

INSPECTION REPORT

CHESTNUTS COMBINED SCHOOL

Bletchley

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 132733

Headteacher: Mr Graham Lee

Reporting inspector: Mr Colin Henderson
23742

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th September 2002

Inspection number: 248984

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Buckingham Road Bletchley Milton Keynes
Postcode:	MK3 5EN
Telephone number:	01908 373748
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Karen Cross
Date of previous inspection:	Not inspected since amalgamation

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Colin Henderson 23742	Registered inspector	Science Religious education Pupils for whom English is an additional language	How high are standards? Pupils' results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Len Shipman 14061	Lay inspector		How high are standards? Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Barbara Darley 22518	Team inspector	English Music Design and technology	
Lynne Thorogood 29988	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art and design History Special educational needs	
Ted Cox 25623	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology	
Jan Boulton 18888	Team inspector	Geography Physical education Educational inclusion	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
Susan Russam 10228	Team inspector		The work of the hearing- impaired unit
Susan O'Sullivan 31525	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chestnuts Combined is a newly amalgamated school that is situated in West Bletchley in the south-west of the city of Milton Keynes. It is larger than other schools of this type and currently has 384 pupils on roll (189 boys and 195 girls). Most pupils live near the school and come from a mixture of private and rented housing. Some pupils come from homes with a significant level of social and economic need. The school receives hearing-impaired pupils from all over the city to attend its specialist unit. It also receives an increased number of pupils in Year 4 who transfer from a nearby first school. Pupils are mostly of white, United Kingdom ethnic background. Twenty-five pupils (7 per cent) have English as an additional language. One hundred and two pupils have been assessed as having special educational needs, which is above average. Twenty-one pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. This is well above average and includes mostly learning, behavioural and hearing needs. Twenty-one per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. The school has a high level of pupil mobility. Children enter the school with well below average attainment, particularly in language development. Difficulties over the amalgamation led to many staff changes and the school being based on two separate sites until September 2001.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Chestnuts Combined School is a well-ordered, caring and supportive community. It has undergone a period of significant change in the past two years. Standards are well below the national average. Recent building improvements and the positive leadership of the headteacher, in an effective partnership with a new management team, an influential deputy and supportive governing body, are establishing a strong school ethos. This is based on its clear mission statement 'Pride in Achieving Together'. Pupils behave well and relationships are good throughout the school. Teaching is sound overall. It is often good and this is beginning to raise achievement, for example in the Early Years and in Year 6. However, there are inconsistencies in some teachers' expectations and these restrict standards. After some initial budget difficulties during the amalgamation, the school is now using its funds efficiently. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and it gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- The good control and management skills of staff enable pupils to behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The arrangements for supporting pupils' personal development are good. They promote good relationships and a sense of community.
- The leadership of the headteacher, supported effectively by his deputy and the governors, is good.
- The school provides well for pupils with hearing impairment, with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.
- The education for children in the Early Years is good.
- The school enhances the curriculum through a good range of trips and extra-curricular activities.

What could be improved

- Standards in literacy, numeracy, science and religious education.
- The consistency of teachers' high expectations of pupils' work.
- The use of assessment information to ensure teachers match learning activities to the full range of pupils' needs.
- The consistent contribution of staff with management responsibilities to improve teaching and learning.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was amalgamated in September 2000. The new school has not been previously inspected.

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		<i>Key</i>
	all schools	similar schools	
	2001	2001	
English	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	E	
Science	E	E	

The results of the national tests for 11 year-olds in 2001 show that standards are well below the national average. Too few pupils achieved nationally expected levels. The proportion of pupils who achieved higher than average levels was below average in English and mathematics. It was well below average in science. The 2002 results were lower than those achieved in 2001 in English and science. The number of pupils who attained the nationally expected Level 4 in mathematics improved from 47 to 51 per cent but was still well below average. The group of Year 6 pupils who took the tests in 2002 had a very high proportion (40 per cent) of pupils with special educational needs. Their education was disrupted by frequent staff changes during the recent amalgamation, restricting, for example, the development of their literacy and numeracy skills. The school did not achieve its unrealistic target of 71 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 or above in English and mathematics. These targets were not based on accurate assessment information that reflected the pupils' range of ability.

Inspection evidence shows that children enter the school with well below average attainment. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, promoted by good teaching. Most are likely to achieve their early learning goals in personal, social and emotional, physical and creative development. Most children are unlikely to achieve their goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world. Pupils attain standards at the end of Year 2 that are below average. The results of national tests for seven-year-olds in the last two years show that standards have been well below average. Inspection evidence shows that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are improving their attainment, promoted by good teaching. They attain standards overall that are below expected levels. An increasing number of pupils are attaining average and above average levels, for example in mathematics at Year 6. Year 7 pupils attain well below average standards. The high level of pupils with special educational needs and pupils' weak literacy and numeracy skills restrict standards. Pupils make sound progress overall in their learning. However, it is not consistent across the school as teachers do not always have high enough expectations of pupils' work. The school makes good use of good quality support staff to encourage all pupils, including those with special educational needs and hearing impairment, to be included in the full range of activities. Teaching and support staff provide good support to enable these pupils to make good progress overall, although it is not consistent in all lessons.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils, especially the younger ones, are keen to learn. Some older pupils are not always positive in their approach to learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. A small number display challenging behaviour. The school consistently manages these pupils effectively.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory overall. Relationships are good. Pupils show respect for each other. Older pupils have some opportunities to take responsibility, but too few show initiative in developing their own learning
Attendance	Unsatisfactory attendance is caused mainly by the excessive absence of a small number of pupils and high levels of pupil mobility.

The school has focused successfully on improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They contribute well to creating a positive school ethos, based on support and good relationships.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in the Foundation Stage and in the infants. It is sound overall in the juniors and Year 7, although with significant variation. Teaching was good or better in about half of lessons observed. A small number of lessons in the juniors had unsatisfactory or poor teaching. This inconsistency in teaching means that pupils do not make consistently good progress in each class. Scrutiny of pupils' work from the last school year showed that teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity were not always high enough. Teachers do not use assessment information consistently to match learning activities to pupils' needs. The teaching of English and mathematics is sound overall. It is good consistently in Year 6 and in Year 2 and is improving pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and manage their pupils well. They do not always challenge them to apply their skills, for example in literacy and science, to raise standards of attainment. The specialist teaching and support for pupils with hearing-impairment, special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for the Foundation Stage and satisfactory for other year groups. A good range of extra-curricular activities enhances the programme.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school uses support staff well to ensure that pupils are included fully and make good progress towards their learning targets.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The school makes very good use of specialist support staff, especially for those at the early stages of language development. Most teachers provide good support to extend their language use, although this is not consistent across the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, especially for moral and social development. It has contributed well to promoting the school's ethos by developing pupils' awareness of social responsibilities and a clear moral code. The focus on pupils' own cultural traditions is stronger than multi-cultural aspects.
Provision for hearing-impaired pupils	Good. Good individual support by specialist teachers and good quality communicators. Provision not consistently as good in class activities.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance and behaviour are good. The school has good assessment procedures, but does not use information consistently to inform planning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to develop links after the amalgamation. A few parents work in school to promote children's learning.

The school provides good quality specialist support for pupils with special educational needs, with hearing impairment and those for whom English is an additional language. They are included in all aspects of the curriculum, although teachers do not always ensure that activities match pupils' needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is soundly managed overall. The headteacher, working in an effective partnership with his deputy, provides good direction to the work of the school. They have been successful in improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. However, the school has not yet established a strong focus on attainment, involving all key staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They fulfil their responsibilities soundly and make a good contribution to the management of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and deputy are analysing an increasing range of assessment information to monitor pupils' performance. They monitor and evaluate teaching, but they have yet to involve other staff effectively in rigorously targeting areas for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Governors work closely with the headteacher to ensure that the school uses funds efficiently and targets them on development priorities. They monitor spending levels closely and apply the principles of best value effectively.

The number of teaching and support staff is good. After many staff changes, the school now has a more stable staff with a sound range of knowledge and experience. The accommodation has been improved and is satisfactory overall in meeting curricular needs. Some areas for practical activities are cramped, especially for older pupils. Resources are satisfactory. They are good for physical education and have improved considerably for information and communication technology.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their child likes school and makes good progress. • Pupils mature and take responsibility. • School is well led and managed. • High expectations that the children will learn • Teaching is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistencies in quality and quantity of homework. • Lack of information as to what is taught. • The level of extra-curricular activities, especially for the younger ones. • The quality of the annual reports.

Parental responses are from 136 questionnaires, some written comments and the views of the 22 who attended the pre-inspection meeting. A number of parents were also interviewed during the inspection. Inspectors confirm many of the parents' positive views, although there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of pupils. Inspectors found that the range of extra-curricular activities is good. Inspection evidence confirms that teachers do not use homework consistently. The annual reports are detailed, although some contain 'jargon' and repeated phrases. Many parents think that this is an improving school, especially in the Early Years.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Children enter the Foundation Stage with levels of attainment that are well below average. The school assesses their ability on entry. Although there is considerable variation from year to year, results show that children have significant weaknesses, especially in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Most children settle happily and respond very enthusiastically to the good range of learning opportunities provided. Teaching and support staff form an effective team and the quality of teaching is consistently good. They encourage children's active involvement in all the required areas of learning. Children are likely to achieve their early learning goals¹ in personal, social and emotional development and physical and creative development. Most are unlikely to achieve their learning goals in communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and their knowledge and understanding of the world due mainly to their weak language skills.
2. Pupils attain standards at the end of Year 2 that are below the national average. The results of the national tests for seven-year-olds in 2001 and in 2002 showed that too few pupils achieved the nationally expected Level 2 or above in reading, writing and mathematics. Test results were well below the national average in all three subjects in 2001. The results of the most recent tests for seven-year-olds were at similar levels. Teacher assessments in science show that most Year 2 pupils attain average levels. Very few attain above expected standards. Evidence from lessons observed during the inspection shows that standards are improving in Year 2, promoted by good teaching. Pupils attain standards at the end of Year 6 that are below the national average in mathematics and well below average in English and science. The results of the national tests for 11-year-olds in 2001 showed that standards were well below the national average in all three subjects. They were below the average of similar schools in English, and well below average in mathematics and science. The results of the 2002 national tests were lower than those achieved previously in English and science. The number of pupils who achieved the nationally expected Level 4 or above increased slightly (from 47 to 51 per cent) compared with the previous year, but it was still well below average levels. The school did not achieve its target of 71 per cent of pupils to achieve Level 4 or above in English and mathematics. This target was not based on accurate assessment information and did not reflect a realistic and achievable target. The low test results were partly caused by:
 - high levels of staff change and disruption during the amalgamation;
 - pupil mobility - for example, 17 per cent of pupils who took the national tests in 2002 were admitted to the school during the last school year;
 - the well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs - for example, 40 per cent of the Year 6 pupils (the current Year 7) who took the tests at the end of the last school year.
3. Inspection evidence from a scrutiny of pupils' work from the last school year showed that teachers did not have consistently high enough expectations of the quality and amount of pupils' work. Teachers did not always challenge pupils to apply their skills and knowledge or identify ways in which they could improve the standard of their work. Weaknesses, particularly in pupils' literacy skills, restricted achievement. Evidence from lesson observations shows that standards are beginning to improve at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. A higher proportion of pupils are achieving average and above average levels, for

