light blue dress and always wore a red cape and hood.' This fluent and descriptive work is good, but there is little evidence of children recording their own thoughts and reactions. Lower attaining children often use no punctuation and some do not yet form their letters correctly. More attention to the structured development of writing skills, especially for the lower attaining children, is likely to raise the overall standards. The school has already identified this as a target for development.
69. In Years 3 and 4, teachers use a range of strategies effectively to improve pupils' skills. Pupils read poems accurately and with expression. They understood what they read and referred to interesting or amusing extracts during the discussions. Later, when working in pairs, children puzzled over lines from another poem, trying to arrange the text in a coherent order. They worked well, discussing what made sense and organising their text to ensure a repeated line occurred in the same place for each verse. This was good learning. In another class, where the task was less successful, pupils were confused by not having enough of the text to be able to make comparisons. In a further class, they were disturbed by others who would not remain quiet during the session.
70. Reading and writing are linked well, particularly in Years 5, 6 and 7, where the teaching is very good. Pupils are strongly challenged; progress is sharp and children achieve well. The highest attaining children work at more advanced tasks and often support others by explaining and demonstrating how to move forward. For example, in Year 7, pupils were identifying the personality of characters in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Nights Dream. Having read some supporting materials about Puck, one pupil asked others, 'What does 'easily quizzed' mean?' While the group thought, unsurely, about this, a higher attaining child replied 'He gets muddled and gets things wrong'. The children went on to write thorough and detailed notes about characteristics during this very effective lesson.
71. In Year 6, pupils use deduction and inference to make sense of text. For example, when studying written argument they recognise opposing viewpoints and pick up the standpoint of the writer. Most pupils write well with a clear and tidy style. They are particularly experienced at reviewing pieces of literature and identify their personal likes and dislikes. Spelling, grammar and punctuation are given a strong emphasis and pupils achieve well in these areas.

72. In English lessons, pupils are given wide-ranging opportunities to write for a variety of different purposes and audiences. They quickly become familiar with the different styles that are needed, for example, when writing letters, poems or reports. There are fewer opportunities to apply their writing skills in other curriculum subjects. In history and religious education, for example, there are rarely examples of children recording what they think about the information they have. Additionally, there is no opportunity for extended writing in these subjects.
73. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are average by the time they leave the school but are below average in Year 2. They are given appropriate opportunities to engage in discussion and debate from the earliest stages. They listen politely to each other's points of view but tend to follow their own viewpoint rather than picking up on the statements of others. By Years 6 and 7, pupils talk clearly, using Standard English accurately and answer questions raised by the teacher. All teachers have appropriate expectations of pupils in this area and usually value and encourage all responses. In some classes, however, there are groups of boys who sometimes dominate discussions.
74. Teachers are skilled at assessing children's knowledge and understanding and setting targets for the next steps in their learning. This is particularly well developed in Year 6. Other teachers are less experienced with the National Curriculum levels but identify what tasks the children found difficult or easy and plan lessons to support the next steps. Homework covers a broad range of the subject and makes a good contribution to learning.
75. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator leads the subject well. She has a clear view of what pupils are learning and has led the school very well in implementing and adapting the literacy strategy. Opportunities for monitoring teaching, looking at teachers' planning and completed work have also contributed to the improvement in standards. There is now a need to share the best practice in literacy teaching within and across year groups. The subject is well resourced, with high quality 'big books' and guided readers. The library is used well by all classes.

MATHEMATICS

76. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are improving. Most of the pupils are making satisfactory progress although their performance is below average by the end of Year 2. Throughout the Years 3 to 6, pupils are generally making good progress but by the end of Year 6, their attainment is still below average. There has been some improvement but not as much as in English and science. Pupils make good progress in Year 7 and achieve average standards.
77. Teaching in mathematics is generally satisfactory but some teachers are not confident with the subject and there are weaknesses in explanations and the use of inappropriate and confusing materials. The national numeracy strategy is being followed to ensure that pupils cover all aspects of the curriculum, although the start of several lessons is not sufficiently interactive and frequently too slow. An exception to this was seen in Year 6 where pupils were very actively engaged in rapid mental calculations, which got the lesson off to a good start. Support staff are well used and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning when working with small groups in mathematics lessons. Opportunities for pupils to practise and consolidate their numeracy skills in other subjects are limited.