¹ Early learning goals are expectations for most children to reach by the end of the Foundation Stage. They refer to achievements children make in six areas of learning; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; personal, social and emotional development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical and creative development.

example in mathematics at Year 6. Some teachers are matching the learning activities more closely to the full range of needs, although the school has not established this consistently in each class. The school's strategies for literacy and numeracy are beginning to promote improvement as teachers become more confident and experienced in using them. However, pupils' literacy skills are still too low, especially in writing, and these limit standards being achieved in other subjects. Year 7 pupils attain standards that are well below nationally expected levels. This group of pupils has a larger than usual number of pupils with special educational needs (see final bullet point above). It has been affected the most by staff changes, for example on pupils' attitudes and inconsistencies in teaching the literacy and numeracy strategies. Inspection evidence and assessment information show that Year 7 pupils have improved their attitudes and their standards of attainment since the school was amalgamated. However, too few are attaining the levels expected for their age.

4. Pupils throughout the school have satisfactory listening skills that they use well to note and act upon teachers' instructions and explanations. Their speaking skills are well below expected levels in Year 2. Year 6 and 7 pupils are more confident when expressing their views, but standards are restricted by pupils' below average knowledge and use of vocabulary. Pupils attain standards in reading that are below expected levels in Year 2 and 6 and well below in Year 7. Many do not have an enthusiastic approach to reading. Their limited knowledge and understanding of words and their uses affects their understanding of what they have read. Pupils attain standards in writing that are below expected levels in Year 2 and well below in Years 6 and 7. Handwriting and presentation of work are well below expected standards across the school. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to extend and improve their writing through drafting and re-drafting activities. They have weaknesses in using punctuation accurately and are not always made aware of how these should be improved.
5. Pupils are not always required to apply their skills and knowledge in mathematics. Infant pupils lack confidence in carrying out simple mathematical processes and in setting it down accurately. Many junior pupils have number weaknesses, for example when subtracting larger numbers. Some higher attaining pupils, for example in Year 6, are being challenged effectively to apply and extend their knowledge. They are achieving above average standards more frequently. Year 7 pupils are beginning to apply their knowledge to solve practical mathematical problems, but uncertainties about number and inaccurate presentation lower standards. Most pupils do not attain average standards in science due mainly to their weak literacy skills and some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations. Teachers do not consistently require pupils to apply their knowledge, for example to explain the results of a scientific investigation. Too often pupils are required only to complete a drawing or a brief worksheet. They are not always challenged to provide more detailed answers by extending their literacy skills and applying their understanding. Where teachers provide activities that more closely match pupils' scientific knowledge, then standards rise, for example in the current Year 2 and 6.
6. Pupils attain above expected levels in art and design at the end of Year 2 and meet expected levels at the end of Year 6. They attain standards that meet expected levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in information and communication technology, although pupils do not use their skills enough to support work in other subjects. Pupils attain standards in religious education that are below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus for Year 2 pupils and well below expected levels for Year 6 and 7 pupils. Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attain standards in physical education and history that meet expectations. Year 2 pupils attain expected levels in geography. Standards are below expected levels in geography at the end of Year 6. Pupils attained expected standards in design and technology and music lessons observed during the inspection, although there was not sufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on attainment in these subjects. Year 7 pupils attain standards that meet expectations in history. They are below

expectations in all other subjects except in information and communication technology, where there was not sufficient evidence to make an overall judgement.

7. Pupils do not make progress consistently due to variations in teachers' expectations, particularly in the juniors. Progress is satisfactory overall and often good, for example in Year 2 and Year 6 where teaching is of a consistently better quality. It is unsatisfactory over time in Year 7. Although teaching was sound during the inspection, a scrutiny of pupils' work from the last school year showed that teachers' expectations were not consistently high enough. Pupils did not always build effectively on prior knowledge and understanding. This limited the standards attained by pupils and the progress they made. There were no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils for whom English is an additional language get good support, particularly those who are in the early stages of English language development. The school works closely with the local education authority's support staff to ensure that individual pupils receive good help and guidance. They attain standards that are well below nationally expected levels. They make good progress overall in their learning, compared to their prior attainment, especially in improving their English language skills. Some teachers do not consistently match learning activities to meet the language needs of these pupils, for example through using worksheets too frequently. This does not always enable them to make good progress in lessons.
8. The school is successful in supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs, and they make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. They are identified at an early stage. They have detailed individual education plans that clearly focus on areas for improvement and targets to be achieved. Learning support assistants provide pupils with a level of support which promotes this progress, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The school is very successful in including hearing-impaired pupils in the full range of activities. They attain generally low standards of work. However, they are not significantly different from their classmates, except in English, where their work is below the standards of others in the class and well below average for pupils of their age. Hearing-impaired pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment, promoted by the good teaching of specialist staff. They also benefit from receiving their full entitlement to a broad, well-balanced and relevant range of learning opportunities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Upon amalgamation the school has focused successfully upon developing a positive ethos, linked to attitudes and behaviour. The school has developed good provision for pupils' moral and social development. The success of the provision is seen in pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour, which parents and staff report have improved since the amalgamation. A new school ethos has been successfully established. It is promoting the school's values and beginning to raise standards of attainment. This is recognised by the parents and carers. Levels of attendance are unsatisfactory due mainly to the regular absence of a small number of pupils.
10. Pupils come into school in an orderly manner. They are smartly dressed in the school uniform. Parents of younger children often take their child directly into class. This develops mutual confidence. Attitudes in class vary. Where teaching is good and stimulating, the pupils respond eagerly to answer questions. The lower ability pupils or those with special educational needs get a good level of support, for example in a 'nurture group' making chocolate cakes. Good use of open questions developed their use of logic and deduction whilst using role-play. However, there are a significant number of pupils who are easily distracted. Most teachers implement effective class management techniques consistently to ensure that pupils do not disrupt lessons.

11. In class, pupils share ideas effectively to support learning. Many use basic sign language to communicate with those pupils with hearing impairment. During a Year 7 lesson with small groups of pupils, everyone felt fully included, irrespective of ability or race. The more able are capable of working independently, although are not given enough opportunities to develop their independent learning skills. During lessons pupils do not interrupt one another and sustain attention for long periods.
12. Behaviour in and around school is good. Pupils know that they are at school to learn. Those pupils with behaviour problems receive effective support. The school uses assemblies well to reinforce pupils' understanding that their conduct does impact on others. The school council, together with the behaviour co-ordinator, have had input into the behaviour policy. Younger pupils behave better overall than the older ones, although parents value the improvements that have been made in the behaviour of pupils of all ages since the amalgamation.
13. During playtime, pupils are supervised effectively. Older ones provide good role models for the younger ones to follow. Pupils play and mix well together, regardless of their background. For example, many older girls played with the younger ones and pupils for whom English is an additional language are included fully in playground activities. There was no evidence of any bullying or anti-social behaviour. There have not been any exclusions this year, although there had been four in the previous year.
14. The personal development of pupils is satisfactory. Relationships are good throughout the school with respect clearly shown between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves. During the inspection, pupils were confident and friendly. For example, many pupils entered into conversation politely. Social skills are evident during the lunch period and pupils care for each other. For example, an older girl took the hand of a small girl and guided her to the first aid point. During the inspection there were many instances of good manners and courtesy. For example, doors were held open or adults invited to go first. In and around school the pupils walked calmly. Older pupils take on responsibilities; for example, during lunch two pupils deputise in the main office. In one instance, an older girl spontaneously asked a visitor if she was lost and could she help. Year 7 pupils are allocated a buddy from Year 1. They enjoy this responsibility and carry it out conscientiously. The opportunities for older pupils to show initiative and develop their own learning are limited.
15. Levels of attendance have fallen slightly from the previous years to 93.58 per cent. This is below national averages but better than similar schools in the area. High levels of pupil mobility are a factor, but the main cause is a small but persistent number who fail to attend. Prior to registration, pupils quickly settle into class routine. Often they are engaged in quiet reading or writing. However, the efficiency of registration varies from class to class. In some, registers are called swiftly and occasionally in French to retain attention. These have a positive impact on learning attitudes. In other classes, registration is slower and the poor punctuality of a few pupils is a contributory factor.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is sound overall, although with considerable variation, especially in the junior phase. Teaching is good at the Foundation Stage and in the infants. It is sound in the juniors and in Year 7. During the inspection, teaching was good in 38 per cent of lessons. It was very good in a further 11 per cent. Teaching was sound in 45 per cent of lessons. It was unsatisfactory in 4 per cent and poor in 2 per cent. Teaching in the junior phase was good or very good in 44 per cent of lessons, particularly in Year 6, and unsatisfactory or poor in 12 per cent. This wide variation does not ensure that pupils make consistent progress in their learning. It does not always enable pupils to achieve the standards of which they are capable. The scrutiny of pupils' work from the last school year shows that

teachers' expectations of quality and quantity of work were not consistently high enough. Teachers do not always use assessment information to match learning activities closely to the range of pupils' needs. This restricts standards. The teaching of English and mathematics is sound overall. It is good in Year 6 and this is promoting improvement in pupils' basic skills, particularly in numeracy. Teachers have implemented the school's strategies for literacy and numeracy satisfactorily, although they do not challenge pupils enough to apply these skills in other subjects. This does not enable pupils to improve their skills and limits the effectiveness of the school's strategies, especially in literacy.

17. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and promote their personal development effectively. Successful management and control of their classes enable teachers to encourage pupils to focus attentively on their activities. Most teachers use control strategies consistently to gain pupils' attention quickly and provide further explanations or instructions. For example, in a very good Year 3 and 4 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher ensured all pupils were quiet and listening as she provided clear instructions to the class. She then moved around the working groups to ensure that they were all were on task, providing extra support or an extension activity for those who needed it. Teachers plan together soundly to ensure pupils meet the same learning objectives. They do not consistently share these objectives with their classes to enable pupils to know what they are trying to achieve.
18. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good. In some lessons it is very good and this reflects the level of progress that children make in their first year at school. Teachers and support staff work together closely to promote learning, taking every opportunity to reinforce the key skills of literacy and numeracy. They give children challenging and interesting tasks to consolidate and develop their knowledge and understanding. As a result children attain well in relation to their ability and prior achievement. However, their weak language, literacy and mathematical skills on entry do not enable most children to attain the early learning goals in these areas.
19. Teachers organise their lessons effectively and many make good use of different resources to enable them to grasp pupils' interest and attention. For example, in a good Year 6 science lesson looking at animal classification, the teacher brought in a selection of live animals for pupils to use their observation skills and identify the key characteristics of vertebrates. Pupils focused carefully on their animal, for example a rabbit or a tortoise. The teacher used good subject knowledge and effective questions to enable pupils to focus on the key features. This extended their knowledge, for example of the differences between an amphibian and a reptile. Most teachers use questions well to include pupils in class discussion and feedback activities. However, few teachers use follow-up questions to challenge pupils, particularly the more able, to apply their knowledge and extend initial answers. The pace and challenge of whole-class question and answer activities were often too slow to ensure that pupils sustained their attention and contributed to the discussion.
20. Teachers do not use on-going assessment information consistently to guide their teaching plans. There were some examples of very good practice to ensure that the learning activities were matched closely to pupils' needs. For example, in a Year 6 numeracy lesson, the teacher re-planned the activity after she assessed that many pupils had not grasped the concept in the previous lesson. She included a more challenging activity for those who had gained an earlier understanding in order not to restrict their progress. However, this was not evident consistently in all year groups. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work and from some lessons observed showed that teachers do not always ensure that the range of learning activities meets the needs of all pupils. A lack of challenge in some activities was evident, for example in art and design, physical education and literacy. Some activities were too difficult for many pupils in some numeracy, literacy and religious education lessons. On occasions, teachers used worksheets that pupils

found difficult to read and understand. They were not clear what they were expected to do and achieved little in the lesson. Teachers do not always provide activities that focus on improving pupils' writing skills, a weakness known to the school and an identified improvement priority. For example, teachers too frequently use activities such as cloze procedures requiring one-word answers and writing frames that only require two or three short sentences. They do not encourage pupils to provide detailed and informative written work nor extend their writing, for example in descriptive or recording activities.

21. Where teaching is good or very good, teachers maintain a brisk lesson pace. They ensure that pupils know exactly what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. The teacher uses regular reminders about how much time the pupils have left to complete their work. This ensures that pupils sustain their interest and their efforts and try hard to achieve their target in the time. For example, in a very good infant geography lesson, the teacher's enthusiastic style and brisk pace encouraged pupils to get involved. They were eager to complete the writing activity about islands and were disappointed when the activity came to an end. However, in lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, teachers do not ensure that pupils know what they are required to do. Teachers do not maintain a good pace to the lesson and do not set targets for pupils to achieve in the time available. This results in pupils not maintaining their concentration and not achieving the quality and quantity of work of which they are capable. For example, in a practical science lesson for juniors, the teacher did not ensure that the pupils knew what the specific objective of the investigation was. The pupils did not know what they were being asked to predict and were very keen to get on with mixing the water and the soil samples. The teacher did not remind pupils about the time. Many did not finish the investigation and record their results before they were required to end their activity.
22. During the inspection, teachers used homework consistently to consolidate and extend the work in school, especially in literacy, numeracy and science. The scrutiny of pupils' work from the last school year showed that some teachers did not consistently use it in line with the school policy. Similarly, there were some clear examples of teachers using the school's marking policy to guide pupils on how to improve the standard of their work. However, this was not consistent. Teachers do not always mark pupils' work, both from school and home, to inform pupils of their strengths and weaknesses.
23. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Learning support assistants are well trained, carefully briefed and have positive working relationships with both teachers and pupils. Pupils receive work that is well matched to their needs in English, mathematics and science lessons. The special educational needs co-ordinator regularly reviews individual education plans in consultation with teachers and parents. They are kept readily available. Teachers do not always adjust their planning in class lessons in other subjects to suit the needs of all special educational needs pupils. For instance, in a junior art lesson, some pupils with special educational needs failed to understand a complex task, which involved signs, symbols, textures and the theme of journeys. Pupils whose special educational needs relate to emotional and behavioural difficulties get very good support and guidance both within and outside of lessons by a specialist learning mentor. Hearing-impaired pupils are taught well by specialist staff in their department. They support them well and prepare them for work in the mainstream classes. This enables hearing-impaired pupils to be included in class learning activities. However, some teachers do not adjust the range of activities to ensure that they meet the learning needs of hearing-impaired pupils. This does not ensure that hearing-impaired pupils always make good progress in lessons. The school makes good use of the local education authority's teaching support staff to enable pupils for whom English is an additional language to benefit from specialist English language teaching. They make good progress in developing their English skills, although class teachers do not always ensure that these are built on consistently in whole-class activities.

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

24. The quality and range of the curriculum are satisfactory and promote the school's aim of equal access for all pupils. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum together with modern foreign languages and religious education. It meets all statutory requirements and offers pupils a good range of opportunities, especially in extra-curricular activities. Long and medium term curriculum plans are in place. There are still a number of subjects that do not yet have a specific subject policy, although these are planned for completion. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been soundly implemented. However, there is a significant inconsistency in the teaching of handwriting and in aspects of numeracy teaching in Years 3 to 6. Comprehensive inclusion and race equality policies give detailed guidance on ensuring that all pupils in the school receive equal opportunities. In practice, however, some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for extra literacy, speech therapy and music tuition. The school tries to ensure that these pupils do not regularly miss the same subject, although this does restrict the range of learning opportunities for some pupils.
25. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage are good. The curriculum includes all the required areas of learning. Planning is very detailed and combined with the wide range of very good quality resources provides a wealth of experiences and opportunities for the children. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. They have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum, which is adapted in most lessons to ensure they make good progress. Assessment takes place regularly and individual education plans are revised frequently. Movement up or down the levels or removal from the special educational needs register is considered at regular intervals for each pupil with special educational needs. The identification of gifted pupils is a recent development and their needs have yet to be reflected clearly in curriculum planning.
26. The school effectively promotes personal, social and health education through the weekly lessons taught to each year group. More informal learning in these aspects takes place in assemblies and in extra-curricular activities. The policy for this aspect of the curriculum is not yet fully in place, but schemes of work cover all the statutory areas, including sex education and drugs awareness.
27. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for boys and girls of all year groups. There are clubs in design and technology, gardening, Spanish, signing, music, art, craft and a variety of sports. A range of visits and visitors, linked to subject areas including citizenship, enhances the curriculum well. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make a residential visit to Woodrow High House and those in Year 5 visit Ironbridge, Years 6 and 7 pupils have the opportunity to go to the Isle of Wight and Year 7 pupils go to France. At least one third of each year group join these residential experiences. The school has good links with a cluster of local schools. Community links with local professional sports teams, who provided both staff and pupil training sessions in the previous academic year, have been very beneficial to the school.
28. The curriculum for pupils' personal development is good overall. The school's promotion of pupils' moral and social development is good and that for spiritual and cultural is satisfactory. The school's mission statement 'Pride in Achieving Together' underpins all its work and is promoted well in and out of the classroom. Pupils, parents and staff clearly take pride in the school. There is a well-developed programme for personal, health and social education, which is supported by the school's behaviour policy and the citizenship programme for Year 7. These provide good guidance on the school's and community's expectations of pupils. All staff make a significant contribution to ensuring the successful promotion of pupils' moral and social awareness.

29. The development of pupils' spiritual awareness is satisfactory. Religious education lessons teach pupils about some other different beliefs and faiths; for example, Year 5 study Islam and Christianity. The assembly programme is broadly Christian and enhanced by local Christian groups who run lively and entertaining assemblies. However, there are too few contributions from other religious groups. The school has a target to address this over this year. Class assemblies successfully build on themes introduced in the whole-school assembly. There are appropriate opportunities for reflection and prayer in all assemblies. For example, some assemblies encourage pupils to celebrate success and achievement, whilst others recall major world events such as September 11th. Some trips and lessons successfully promote pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. For example, Year 7 pupils reflected on the sadness of conflict when visiting a French war cemetery. However, such experiences are not planned as there is no policy to guide staff.
30. The curriculum to promote pupils' moral development is good. The behaviour policy sets a strong moral code and promotes an awareness of choice and responsibility. It defines rewards, sanctions and the concept of recompense. Clear expectations of pupils are set out in school and class rules. Discussions during personal, social and health education lessons and circle time provide opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of right and wrong. Year 7 citizenship lessons promote an understanding of rights, responsibilities and personal choice. All pupils nominate and elect members to the school council, which teaches them about democracy, participation, rights and responsibilities. Pupils are taught about running meetings, discussions and respecting the views of others. The school successfully promotes its strong commitment to inclusion. Staff ensure everyone is included in all aspects of school life and encourage understanding and appreciation of the needs of others. For example, they run a sign language club to help hearing pupils communicate with the hearing-impaired pupils.
31. The promotion of pupils' social development is good. The behaviour policy and school rules set clear expectations of pupils in order to ensure the school is a happy and secure learning environment where all work together. There are appropriate opportunities for older pupils to take responsibility but few for younger pupils. For example, Year 7 pupils take responsibility for staffing the office at lunchtime, organise and manage the playground equipment and run a 'buddy' programme where they help younger pupils. Discussion times and lessons provide opportunities for pupils to learn about rules and accepting responsibility for their own actions. For example, in a Year 7 literacy lesson pupils discussed dramatic tension, wrote and acted a play about confronting a bully and finding ways to resolve conflicts. Good relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are promoted effectively. Teachers ensure there are clear expectations on pupils' behaviour in class. Support staff play a crucial role in building pupils' self-esteem and reinforcing the school's expectations with individuals and groups of pupils in lessons, group sessions and at lunchtimes. Working together, co-operatively and collaboratively, is promoted well in lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils understood the need for discussion and reaching a consensus when composing a market cry and practised to ensure the performance was successful.
32. The curriculum to promote cultural development is satisfactory. There are many opportunities to help pupils learn about their local cultural area and that in Europe. Pupils learn French, German and Spanish. Year 7 pupils have an annual residential trip to France and Year 6 pupils go to the Isle of Wight. Music makes a satisfactory contribution by introducing pupils to a range of music and a variety of instruments. Visitors to school introduce pupils to a range of music and dance, for example African dance and Japanese and African drumming. The choir and orchestra perform in concerts locally. Trips and pupils' involvement in special projects make them aware of local places, such as the theatre, and places further afield such as Ironbridge and countries of the Commonwealth. The school recognises that its promotion of cultural awareness is stronger than that for