78. When looking through pupils' books it is apparent that many higher attaining pupils are simply getting all their work correct and are not working on sufficiently challenging tasks to enable them to make more rapid progress. These pupils in particular need to develop much more investigative work to improve the scope for mathematical thinking. More opportunities should be provided for them to explore mathematical patterns, relationships and problems, including using their own recording methods. Some teachers, however, have high expectations. Pupils in Year 1, for example, showed that they could subtract two digit numbers from two digit numbers in excess of 20, which is beyond the expectation for this age group.
79. Pupils record their work very tidily and the presentation of their work throughout the school shows that they have a good attitude towards mathematics. They work well in pairs and groups and can work for long periods with sustained concentration. They display a fair range of methods for mental calculations using doubling and partitioning, but are less secure with problem solving strategies such as estimation or trial and error. Homework is used to support class work and provides an opportunity for pupils to extend their learning.
80. The experienced co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Her analysis of pupils' work and tests results revealed that investigational mathematics needed improvement and this is being addressed. The school has been identified by the local education authority for intensive support in mathematics and staff have received further training, including visits to other schools. There has been a focus on raising the basic attainment of all pupils and the school has been successful at this. Tests used from Year 3 through to Year 7 are used to group pupils appropriately. Teachers need a better understanding of how to measure pupils' progress throughout the year to ensure they meet their needs.

SCIENCE

81. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 are below expectations. Those attained in Year 6 are broadly average. Attainment in Year 7 is above expectations.
82. As a result of consistently good teaching overall progress of pupils throughout the school is good and they achieve well. Teachers plan carefully, taking account of the learning needs of all pupils. Higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately. Lessons have well-defined objectives which teachers make clear to pupils. They use summary sessions well to assess and reinforce learning. Lessons are well organised and resourced. Throughout the school, pupils carry out their own investigations independently so, by Year 7, they have very good habits of scientific enquiry. Teachers have a good understanding of science and this enables them to give clear explanations of new ideas. Most ask challenging and probing questions which help pupils to clarify their own understanding.
83. Year 2 pupils make good progress in developing investigative skills when studying conditions conducive to seed germination and plant growth. They make predictions, careful observations, measurements and recordings. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of some of the conditions required for seed germination and plant growth. In discussing this topic, they use a good range of scientific vocabulary, for example using words such as germination, root, stem and leaf.
84. Using their good investigative skills, Year 6 study how forces act in a range of contexts. They make predictions before carrying out their investigations. They have a good understanding of the need for fair testing in investigative work and observe and discuss

results, offering explanations for their findings. Pupils investigating the effect of immersing an object in water on its measured weight, in comparison to its weight in air, first predicted the outcome, then measured accurately and carefully recorded their results. Lower attaining pupils make relevant observations during investigations and, with help, record these, sometimes explaining the changes they observe.

85. Year 7 pupils continue to develop very good investigative skills. For example, they use chromatography to compare mixtures of solutes and begin to understand how scientists, including forensic scientists, use evidence from this process. These pupils work very carefully using a range of equipment; they make comparisons of readings and draw conclusions. Higher and average attaining pupils write up investigative accounts in concise note form, sometimes using bullet points to good effect. Lower attaining pupils complete their accounts with support.
86. The provision for pupils to develop learning about living things, properties of materials and physical processes is satisfactory. Throughout the school, there is a strong focus on experimental and investigative work with the result that the development of investigative skills is good. Information and communications technology is used to support learning in science but this is an area needing further development. For example, sensing equipment is not yet available to enable pupils to measure changes in temperature or sound intensity. Throughout the school, pupils use their writing skills in science. However, in some classes, pupils mainly copy out notes and opportunities are lost to get pupils to write independently and at length on a range of topics
87. The subject is managed well by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher. She gives effective leadership, moving the subject forward and maintaining the momentum for improvement. She supports teachers well and monitors all aspects of the subject, including lessons, teachers' planning, pupils' completed work and pupil assessments. The co-ordinator scrutinises assessment test results thoroughly and uses the results of analysis to build a clear view of strengths and weaknesses and the progress pupils make.

ART AND DESIGN

88. As a result of good teaching throughout the school, pupils make good progress and standards are above those expected by Year 2 and by Year 6. Year 7 pupils maintain this rate of progress and their attainment is well above that expected.
89. Teachers motivate pupils to do well. During a very good lesson, pupils in the Year 3/4 class closely examined portraits by several artists and analysed them against a given set of criteria, including the types of texture depicted and the techniques and materials used. They discussed the range of materials used to produce different textures in different parts of the pictures and suggested words such as, velvety, silky, soft, fluffy and hard to describe how they perceived these. They expressed personal responses towards the paintings and stated preferences and then, working carefully with a good level of skill, they investigated ways they could depict textures using paint, pastel, and pencil.
90. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. They explore a wide range of different media and techniques, following a progressive programme including composition, perspective, sketching and shading, and painting. This contributes to the good progress through the school. Pupils in Year 1 learn to mix paints and pastels to obtain a range of delicate shades producing, for example, good quality drawings of flowers. Older pupils experiment with paint, producing good

paintings inspired by close observation of African fabric patterns. Year 7 pupils design very good quality collages depicting themselves. They attractively juxtapose a set of texts and images to produce a miscellany of information reflecting their interests and hobbies. These pupils work purposefully and carefully, taking a pride in their work and applying the skills and techniques they have learned very effectively. Pupils are introduced to works of famous artists and study the techniques they use. For example, Year 7 pupils try painting in the style of Sigmar Polke.

91. A very good programme of visits to art galleries, visitors to school and art clubs, considerably broadens opportunities for pupils to develop skills and knowledge. For example, Year 5 and 6 have worked with a professional artist to produce a number of high quality textile hangings, which enhance part of the school. Year 3 and 4 pupils visit the local sculpture park to view the work on display and to talk about it. This gives them a greater appreciation of three-dimensional art work and some knowledge of the designing and making process that goes into the creating of a sculpture. Back in the classroom, pupils then apply this knowledge.
92. The subject is managed very well by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator who provides good support for colleagues. Resources are plentiful and very good use is made of the accommodation, including four practical work areas.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

93. Pupils make good progress. They enter Year 1 with rather limited skills but standards are in line with those expected by Year 2, by Year 6 and by Year 7.
94. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons well. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the design process and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their designs and their finished products and to consider ways in which they might be improved. Throughout the school, pupils are given a good range of practical tasks and are taught the skills which allow them to complete the tasks safely and well. Support staff are involved in most lessons, which has a good impact on learning.
95. Year 1 pupils design models of playground equipment using construction bricks to develop their ideas and working with a range of materials including balsa wood, art straws, paper and card. With adult support, they put their good ideas into practice. They make choices and they are developing the skills to enable them to cut, fix and assemble materials with reasonable success. Pupils talk readily about their models and describe how they work. Year 2 pupils also benefit from a good level of adult support in classrooms. These pupils make models of playground equipment, first studying pictures of children's playgrounds and play equipment, then drawing their own design before constructing a model. Whilst making their slides, swings and roundabouts, these pupils talked confidently about their ideas and their work.
96. Year 6 pupils learn about structures and how they can sometimes fail when subjected to an excessive load. They develop tests for testing the strength of a structure and techniques for reinforcing and strengthening it. They evaluate their designs and modify them when appropriate. Year 5 pupils study how commercially produced toys using a cam are made before designing and making their own toys. All pupils are encouraged to evaluate their designs and the things they make and to consider how they might improve them.
97. Year 7 pupils make good progress when learning how to apply and combine understanding of electrical and mechanical control and structures. They benefit from

participating in a 'design challenge' with pupils from other local schools. Working alongside engineers and designers from industry, they use a wide range of equipment.