multi-cultural awareness. It recognises a need for all subjects to reflect a strong multi-cultural dimension to help prepare pupils more fully for life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. Since amalgamation the school has been successful in improving behaviour and raising the pupils' self-esteem. It gives good support to promote individual strengths and identify and help with pupils' weaknesses. Parents value the guidance and support given to their children. Eighty-eight per cent of the parents' questionnaires agreed that the school helps their children become more mature and responsible.
34. Procedures to promote and monitor the pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The school has adopted locally agreed child protection procedures. The headteacher is the designated member of staff. Staff are aware of the procedures and training is planned to ensure that they implement them consistently. There is a governor with a child protection role. All the required first aid procedures are in place and pupils follow the guidelines. For example, an injured pupil, together with carer, visited the first aid point. The incident was properly dealt with. Health and safety is taught within the classrooms, such as ensuring pens have the caps replaced. Maintenance records, including risk assessments are in place. The school constantly reviews the safety and security of staff and pupils.
35. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good. The school uses computerised forms. As a result, monitoring the data is simple and accurate. Due to the high level of mobility and a few persistent absentees, the school holds regular meetings with the support services, such as the education welfare officer. Home visits are conducted and other support is available from the local education authority's welfare service. The newly appointed learning mentor has already solved one attendance problem. Welfare services monitor progress and ensure all pupils are fully included. Awards for excellent attendance are to be extended further, making use of the pupils' competitive spirit and encouraging them to value good attendance.
36. Procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour are good and raising standards. There are some pupils who do not find self-discipline easy and have the potential to be very disruptive. A co-ordinator, in conjunction with staff, parents and pupils, produced the behaviour policy. Every pupil filled in a questionnaire. Pupils decided class rules democratically. The school takes a strong stance against unacceptable behaviour, including racist or sexist remarks. Where necessary, it quickly involved the local education authority's behaviour support team. Liaison with the behaviour support team and parents is effective. Midday supervisors meet with the behaviour co-ordinator and are due to receive training in behaviour management. A sign language communicator is part of the midday supervisor team to assist with supporting hearing-impaired pupils.
37. The Code of Practice for special educational needs is fully in place with the recent ratification of the special educational needs policy by the governing body. The school has effective systems to identify, assess, support and monitor pupils with special educational needs that enable them to make good progress. Those pupils with specific Statements of Need are supported well through individual education programmes. They get very appropriate and challenging targets that the school reviews regularly. Target setting is very good because targets are very specific, for example 'orientate the letters b, d, g, h, p and q correctly', so that pupils' success with their targets can be measured easily.
38. Procedures to monitor and promote personal development are sound. There is no formal policy to record and track personal development. The co-ordinator for personal, social and health education has promoted the topic across the curriculum. There has been insufficient time to evaluate its impact fully. An anti-bullying role-play session enabled pupils to reflect on the feelings of victim and bully effectively. The school council

contributes to the policy's effectiveness. The annual reports provide parents with detailed information on all subjects, including citizenship.

39. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The procedures have been introduced since the amalgamation of the two schools and some have only just been introduced. They have not yet had an impact on raising standards across the school. The situation faced by the assessment manager when the new school was set up was unsatisfactory because:
- very little information was held outlining pupils' academic progress; optional tests had been taken on an ad-hoc basis and results were not kept centrally or passed on to the next class teacher;
 - analysis of the tests had not taken place and there was no information from the tests to help teachers plan future work;
 - details of statutory national tests taken at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 were kept on the office computer. However, no one was trained to use the computer program and building work in the school created further problems with the computer system;
 - individual record systems varied considerably, with some teachers keeping much more detailed records than others;
 - the marking of pupils' work was erratic.
40. The situation is now much more positive. The assessment manager has managed to find records for the current Year 6 as far back as the tests they took at the end of Year 2. Using this information, a group of under-achieving pupils was identified in Year 5. Work planned for their needs raised standards in English and mathematics by the time they entered Year 6. Pupils now take the optional tests in Years 3, 4, 5 and 7. The results of these tests enable teachers to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for them. Teachers are expected to pass on details of pupils' progress to the next teacher at the end of the school year so that the next teacher can set targets for each year. Unfortunately, this does not yet happen in every case. The school asks teachers, when marking test papers, to carry out a question-by-question analysis so that areas of strength and weakness can be identified. The weekly recording of attainment in English and mathematics, and half-termly recording in other subjects, will contribute to the school having a much clearer picture of how well its pupils are doing. A marking policy with clearly outlined expectations for marking and feedback to pupils is in place, but teachers are not yet using it consistently. The school is not always using assessment effectively to guide teachers in planning work. There are examples of good practice. However, the checking of pupils' work from the previous year and lesson observations, show that teachers often do not use assessment effectively to help pupils make the progress they should. In some classes, work in books does not make pupils think hard enough. Conversely, in a junior lesson, the example used by the teacher was too difficult for all but the most-able pupils in the class.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. Since amalgamation, the school has worked hard to improve its links with parents and carers and to overcome some difficulties created by staffing changes and high levels of pupil mobility. Many parents now recognise that this is an improving school, especially in the Early Years. The links are now satisfactory with strengths and a few areas for further development.
42. For parents of children new to the school there is a good system to integrate them quickly. Many parents praised the 'Welcome Booklet' with the named 'buddy' for their child. A member of the teaching staff acts as a link between the parents and school. One outcome has been the increase of parents coming into classrooms and playground at the beginning of the day. This helps to create mutual confidence. Newsletters are very readable, informative and interesting. Awards and achievements by pupils are noted clearly and

encourage endeavour. However, more information as to the curriculum topics taught would benefit a lot of parents who wish to support their child's learning.

43. A learning mentor appointed this term provides an additional tier of support between the school, pupils and parents. Already there has been a positive result working with one family. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in reviews and targets. Parents whose first language is British Sign Language receive good information from the hearing impaired unit. However, this is not always consistent with that which the school provides in relating to nationally expected levels of attainment.
44. The school gathers parents' views from a number of sources. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a high profile and this gives parents an opportunity to discuss any concerns. There is an 'open door' policy for parents. Whenever possible, staff provide feedback to parents. Curriculum 'workshops' have been held, though poorly attended. Despite many requests by the school, few parents help in school to support learning, for example reading. However, many volunteer to assist in trips. To promote learning and raising the pupils' self-esteem, the school has introduced a homework club this term. In addition there is an 'after-school club' where pupils both from this and other schools have the benefit of structured activities, for example craft and design and technology activities or help with homework.
45. Some parents had concerns over homework. As a result they could not support teaching and learning at home as much as they would like. The school regularly sets spellings and reading for the younger pupils. An evaluation of the reading diaries shows that the more able and enthusiastic readers read regularly at home. Parents use the diary effectively. Parents can monitor how often their child reads with the teacher and also record their own views. For the older pupils, diaries show variations with many spaces and no parents' signature. Inspection evidence showed homework is satisfactory but with inconsistencies between classes. A few parents raised concerns regarding the annual report. The reports are detailed and well presented. Levels and targets are clearly set out. However, similar phrases recur and, in some, over use of educational jargon spoils the message. Personal, social, and health education development is a noteworthy feature, for example how low attendance and behaviour is affecting progress. Some parents, who rely on sign language, are not always aware that the school provides a communicator. This does not allow them to monitor their child's progress consistently.
46. A small but very enthusiastic group of parents and staff created the 'Friends of Chestnuts'. Despite appeals, there is a shortage of parents volunteering. The group holds fund-raising events regularly and raises good sums of money. These funds are used well to purchase resources such as books or towards the gardening club. Their input helps improve the quality of education provided.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The school is soundly led and managed overall. The school has undergone a period of considerable change in the last two years since the amalgamation of the local first and middle schools. The uncertainty over the school's future resulted in high levels of staffing change and pupil mobility, building problems and lower standards of pupils' attainment and behaviour. The new headteacher, working in close partnership with an influential deputy, a new management team and a supportive governing body, has given good, clear leadership, focused strongly on improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Most parents and many pupils value the contribution of both the headteacher and his deputy in improving the learning environment and the school ethos. Eighty-five per cent of the parents' questionnaires confirmed that the school is well managed and led. However, the school has yet to establish a rigorous focus on raising standards of attainment. The contributions of staff with subject and management responsibilities are not consistently

targeted on evaluating the standards of teaching and learning and taking effective action to improve weaknesses.

48. The school's vision of 'Pride in Achieving Together' sets out clearly what it is trying to achieve. It is being implemented successfully to create a sense of school identity and community. The school's provision for promoting pupils' personal development is managed well, especially social and moral development. It promotes the school's vision very effectively. The school's aims relating to providing a happy, secure and disciplined learning environment and to promoting pupils' personal development are reflected clearly in the work of the school. The aims that emphasise every child achieving the highest possible standards in literacy and numeracy have yet to influence significantly the standards being achieved. Parents are supportive of the values of the school. They particularly value that the school enables all children, especially those with special educational needs and those with hearing impairment, to be included fully in the programme of activities. Parents commented that this helps their children to enjoy school, to mature and to value the school community.
49. The headteacher, supported by his deputy and link advisers from the local education authority, has monitored and evaluated teaching in literacy and numeracy. He has identified strengths and areas for development, and enabled teachers to benefit from additional training. The headteacher has enabled all staff to observe and share good practice, for example by visiting leading literacy and numeracy teachers, identified by the local education authority. The school has a new and quite inexperienced senior management team. They are working well together and have contributed significantly to improving the school ethos. Their roles have been clearly established, including contributing to improving teaching and learning through an effective performance management strategy. Some training has been given to support the phase leaders and they are beginning to influence the work of their teaching and support teams. However, this is still at the early stage of development. Staff with subject and management responsibilities do not focus consistently on raising the standards of teaching and learning within phase teams and subject areas. There is no clear and consistent understanding of what pupils should be achieving in particular subjects. The school is aware of the need to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of the standards being attained, particularly those with management responsibilities. It has planned to increase the range of training opportunities and extend the opportunities for staff to evaluate standards, for example through regular monitoring of work samples.
50. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are beginning to use an increasing range of assessment information to track pupils' progress and target areas for improvement. They are sharing it with class teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievements. However, there was little evidence of teachers using this information consistently to adjust their planning to meet the differing needs of their classes and teaching groups. Although standards are still too low, especially for older pupils, information from annual national tests used by the school show that standards are improving. This confirms the views of the local education authority's advisers who have recently informed the school that they no longer regard it as 'giving cause for concern'. The deputy headteacher is extending the range and use of assessment information, for example to identify under-achieving pupils. Teachers need to use this information more consistently to ensure that they are challenging all pupils to raise their attainment.
51. The staff has developed a good partnership with the governors both during and since the amalgamation. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties soundly, although it has yet to adopt all the required curriculum and management policies. Governors work closely with the school, for example in agreeing and implementing the good school improvement plan. This is then used as the main focus for school development. Governors, through their effective committee structure, monitor closely the impact of the plan. Many come into

school, especially those with responsibilities for literacy, numeracy and special educational needs. They meet with subject co-ordinators to review the subject action plan. Some visit lessons to monitor the impact of teaching. Governors are kept well informed about school developments, through frequent meetings and detailed reports from the headteacher. Many have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to make decisions that target improvement priorities, for example the appointment of additional teaching support staff. Governors are keen to contribute to improving the school, although they have yet to establish a sufficiently rigorous focus on raising standards of attainment. Many governors have benefited from good quality training and make a good contribution to working with the staff and shaping the direction of the school.