GEOGRAPHY

98. Pupils achieve the standards expected by Years 2, 6 and 7, although there is little evidence of more advanced work for older pupils. Pupils can discuss geographical issues and in the lessons observed in Year 1 and Year 3/4 they sustained concentration and showed a good attitude towards the subject. Work in pupils' folders, in the school portfolio of work and during geography lessons shows that teaching is satisfactory.
99. The topics chosen for study have been carefully selected and enable the pupils to develop their understanding of their own environment before applying ideas to the wider world. In Year 1, pupils recorded ideas about leisure activities and the facilities are needed for people to make use of their locality. Using a large scale map of the area and collecting children's suggestions on the whiteboard, good teaching was helping children to understand the geographical aspects of the work. The teacher made the subject come alive for the children by drawing on their own experiences of leisure activities.
100. When studying a village in India in Year 3/4 children were beginning to apply knowledge of what people do in a town or village to a faraway place where daily life is very different from their own. The teacher skilfully used photographs of the Indian village to bring the pupils to an understanding that secondary sources like photographs do not tell the whole story and that evidence has to be carefully evaluated. By frequently reminding children of the key points in the lesson and through good questioning techniques, the teacher ensured that good progress was made by all the children.
101. Pupils use a variety of means for recording their work with pictures, postcards and photographs, but a restricted range of writing. Written work shows an over-reliance on worksheets, which require very short answers. Pupils have limited opportunities to write in a variety of styles, including more extended descriptive and evaluative accounts of their research and findings. Marking in books is mainly very brief and gives almost no guidance on how pupils could improve their work. A residential trip to Snowdonia in Year 5 provides very good opportunities for geography fieldwork.
102. A subject portfolio shows a good range work by Years 1 to 3, including maps, diagrams and photographs of wall displays. A study of Great Linford village included in it provides a good model for finished presentation. The portfolio needs to be extended to provide examples of the standards expected in later years.

HISTORY

103. Pupils are enthusiastic when talking about history and the well-chosen range of studies enables them to develop their understanding of the reasons for exploring the past. Through regular study, pupils achieve expected standards in Years 2, 6 and 7.
104. Younger children compare the way things have changed through first-hand experience, for example, by looking at toys from today and toys from long ago. Whilst studying the Fire of London they are learning to see the world through the eyes of people who lived a long time ago and to imagine what life must have been like. Their knowledge of why things happened in the way that they did and the effects of these events is developed

through a good range of written and practical work. Letters, imaginary eyewitness accounts and first hand observational notes show a good variety in writing styles.

105. Through Years 3 to 7 pupils are beginning to develop historical enquiry techniques. For example, when studying Henry VIII they explore the reasons behind his desire for a son rather than just recording facts about his six wives. The curriculum is enriched with visits, such as the Year 7 trip to Warwick Castle for fieldwork to accompany their studies of Medieval England. Tudor music and Greek theatre events also provide practical experiences.
106. There are opportunities for the pupils to communicate their findings through written work, drama and some very good art work but only a limited range of ICT opportunities. Older pupils need more opportunities for choosing how to present finished studies, including the wider use of ICT. The marking of pupils' work throughout the school is very brief and does not provide guidance on how work should be improved.
107. There was too little opportunity to observe teaching during the inspection in order to judge its overall quality. However, evidence from pupils' work and teachers' planning suggests that teaching is at least satisfactory. The one lesson seen on the Ancient Greeks was very good. Pupils in Year 5 were putting together a TV news bulletin on the different thoughts and feelings of the Spartans and Persians before the Battle of Thermopylae. Highly effective teaching helped the pupils develop a clear understanding of the difference between fact and opinion and how this has implications for what they see on TV news in today's world.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

108. Standards are in line with those expected of pupils in Year 2. Pupils are confident when using computers; they log on to the network, select programs and save and retrieve their work. They have reasonable word-processing skills and are good at using graphics programs to make pictures. They learn how to make simple graphs about houses and pets. Using a floor robot, pupils gain a reasonable understanding of how to sequence commands to control its movement.
109. Pupils' skills increase appropriately as they move through the school so that, by Year 6, most use computers very competently, particularly for word-processing. They use spreadsheets to create databases and to produce graphs, and are learning how to create formulae to make rapid calculations. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 use a music program to explore composition, selecting musical phrases and entering them into an on-screen sequencer. Pupils are familiar with the Internet as a source of information and discuss the advantages and possible disadvantages of doing so. Although some use email at home, they do not learn to do so at school. The school does not have the software needed to teach pupils to create multimedia presentations and lacks the equipment for data logging (measuring and recording changes in temperature, light and sound) and control (writing sequences of commands to operate external equipment such as mini traffic lights). This means that, although pupils are good in the areas of ICT they cover, they are unable to meet the expectations for eleven-year-olds.
110. The picture is the same in Year 7. Pupils have good general computer skills. For example, when combining text and graphics to create their own newspapers, they often use a scanner to capture images. Although pupils are building steadily on their earlier work, due to the lack of resources, they cannot cover all aspects of the National Curriculum so standards are below expectations.