52. The governors, working closely with the headteacher and the school's financial assistant, have established good procedures for financial planning and management. After some budget difficulties during the initial stages of amalgamation, the school has now developed an effective budget strategy to enable the funds to be targeted well on priorities in the school improvement plan. They use specific funds, such as the Standards Fund and the National Grid for Learning grant, to support pupils' learning successfully. For example, they appointed additional teaching assistants and improved computer resources to provide more support for pupils. The governors' finance committee monitors spending levels carefully. The impact of spending decisions is evaluated soundly through other committees. Governors apply the principles of best value with increasing effectiveness. They compare their performance with other schools and have consistently tried to seek best value during the recent building improvements. The school makes good use of new technology to support learning and to ensure efficient general and financial administration.
53. The school has now overcome previous difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff. The number of suitably qualified and experienced staff is good and meets the demands of the curriculum. Phase leaders and subject co-ordinators are in place with clear job descriptions. The school's priorities to improve the quality of teaching and learning are being supported by increased training. The governors' decision to increase the number of teaching assistants has made a significant contribution to the quality of learning, especially for the lower attaining pupils. Good procedures, including mentors, are in place to support newly qualified teachers or new appointments. The school has established performance management effectively and a pattern of staff meetings to ensure teachers receive support in developing their skills.
54. The school buildings are safe and secure. The accommodation is satisfactory overall and ensures that the curriculum can be taught effectively. The main hall for assemblies is cramped and the facilities for practical activities in physical education, design and technology and science for Year 7 pupils are restricted. Classrooms are organised effectively to promote a sound learning environment. Teachers use displays on the walls satisfactorily to support teaching, for example in numeracy and literacy or to illustrate pupils' work. The library is jointly used with the information and communication technology suite. Delay in completing the building work has had a slight impact on repairs and refurbishment, such as toilets or paving slab repairs. The school is maintained in a clean and hygienic condition due to the competent caretaker and cleaning staff.
55. Overall, resources are satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage there is a good range of wheeled toys and other equipment, for example traffic lights, to interest children and to support their learning activities. The resources for physical education are good. The school has increased the number and range of resources for information and communication technology. During the inspection, computers were seldom used to support teaching or extend learning, especially for the older and the more able pupils. The school buys into the school's library service and there is a regular book audit. Pupils know how to access the library and how to identify books. However, few pupils browsed or extended their research skills. The school plans to provide staff training to make better

use of the libraries. Playtime resources are varied and used well to develop the pupils' social skills. The school council helped to improve play resources and to develop a more structured play period involving the 'Buddy System' and the midday supervisors.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to raise pupils' attainment and the quality of education, the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- (1) a) raise standards in literacy by
 - applying pupils' literacy skills consistently in other subjects;
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to improve their written work by drafting and re-drafting and evaluating how it can improve;
 - increasing the use of pupils' information and communication technology skills;
(paragraphs 3-4, 16, 20, 81 and 147)
 - b) raise standards in mathematics by
 - providing more opportunities for pupils, especially higher attainers, to apply their skills and knowledge;
 - improving pupils' skills in the presentation of their work;
 - increasing the opportunities for pupils to extend their mathematical skills and knowledge through using information and communication technology;
(paragraphs 5-6, 84, 90 and 91)
 - c) raise standards in science by requiring pupils, especially Year 7 pupils and higher attainers, to apply their ideas, skills, knowledge and understanding more frequently in scientific enquiry;
(paragraphs 5, 93-94, 96 and 97)
 - d) raise standards in religious education by improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of different religious beliefs and practices;
(paragraphs 144 and 146)
 - (2) raise teachers' expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work to a consistently higher level;
(paragraphs 3, 7, 16, 82 and 93)
 - (3) ensure that teachers use assessment information consistently to match learning activities to the full range of pupils' needs, including those with hearing impairment;
(paragraphs 3, 7, 16, 20, 40, 50, 65 and 148)
 - (4) involve staff with management responsibilities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning rigorously and improve standards.
(paragraphs 47, 49, 66, 100, 110, 114, 139 and 149)

THE WORK OF THE HEARING-IMPAIRED DEPARTMENT

57. The specialist department located at the school forms part of the local education authority's provision for primary aged pupils with hearing impairment. The work of the department is a strength of the school. The pupils are on the roll of the school and the local authority funds the provision. Currently there are 16 pupils in the department. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, which mainly focus on hearing difficulties. At the time of the inspection the department had a full complement of 16 pupils.
58. Pupils usually participate in the national tests and teacher assessments at the ages of 7 and 11 years. Pupils attain generally low standards of work. They are not significantly different from their classmates, except in English, where their work is well below average for pupils of their age. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress because they are taught well by specialist staff. They receive their full entitlement to a broad, balanced and relevant range of learning opportunities. They share in lessons with pupils of a similar age in the mainstream school. They make satisfactory and, on occasions, good progress and achieve satisfactory standards of work, for example in a physical education lesson. This was because the quality of teaching was good. The mainstream teacher had high expectations of what these pupils could achieve. She was very aware of the additional special educational needs of the pupils. She made good provision to meet these needs by involving the pupils and their communicators in discussing their performance and how they could improve their techniques. The pupils were very well motivated and benefited from working alongside pupils who do not have special educational needs.
59. The school's philosophy is to enable pupils to work alongside their peers as much as possible, whilst giving focused support for their specific individual needs in the department. These needs are mainly the development of language skills. Pupils attain standards in this area that are often well below those of pupils of the same age who do not have a hearing impairment. To help pupils, the department staff support them individually with their ongoing work and to prepare them for future lessons. Support is decided on individual need and is very effective. It is promoted by the range of specialist expertise and the good ratio of teachers and communicators. The focus on providing these pupils with a fully inclusive education is good. However, during the inspection, some mainstream class teachers were not effective in promoting equality of opportunity for every pupil regardless of their disability. Teachers did not always notify communicators and specialist staff of timetable changes. This resulted in a small number of pupils being withdrawn from lessons other than literacy for help with literacy-based activities. They missed significant parts of lessons in other subjects, including mathematics.
60. Within the department pupils with hearing impairment are taught well. Lesson observations, including one-to-one support sessions, were mainly good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching was good, such as in a session with a pupil in Year 1, the specialist teacher had high expectations of the pupil's attitude and behaviour. The teacher was a good role model and gave the pupil good encouragement to use her voice as well as to communicate using British Sign Language. The pupil achieved well because she was encouraged to answer questions using extended signed sentences. In good lessons, discussions reinforce and extend the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers make pupils use their thinking skills. This leads to good gains in learning and promotes positive attitudes. Relationships are very good between adults and pupils. Where signing is used as a significant means of communication, full discussion takes place about the pupils' work. This enables them to think about how well they have worked and what they have learned. Tasks are challenging and the adults use questioning skills well to assess the pupils' knowledge and understanding.

61. The inclusion of pupils with hearing impairment in the mainstream lessons is good. Teachers have been provided with effective training in raising their awareness of the needs of this group of pupils. Some teachers who have not had training are less effective in recognising and meeting the needs of pupils with hearing difficulties. For example, they do not include pupils in questions and answers during feedback sessions. They do not always sit so the pupil has a good view of the teacher's lip patterns. The department has devised a comprehensive policy and file of information that are helpful and easy to implement. Rarely do teachers fail to use aiding equipment properly or forget the need to sit pupils in the correct position in the room. Pupils' classmates are aware of the needs of those with hearing difficulties and wear the radio aid if necessary. The support by the communicators is very good, both in the department and in the mainstream classrooms. However, not all teachers value or use their expertise to best effect. The communicators understand the specific needs of the pupils very well. They give help when needed but also encourage independence. Signing is very effective for pupils who use this as a significant means of communication. The school has signing clubs for pupils and members of staff. However, there are no signs around the school that reflect the need for these pupils, some parents and visitors to communicate through British Sign Language as their first language.
62. The specialist staff support pupils well to enable them to participate in the mainstream curriculum. Members of staff in the department plan work with mainstream teachers. Where necessary, the curriculum is adapted to help the hearing-impaired pupils. This is done mostly through the use of sign supported English. Pupils also have individual education plans, which are drawn up by the specialist staff and class teachers. These are reviewed every term. The quality of pupils' records is good. They provide comprehensive information about the standards of work pupils achieve and their rate of progress over time. Hearing-impaired pupils are encouraged to fully participate in extra-curricular activities alongside their classmates. Whilst it is sometimes difficult to participate in after-school clubs because of transport needs, pupils always join their classmates for day trips, visits and residential experiences. This is good practice.
63. There are very good systems in place to ensure that pupils are well cared for and safe. This helps them to feel secure. Staff know all the pupils very well and promote their development successfully. There are very effective partnerships with other agencies, such as the audiologist and speech therapist. These contribute positively to the very good quality of provision for pupils' welfare. Child protection systems are good and staff are knowledgeable about procedures they need to follow if they have a concern about any hearing-impaired pupil. Pupils are adequately supervised at all times and the collection arrangements at the end of the day are a well-established routine.
64. Pupils' statements of educational need are in place and reviewed regularly. Parents are encouraged to contribute their views at annual review meetings, as are the pupils. A small minority of hearing-impaired parents does, however, find some difficulty in understanding all the written information they receive, for example the annual report to parents. The 'open door' policy of the department staff promotes good relationships amongst all those involved. This helps pupils understand the importance of taking more responsibility for themselves as they get older. As a result, their skills of independence improve and they readily accept responsibility for maintaining and caring for their own equipment.
65. Assessments of pupils' learning and the development of their personal skills are well linked to identified needs in pupils' statements of educational need. Specialist teachers make good use of the assessment information to inform planning. There are clear links between individual's statements, their education plans and what they are taught in each lesson. However, there is little reference to hearing-impaired pupils' levels of ability in mainstream class teachers' planning. Therefore, they have no clear record of how quickly or slowly

hearing-impaired pupils are learning. Many class teachers do not have sufficient information to ensure they plan lessons that are promoting each pupil's full potential.

66. The head of the department works closely with the headteacher to manage the hearing-impaired department well and staff see themselves as members of the whole-school staff team. Staff share a commitment to improve the quality of what the school does and ensure every pupil has equality of opportunity. Teachers get clear information to help them understand the needs of hearing-impaired pupils within the classroom. Procedures are in place to liaise with all teachers through good quality notes made by the communicators at the end of lessons. The local education authority has been generous in its allocation of staff, who have a wide range of experience and expertise. However, there are not yet any formal procedures in place for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. As a result individuals do not know their strengths or areas in which they need to improve. The head of the department has no time allocated for monitoring the effectiveness of the work of colleagues and setting them development targets. She has no opportunity to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a whole in meeting the needs of this group of pupils.
67. The accommodation allocated to the department is adequate, but the teaching bays are not well enough soundproofed. This results in staff and pupils often becoming distracted. The environment is bright and cheerful with good use being made of displays of pupils' work. Resources are good. However, given that the department is regarded as a 'centre of excellence' by the school, it is not well equipped with a range of modern technology. The quality and range of information and communication technology equipment for personal use by pupils are unsatisfactory. In part these shortages have arisen because the school is unclear about how the local education authority has designated funding to support this group of pupils.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	86
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	10	32	38	3	2	0
Percentage	0	12	38	45	4	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	384
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	80

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	102

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	22	13	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	15	16	16
	Girls	12	12	9
	Total	27	28	25
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	77 (n/a)	80 (n/a)	71 (n/a)
	National	84 (83)	86 (84)	91 (90)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	15	21	20
	Girls	13	12	13
	Total	28	33	33
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	80 (n/a)	94 (n/a)	94 (n/a)
	National	85 (84)	89 (88)	89 (88)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	26	31	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	16	14	16
	Girls	17	13	23
	Total	33	27	39
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	58 (n/a)	47 (n/a)	68 (n/a)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	16	15	16
	Girls	17	15	20
	Total	33	30	36
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	58 (n/a)	55 (n/a)	63 (n/a)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
320	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
8	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
3	2	0
13	0	0
14	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20
Average class size	25.7

Education support staff: YR– Y7

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	489

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 / 02
	£
Total income	1,066,710
Total expenditure	1,026,311
Expenditure per pupil	2,659
Balance brought forward from previous year	8,030
Balance carried forward to next year	48,429

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	13
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 35.5%

Number of questionnaires sent out	383
Number of questionnaires returned	136

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	41	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	57	7	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	57	9	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	38	20	7	6
The teaching is good.	36	55	6	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	48	15	1	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	57	33	5	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	28	53	13	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	35	50	8	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	47	7	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	35	22	2	9

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

68. The school admits children in the September which follows their fourth birthday, in line with the local education authority guidelines. The youngest children attend on a part-time basis for the first five weeks, either in the morning or the afternoon. Some children start school having had no organised pre-school education. Others have experience of a variety of early years provision, including crèche, playgroup and nursery. Most children enter the Foundation Stage with standards that are well below the expectations for their age in most areas of learning. They respond very positively to the opportunities provided, and make good or very good progress towards the early learning goals. Despite their good progress, most are unlikely to meet the expectations for children entering Year 1 in the areas of communication, language and literacy, mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world.
69. All staff in the Foundation Stage have a clear commitment to raising standards. They attend in-service courses and meet with colleagues from other schools on a regular basis to share good practice. Staff plan lessons together and have devised a detailed system of assessment and monitoring. They set targets for all children and revise them regularly. They have good links with parents and carry out home visits each year. The support for children with English as an additional language is effective and enables these children to work confidently in group and class lessons. All members of staff ensure that children have full and equal access to all areas of learning.

Personal, social and emotional development

70. Children make good progress in this area of learning and are likely to meet the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they reach Year 1. Teaching is good. Teachers and learning support assistants work effectively as a team to support children's development. Children are happy and secure with the everyday routines of the class. They move confidently around the school, for example when going to the dining room or to whole-school assemblies. They show satisfactory independence when they choose activities for themselves. Most show good levels of concentration and interest, for instance when role-playing in the shop. Children take care of classroom equipment and soon learn to tidy up after themselves. Most look after their own clothing, for example when changing footwear after an outside lesson. In class lessons, children listen attentively to each other and to the teacher, and take turns to speak. In group work they show good relationships with others and with the adults who help them.

Communication, language and literacy

71. The provision for the development of language and literacy is good. Many children enter the Foundation Stage with very low language skills. They make good progress in developing enjoyment of books and stories. All children quickly learn how to handle books correctly and understand that pictures and print convey meaning. They listen to well-known stories and rhymes and join in enthusiastically. This is a direct result of the enthusiasm shown by members of staff. It makes children eager to look at books and try to read them. The more able repeat lines from a favourite story about *The Three Bears*. 'Someone's been sleeping in my bed, and she's still there!' A number of children have limited language and immature speech patterns. They receive a good level of individual help and support to improve their speaking skills. Teachers model Standard English well from which children learn. For example, when discussing how many sides various shapes have, one child said, 'Him's four side'. The teacher replied, 'Yes, it's got four sides. Tell me again'. Children with English as an additional language receive good support and

make good progress with their English skills. Children improve their early writing skills in a range of activities that increase their hand and eye co-ordination. All learn to use pencils correctly. Many write their own name unaided. The most able write phrases or sentences independently, drawing on their developing knowledge of letter sounds to attempt to spell words. Most children make good progress with their language development in the Foundation Stage. However, their very low skills on entry results in very few children meeting all the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Mathematical development

72. The provision for children's mathematical development is very good. Most children make good progress in developing their number skills. However, they are unlikely to reach the standards necessary to meet the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1. Teachers help children to develop their mathematical skills through a carefully structured programme of work. This includes the use of construction activities to help children to understand shape and space and to develop their control skills. The support for children with English as an additional language is effective in promoting their ability to count and recognise numbers. All children have a session of structured number work each day. The more able children count up to 10 and write some numerals correctly. Most children know and recognise numbers on a number line. They learn and sing simple number rhymes and songs, and identify shapes by name, counting sides and corners. They use suitable mathematical language to describe features, such as 'bigger than' and 'smaller than'. Staff use simple computer programs well to support children's learning.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

73. Very good provision and an extensive range of resources ensure that children make good progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding of the world. They have many opportunities to explore the natural and man-made world. They show sound skills in using the mouse and keyboard when using a computer, which they move to independently after completing a required task. When using construction materials they show a good understanding of how parts join. They show good awareness of safety in their environment in a lesson in which a set of working traffic lights was used to introduce road safety issues. Children investigate taste when they sample a range of breads from around the world, for example an Indian bread. In spite of the very good level of provision, the low levels of attainment on entry mean that most children are unlikely to meet the expectations of the early learning goals by the time they reach Year 1.

Physical development

74. Teaching and support staff make good provision for children's physical development and children make good progress. They have access to a range of equipment such as scissors, pencils, crayons and glue every day. Many experience difficulty in controlling basic tools when they start school. The direct teaching of skills enables them to increase their fine control skills, but many are below the expected standard when they enter Year 1. Children have opportunities to run, jump and skip in physical education lessons. They move around with an increasing awareness of space, changing direction and stopping when asked. There is a secure area for outdoor activities for Foundation Stage children, but use of this space is restricted to fine weather as there is no overhead cover. Foundation Stage classes are timetabled regularly in the school hall, where they use the large apparatus for climbing and balancing activities. The level of progress pupils make means that they are likely to meet the requirements of the early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

Creative development

75. Provision for children's creative development is very good. They learn basic techniques which enable them to use and control materials effectively. They hold brushes correctly, apply paint to paper with increasing confidence and use printing materials effectively to create shape pictures. Children enjoy experimenting with materials when, for example, they try out paper collage to make pictures of *The Three Bears*. Children learn and sing a variety of songs from memory and show a suitable awareness of melody and rhythm. Because of their very good progress children are likely to acquire the level of skill to achieve their early learning goals by the time they enter Year 1.

ENGLISH

76. Pupils attain standards across the school that are well below expectations for their age in most aspects of English. This reflects pupils' attainment in national tests at the ages of 7 and 11 years, which is well below national averages and below those of similar schools. However, improvement in teachers' confidence and knowledge in teaching the literacy hour over the last year is beginning to show in pupils' achievement. Work seen in lessons indicated that pupils are starting the year with slightly better skills than the previous year. In lessons all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, made satisfactory gains in their learning. However, over time their progress is unsatisfactory, as there is insufficient focus on developing their literacy skills in a systematic way. Due to the high level changes of staff the National Literacy Strategy is at an early level of implementation.
77. Pupils start school with skills and experience well below expectations for their age in language and communication. Pupils' standards of attainment in speaking remain below expectations for their age across the school. Their listening skills are broadly in line with expectations as they behave well and attend to teachers' demonstrations and instructions satisfactorily. There are some good opportunities across the curriculum to promote pupils' listening skills. There are too few to teach them skills in speaking clearly, extending their vocabulary and structuring presentations. Pupils lack basic presentational skills when speaking to an audience in classrooms and in assemblies.
78. By the end of Year 2 pupils' speaking skills are well below expectations for their age. They often give brief one-word answers to teachers' questions. By the end of Year 6 and Year 7 pupils have developed more confidence in speaking and expressing their views. However, most pupils' range of vocabulary and ability to use and understand the meaning of words are below expectations for their age. Pupils' limited vocabulary has an impact on their learning throughout their time in school. It affects their learning in English and other subjects. In English, pupils lack the vocabulary to describe exactly what they mean and to choose words precisely. In other subjects, such as design and technology and music, pupils lack the extended vocabulary necessary to explain fully what they know or feel.
79. Pupils attain standards in reading that are below expectations at 7 and 11 years of age. They are well below expectations in Year 7. Approximately 40 per cent of pupils in this year group have special educational needs. Pupils' lack of vocabulary affects their reading as they do not always understand the meaning of the words. This does not help them make sense of what they read. Guided reading sessions ensure pupils analyse what they read and teaches them important strategies, such as skimming and scanning, when reading for information. Pupils' understanding of how to use reference books is satisfactory in most year groups. From Year 2 most pupils understand how to use index and contents pages. Most pupils enjoy reading and their learning is enhanced when parents regularly complete their reading records. By Year 7 pupils have less positive attitudes to reading as they feel there are too few interesting books for their age group.
80. Pupils' writing in Year 2 is below expectations and standards are well below at Year 6 and Year 7. Older pupils learn to recognise different styles of writing such as biographies and