111. Only one lesson was seen in Years 1 and 2, and too few lessons were observed in Years 3 to 7 to judge the overall quality of teaching, but evidence from portfolios and discussions with pupils indicates that teaching is at least satisfactory and pupils are keen to do well. Some good links to other subjects are made in Years 1 and 2, with computers being used to make pictures of the Fire of London, to create illustrations of geographical features and to support work in design and technology and religious education. This is less evident in Years 3 to 7, where opportunities are missed to use ICT to support work in subjects such as mathematics and science.
112. Good progress has been made since the school opened in providing an efficient network of computers in the upper school ICT suite and in creating a useful computer room in the lower school using older equipment. There are further computers in classrooms and open areas. The existing resources are of good quality, but there is an urgent need to provide extra software and equipment to enable pupils to widen their range of skills.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE (FRENCH)

113. No teaching was seen during the inspection but pupils' written work was reviewed and a discussion was held with the subject co-ordinator. Most of the work is orally based and the main focus is on developing simple understanding of everyday phrases and vocabulary. The specialist teaching is adequate to give pupils an introduction to studying a modern foreign language and the teacher has sufficient confidence to give the pupils an enthusiasm for learning.
114. The syllabus follows national guidelines ensuring that the pupils are given a reasonable programme of study. Very little written work has been covered and this is mainly on family, self and some simple vocabulary. Much of the work appears to be marked by the pupils themselves and the many errors are uncorrected. The secondary school provides good support and there is a termly meeting for Year 7 teachers of French run by the local education authority. This helps to ensure continuity between schools. There are adequate resources for the subject which include TV programmes, games, posters and workbooks and some simple vocabulary is displayed in the classroom.

MUSIC

115. Standards are in line with those expected by Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7. Throughout the school, pupils sing well and most have a sound sense of rhythm. Building on the nursery rhymes and songs they learn in reception, pupils' pitch and timing improves steadily. They learn how to interpret the mood of songs using dynamics. This was evident during the assemblies and singing practices for the lower and upper school.
116. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2 in learning to play percussion instruments and perform with increasing confidence for an audience. For example, Year 2 pupils had suggested a sequence of sounds to accompany *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and performed it sensitively when recording it on tape. Work on composition starts when younger pupils are asked to make up rhythm patterns and to write them down in their own way, so that other people can follow their 'music'. Recorder groups for this age group provide good opportunities for pupils to learn a melodic instrument and to begin to read standard musical notation. Pupils are introduced to orchestral instruments and are asked to identify them when listening to music such as *The Four Seasons* by Vivaldi.
117. Learning proceeds steadily during Years 3 and 6. Although only two lessons were

seen, pupils' enjoyment of musical activities and their level of confidence indicates that teaching is satisfactory. Year 3 and 4 pupils were using a computer program to sequence sounds. They had a reasonable understanding of which phrases were more appropriate for the beginning and end of the sequence. Other pupils in Year 3 and 4 were learning about rhythm through playground chants such as, 'Mrs White - had a fight - in the middle of the night', which the teacher used to introduce crochets and minims. Several pupils have individual instrumental lessons and this contributes to overall standards. The instruments studied include keyboard, violin, trumpet, percussion and guitar. The subject is also enhanced by visiting musicians, such as a group from Ghana that introduced pupils to a range of African instruments.

118. Year 7 pupils benefit from the effective teaching of a specialist teacher from the local secondary school. During a very good lesson, all pupils were playing an instrument and were exploring the kind of sounds produced by an Indonesian Gamelan orchestra. They were playing in the pentatonic (five note) scale typical of the region and learning how the music is structured. They recently attended a 'master class' taken by the percussionist Evelyn Glennie.
119. Music plays an important part in the life of the school and contributes much to pupils' personal development. They are introduced to music from a variety of cultures and are encouraged to learn about and appreciate music in its many forms. Under the able direction of the music co-ordinator, the choir performs locally and is currently rehearsing for a performance at the Royal Albert Hall with other local schools. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to perform. This happens on a small scale in the classroom when pupils perform their compositions for one another. There are further opportunities to appear before an audience when parents are invited to assemblies and to musical productions, such as *Grease* and *Bugsy Malone*.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

120. Standards are securely in line with those expected by Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7. Pupils' games skills develop rapidly as they move through the school so that, by Year 6, they are at a good level. This continues in Year 7 where these skills are also well developed. This good progress is due to a strong emphasis on the progressive teaching of skills in lessons and the contribution made by professional players and coaches. For example, Year 7 pupils learn badminton from an international player, which complements the effective instruction by class teachers. Similarly, pupils make good headway in football, basketball and tennis due to specialist coaching. Teaching is good overall. Very good facilities and equipment also contribute to attainment and progress.
121. Dance is another strength. Pupils in Year 1 were devising movements in response to various musical sounds, such as those of a tambourine or jingle bells. Skilfully prompted by the teacher, they offered comments on one another's efforts, which took the learning forward. Although no other dance lessons were seen, photographs of Year 7 pupils taking part in local workshops, in a dance event at Tate Modern and working with the Ludus Dance Company, illustrate the strong emphasis on this aspect of the curriculum.
122. Gymnastics was observed only in one lesson in Year 2, taken by the headteacher. Her lively and dynamic approach sustained pupils' attention and her excellent motivational skills enabled all pupils to take part, including those who generally have difficulties in behaving well. Pupils demonstrated good control as they made high, low and balanced body shapes to form a movement sequence.

123. It was not possible to gain first-hand evidence of standards in athletics, but the school's success in local athletics meetings indicates that pupils attain at least satisfactory standards. The enthusiastic way pupils talked about these occasions provided a good example of the contribution made by these events and other sporting competitions to pupils' self-esteem and to their pride in the school. Swimming sessions were not observed, but the school reports that, by Year 6, most pupils reach the expected standard of swimming unaided for 25 metres.
124. In addition to regular coaching – the result of a successful bid for Lottery funding – many other visitors enhance the subject. Recently, pupils have had visits from a Judo champion and from representatives of the 'Super Schools' programme. Orienteering takes place in the school grounds and adventurous activities feature in the annual residential visit for Year 6.
125. The recently appointed co-ordinator is reviewing the subject in order to plan further developments. She is aware of the need to evaluate pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching in order to identify and share ideas and to extend teachers' expertise.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

126. Standards are in line with those outlined in the locally agreed syllabus. There is a suitably broad range of activities that make the content interesting and much of the teaching and learning is practical. Standards could be higher if tasks provided more opportunities to explore the meanings, attitudes and values that lie behind the stories pupils hear and the resources they use.
127. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have sound and sometimes good subject knowledge. For example, a Year 3 and 4 lesson, on celebrating the arrival of a new baby, was supported effectively by watching a video of Sleeping Beauty receiving gifts at her christening. The children recognised the nature of gifts that would be of lifelong importance to a child. They finished the lesson by reciting group poems based on collections of more abstract gifts such as 'a gift of song, a long life to shine upon you'. One child at the early stages of learning English wrote with the support of his group. His sentence read, 'A happy life of your own choosing'. A good feature of this lesson was the skilful questioning used to help the children recall previous learning. This enabled them to relate what they learned to their own lives, especially those with small babies at home. On occasions, lessons tend to neglect the appropriate skills and understanding. For example, pupils begin to focus on aspects of art rather than interpreting the religious significance behind the pictures.
128. The co-ordinator knows the subject well and helps colleagues if requested. The school is using the local syllabus alongside the nationally recommended guidelines. This is generally effective but leads to some confusion. The co-ordinator is working with other teachers to modify the local syllabus and has a clear view of the gaps that need filling. Resources for the subject are just satisfactory. There are sensible plans to supplement the range of artefacts that are used in different world faiths when the new guidelines are published.