autobiographies and how writers use vocabulary and sentence structure to create dramatic tension. Pupils' limited vocabulary has an increasing impact on their ability to construct interesting, extended pieces of writing. Standards of handwriting and presentation skills are well below expectations across the school. The lack of a common scheme to guide teachers means that they do not teach handwriting skills consistently. In some classes pupils learn the correct formation of letters and some letter-joins. However, they write in books and guidelines that are too large for them. This does not promote a consistent style or quality. The lack of appropriately lined books for general work does not provide sufficient support for pupils with limited skills. The focus on regular spelling sessions is helping pupils learn spelling rules and to spell more accurately. Teachers make too little use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to aid the writing process. There is insufficient focus on the development of writing through drafting and redrafting work. Pupils have weaknesses in their use of punctuation. Although teachers often point out inaccuracies to pupils, there is little evidence of this being improved in later work. Teachers rarely corrected pupils' work to show how it could be improved and teachers accepted a low level of presentation from too many pupils.

81. The quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2 literacy lessons is good overall and beginning to raise standards. Teachers have secure knowledge and high expectations of pupils, resulting in good levels of effort and perseverance. Teachers model speaking, reading and writing well and make good use of learning support staff to assist pupils with special educational needs. There is significant variation in the quality of teaching for junior pupils and for those in Year 7. Overall, it is satisfactory with examples of very good teaching and poor teaching. The greatest variation is in teachers' confidence in teaching the literacy strategy, the pace of lessons and their ability to match work well to pupils' differing abilities. This inconsistency limits the impact of the school's focus on raising literacy standards. Most teachers do not use marking to make assessments of the levels pupils have reached or give them sufficient guidance on how to improve further. Some good examples of extended comment by teachers in Year 7 and useful support strategies enable pupils to appraise their own work and that of others.
82. The National Literacy Strategy is in place and being used satisfactorily overall. It has been slow to develop as there have been many staff changes each year. The new co-ordinator is very experienced in teaching the strategy and has taken a lead role in promoting literacy and training staff. It is beginning to have effect on the quality of teaching and learning as most lessons were at least satisfactory. However, it is too soon for this to have significant impact on pupils' achievement or ensure accelerated learning. The leadership role in ensuring consistency of teaching and monitoring of the quality of work across the school is underdeveloped.

MATHEMATICS

83. In national tests in 2001, pupils aged 7 and 11 attained standards that were well below the national average. Although there are, as yet, no figures for national comparisons to be made, the results of tests taken by pupils in 2002 reflect similar standards. The checking of pupils' work from the last school year shows that pupils attained standards at the end of Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7 that were well below nationally expected levels. This is because:
- teachers have not made pupils think hard enough to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge;
 - teachers have not matched learning activities to pupils' individual needs often enough to allow them to do as well as they are able;
 - teachers have not assessed pupils' work carefully enough to enable them to plan work to help all pupils make the progress they should;

- assessment procedures in the school have not been rigorous enough. They have not enabled teachers to track the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school so that teachers can set targets for them to improve;
 - the use of marking to show pupils how they can improve is inconsistent.
84. However, inspection evidence shows that standards are rising, especially for infant and junior pupils, although they remain below average. This is because:
- good assessment procedures now being put in place enable teachers to see which pupils need extra help;
 - the small numbers in the classes in Year 6 mean that teachers are able to give more attention to individual pupils;
 - higher attaining pupils in some classes are getting work that makes them think harder.
85. There are no significant differences in the performances of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with impaired hearing, are well supported. They make good progress in relation to their previous knowledge and understanding. Pupils for whom English is not their first language benefit from good English language support. This allows them to understand and participate fully in mathematical activities. They make good progress in their learning.
86. By the age of seven, pupils are not as confident carrying out simple mathematical processes as they should be. Lower ability pupils find it difficult to use a number line to help with simple multiplications such as 3×3 . They still need counters to take numbers away from 5. Average ability pupils become confused when dealing with problems containing 0. Higher ability pupils work more confidently with numbers up to 30. They supply missing numbers accurately in problems. Pupils put lists of children into order by age, height and alphabetical order. They are beginning to collect information, present it as simple graphs and answer questions using the graphs. They do not always present work as well as they could. By the age of 11, although too many are not achieving expected standards, there are signs that standards are rising. Higher attaining pupils have a good understanding of place value and give clear explanations of the effects of multiplying numbers by 10 and 100. This enables them to multiply numbers up to 10,000 in a variety of ways. They work confidently and quickly. Average and lower ability pupils are not secure in their mathematical knowledge. Their lack of confidence in place value shows when they have difficulty with taking away when they need to move 10 from the next column. Their success in carrying out these tasks is not helped when they set down their work in an untidy and careless way. Checking pupils' work shows that they cover a large amount of work including looking at the relationship between fractions and decimals and plotting co-ordinates.
87. By the age of 12, pupils attain standards that are well below expected levels. The current Year 7 has a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Many pupils work out the perimeter and area of shapes accurately. They apply this knowledge when measuring the playground and hall, but weaknesses in their number knowledge and understanding restrict the accuracy of their work. Lower attaining pupils work out time using 12- and 24-hour clocks and record temperatures. They measure angles up to 90 degrees, but find difficulty understanding angles larger than a right angle. Average attaining pupils identify congruent shapes correctly and interpret data about European countries. Both lower and average attaining pupils make mistakes because they often do not set down their work carefully enough. Higher attaining pupils do simple algebra and work out the value of b correctly in the equation $4b - 7 = 7$. However, they are not applying their skills, knowledge and understanding consistently to achieve expected levels.
88. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. There were a number of good lessons during the inspection in mixed-age classes in Years 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and in Year 6. In these lessons, teachers used time well and pupils learnt effectively. The mental

mathematics sessions that normally start lessons were conducted at a brisk pace with lively teaching that established good relationships within the classroom. In these lessons, pupils learnt effectively, applied considerable effort and maintained good concentration. Pupils were questioned effectively and were involved fully in the lesson. They were encouraged to discuss their answers. For example, in a good lesson in Year 6, the teacher made good use of 'show-me' cards to illustrate how to multiply two- and three-digit numbers. This enabled pupils to explain how they arrived at their answers and say what they found difficult. A particularly good feature of this lesson was the way the teacher used her assessment of the previous day's work. She had judged that pupils had not understood the point of the lesson. So she planned a completely different approach, thus enabling pupils to make good progress. Lessons are successful when teachers include all pupils in the lesson. They do this by planning work that is matched to the different needs of the pupils and asking questions that allow pupils to show how well they are learning. In the best lessons, teachers use classroom assistants well to support pupils. In some lessons, for example in Year 3 and Year 6, teachers made good use of the communicators in ensuring that hearing-impaired pupils were able to take a full part in the lesson.

89. All teachers are familiar with the National Numeracy Strategy and use it satisfactorily. However, in some lessons that were judged to be satisfactory overall, teachers missed opportunities to make learning even better. Some lessons need more pace and teachers should have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Insufficient demands are made on some pupils, particularly the higher attainers. Although all lessons are planned to take account of the different ability groups found in all classes, some teachers handle this more effectively than others. Consequently, in some classes pupils are undertaking work that is too easy or too hard. Checking Year 7 pupils' work from the last school year, for example, showed that teachers' expectations were not high enough. This contributed to the low achievement of those pupils. Work planned for the current Year 7 matches the needs of the pupils more accurately. The use of marking is inconsistent. Some teachers tell pupils where they have gone wrong and sometimes show the correct way to set down problems. However, too much marking consists of a tick and brief congratulatory comment. Teachers accept careless and untidy work too readily and do not insist on a high standard of presentation. Poor teaching was seen in one lesson when the examples used to illustrate the lesson were too difficult. The teacher did not make clear what it was the pupils had to do and the pace of the lesson was too slow. Not all pupils were involved in the questioning, they became restless and, consequently, few pupils made any progress.
90. Teachers do not use information and communication technology enough to develop mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. Computers were not used during the inspection to support any lesson. Pupils collect information and use it to produce graphs and charts. However, pupils often do not include a title or key to show the meaning of the graphs and the information they contain. Pupils do not use the information to answer questions often enough. Teachers do not make sufficient opportunities to promote numeracy skills in other subjects. In a science lesson with mixed Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, pupils did not use the rulers correctly and were confused about centimetres and inches. However, the use of timelines in history to work out how many years there were between the reigns of King Canute and William the Conqueror helped pupils understand the passage of time.
91. The management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject manager is an experienced teacher with a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in mathematics. She is aware of what needs doing to raise standards. However, not enough time has passed since the amalgamation of the schools for her ideas to raise standards. The school has received considerable support in mathematics from the local education authority. It now analyses the results of national tests taken in Year 2 and Year 6, as well as tests taken in other years, to identify areas of weakness. The subject manager has

monitored a small number of lessons to check teaching. The assessment manager has devised new systems for assessing pupils' work. They have begun to use them effectively to raise standards in some areas, particularly with Year 6 pupils. In general, however, the new procedures have not yet had time to raise standards significantly across the school. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and are used well to teach all required aspects.

SCIENCE

92. Pupils attain standards that are well below the national average at the end of Year 6 and well below those expected nationally at the end of Year 7. These reflect the results of the national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2001 and 2002. An analysis of pupils' work from the last school year showed that standards were too low and too few Year 6 and 7 pupils were attaining average or above average levels. The main factors that are limiting the standards attained include:
- the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, especially in the current Year 7;
 - some unsatisfactory teaching when teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough;
 - pupils' weak literacy skills;
 - teachers using worksheets too frequently which do not challenge pupils to apply their scientific skills and knowledge.
93. Evidence from lessons observed during the inspection show that standards are improving, especially in the current Year 6. Most junior-aged pupils are achieving levels that are similar to those expected nationally for their age. More pupils than in previous years are achieving above the expected level. Some teachers plan different activities more consistently to meet the range of learning needs. For example, the improved range of activities, together with the effective use of good quality support staff, enables pupils with specific learning difficulties such as hearing impairment or behavioural concerns, to be included fully. They make sound progress overall. It is often good, especially when the learning objective is shared by the teacher and is known and understood by pupils and their learning support staff. Many teachers continue to use worksheets that do not enable pupils to extend their reasoning and recording skills. This limits the standards attained. Progress overall is sound for pupils in Years 3 to 6, although it is not always consistent between classes. Some Year 7 pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, make sound progress. However, most do not make satisfactory progress overall, especially the more able pupils. They are not required to apply their knowledge consistently and explain the results and observations in their scientific investigations.
94. Pupils attain standards overall that are below the national average at the end of Year 2. There is some variation in pupils' knowledge and understanding of the different scientific aspects. Most have a sound knowledge and understanding of 'life and living processes', for example the different types of animals and plants and what they need to grow. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical processes, such as force and electricity, is not satisfactory. This reflects the 2002 teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Year 2. The high level of pupil mobility and the increasing proportion of pupils with special educational needs affect standards. Infant pupils make sound progress overall. Teaching is often good and encourages pupils' enthusiastic approach. Their weak literacy skills restrict their attainment. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make sound progress overall, particularly in the infants and in the lower juniors when they benefit from additional specialist English language support. This enables them to improve their knowledge and understanding of key scientific words. Teachers encourage pupil to use correct scientific terms, for example 'life-cycles', when talking about their work. However, some teachers do not always expect pupils to use these terms in their written observations.

95. Most Year 2 pupils know what a plant needs to live and grow. They label its main parts accurately. Many know that different animals live in different habitats and that living things, for example a chestnut tree, grow and reproduce. Most know that young animals, for example lambs and chicks, 'grow big and then have babies of their own'. Most pupils are beginning to develop their skills of scientific enquiry, for example when investigating how sound travels or forces move objects. They use drawings well to illustrate their results. They are not always required to explain if what happened was as they expected, for example when comparing bulbs in a simple circuit. The analysis of pupils' work showed that they cover all required aspects of science. There was some inconsistency between classes in the way pupils were encouraged to suggest their own ideas and record their results.
96. Pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding are developed soundly overall in Years 3 to 6, although not consistently in each class. For example, they extend their understanding of food chains and life cycles, electrical and magnetic forces and the properties of different materials. Most pupils in the current Year 6 classify animals accurately and know the key features of living and non-living things. They confidently use different classification types, for example vertebrates and mammals, to describe different animals. Most use their observational skills effectively to identify the key features of different live animals, for example the scales and gills on a fish. However, the analysis of work shows that pupils do not use their enquiry skills enough in some classes. Pupils carry out investigations, for example into separating solutions and checking the amount of air contained in different soil samples. However, teachers direct these investigations carefully and there were too few opportunities for pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, to choose their own methods. Most Year 6 pupils know some factors in making a test 'fair', for example by ensuring that the quantities used in mixing solutions remain constant. They make predictions, for example 'I think that the water will be clear', but do not apply their knowledge to try to explain the reasons behind their prediction. Pupils' weaknesses in English and mathematics restrict standards. For example, the results obtained by some Year 4 pupils in their magnetism investigation were inaccurate, as they were not able to measure carefully and work out how far the object had moved. These skills are not built on effectively in Year 7. For example, pupils classified animals accurately by observational features such as suckling their young. This was very similar to the standard attained by Year 6 pupils. Pupils were not challenged to extend their knowledge, for example by requiring them to explain how the animals had adapted their characteristics to suit their habitat. Some pupils are beginning to apply their knowledge to support predictions and observations. However, this is not done consistently to enable them to achieve the levels expected for their age.
97. Teaching is sound overall. It varied from very good to unsatisfactory in the lessons observed. This range was also reflected in the analysis of last year's work. Past work, especially in Year 7, shows a low expectation in the detail and presentation of writing. Teachers do not challenge pupils enough to apply their ideas, skills and knowledge in experiments and then evaluate to identify ways of improving their work. They do not use marking consistently to tell pupils how they can improve their work. Teaching was often good in lessons, particularly in Year 2 and 6. It is raising standards in those years. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, the teacher used live animals to grasp pupils' interest and attention. She was very well organised with a good range of reference books available to enable pupils to find out more about the characteristics of their animal. The teacher used questions well to promote and extend pupils' knowledge of, for example, the features of all mammals. Year 2 teachers used a video very successfully to gain pupils' attention as they were looking at how animals grow and develop. This very effective use of a visual resource enabled all pupils, including those with a hearing impairment, to be included fully in the activity.
98. Most teachers maintain good class control and manage their pupils well. This allows them to maintain the lesson pace as pupils respond quickly when the teachers need to give out

further instructions. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on animal habitats of wood lice, the teacher retained effective control of the group as the pupils went on to the field to collect wood lice. Where teachers maintain a good pace to the lesson, they retain pupils' interest and attention and ensure that pupils achieve what is expected in the time. However teaching is unsatisfactory when teachers do not ensure that the lesson has a brisk enough pace and pupils do not know what they are trying to achieve. For example, pupils carried out an investigation into the amount of air contained in different soil samples. They did not know what they were required to predict or observe. The teacher did not provide enough time for pupils to investigate or indicate what she expected them to have completed by the end. This did not enable pupils to make satisfactory progress in their learning.

99. The co-ordination of the subject throughout the school has some strengths and some weaknesses. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of what is being taught. She has made good use of national subject guidance and a commercial scheme to ensure that all aspects are included. There is no subject policy, although one is planned for development later this year. The co-ordinator has not had opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning to identify ways in which standards will improve. Science resources are adequate overall, although there are weaknesses in the quality and range of practical equipment, especially for older pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

100. Pupils attain standards that are above national expectations at the end of the infant stage and meet expectations at the end of Year 6. Work seen in sketchbooks completed by 12-year-old pupils indicate that they attain standards that are below expectations at the end of Year 7.
101. Planning for art, based on national guidelines, shows a satisfactory level of coverage including studying the work of established artists. There are no structured procedures to measure pupils' progress in the development of skills and techniques. Pupils in some classes keep a sketchbook in which they record work and techniques they have learned. This is not consistent in all classes, so does not give a clear picture of progress. Pupils in the junior classes have the opportunity to visit the local art gallery to enrich their experiences.
102. By the age of seven, pupils' standards exceed those expected for that age group. They understand the properties of a range of media including pastels, paint and fabrics. Work is linked effectively with work in other subjects such as history and geography. For instance, pictures depicting The Great Fire of London show effective mixing of colours to achieve effects. Pupils make good use of silhouettes to create focus in the pictures. The work is carefully presented and builds on the good progress that children make in the Foundation Stage.
103. Junior-age pupils attain standards that are satisfactory overall, but are inconsistent. Teachers do not all have a sufficiently high level of subject knowledge to teach skills and techniques, and thus promote artistic development. Sound standards seen in a Year 6 lesson resulted from the use of good teaching strategies including demonstration, encouragement to observe, and analysis and discussion of individual pupils' progress. Despite good planning and careful provision of resources, some pupils in an otherwise satisfactory Year 7 lesson achieved below expectations because of a lack of appropriate support due to the teacher's poor subject knowledge. Unrealistic teacher expectations and a poor choice of resources led to low standards in one of the younger junior classes. Pupils struggled to achieve 'texture' using large sheets of dull-coloured paper and watercolour paints. Work seen in sketchbooks and displayed around the school indicates that pupils use a satisfactory range of mediums and media, including computers, to

generate pictures. Year 7 pupils used a digital camera effectively in a lesson on 'Portraits'. Pupils draw upon the work of established artists such as Lowry to inspire landscapes.

104. Visits from a local artist enhance the curriculum, and junior-aged pupils benefit from the opportunity to participate in an 'Animation Art Workshop'. The local art gallery displayed pupils' art work recently. During a visit to Ironbridge pupils have the opportunity to work with clay and produce a decorated tile, providing them with an opportunity to work in three-dimensions. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and take pride in pointing out their completed pieces displayed in the school.
105. The co-ordinator manages the subject soundly. She has begun to collect a sample of pupils' assessed work so that teachers can analyse pupils' development and progress more effectively. She has attended in-service training courses run locally and is keen to spread her expertise through the school. Resource provision is just satisfactory to meet the needs of the curriculum. It does not enable pupils, particularly the higher attainers in Year 7, to extend their skills.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

106. Year 6 and Year 7 pupils' attainment was in line with national expectations in the lessons seen. Pupils' work in Year 2 indicates that the quality is in line with what is usually seen for pupils of this age. However, there is insufficient evidence for other year groups and, consequently, too little information to make a judgement about the pupils' attainment overall and over time. Pupils record their work in specific books for the subject, but the school had retained few from the previous year and evidence around the school related only to Years 2, 6 and 7. The limited evidence available indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with what is usually seen for pupils of this age. The previous Year 4 pupils' books show that previous work was set at too low a level for pupils of that age. Their low level of literacy and presentation skills limited pupils' written evaluations of what they had made.
107. In lessons, Year 6 pupils handled tools and equipment appropriately. They followed instructions to measure carefully and make a cube. They gave close attention to bracing and reinforcing the corners and sides to make it as strong as possible. They observed the test closely and successfully evaluated why one structure was stronger than another. Year 7 pupils paid close attention to safety procedures when using tools to cut and shape pieces of acrylic to form a key ring. Their limited subject-specific and general vocabulary restricted pupils' evaluation of what they made. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language learn satisfactorily alongside their peers with appropriate support from the teachers. Hearing-impaired pupils are well supported in developing their skills by the use of technology and communicators. These ensure pupils understand what is being taught, enabling them to make satisfactory progress.
108. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching across the school. Much of pupils' past work was marked with a tick or short comment, but this is inconsistent. There is very little marking that tells pupils what they have achieved or how they could improve further. There is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching as teachers' expectations vary, as does their subject knowledge. This means that, in the same year group, teachers use the same basic plan but pupils have different experiences. The quality of teaching across three lessons varied from very good to satisfactory. Where teaching was very good in Year 6, pupils were challenged to work quickly and learnt from making a structure and testing it. Good teaching put the focus on taking time and care and producing a good quality product. This meant they learnt about structures and refined their making skills but did not reach the stage where the finished product was ready to be tested. Teachers prepare well, plan their lessons carefully and ensure they have appropriate resources to hand. There is some inconsistency in teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in Year 7. In Year 7 pupils learnt basic skills soundly.

However, they learnt from experience the frailties of the material they were using, rather than from fully informed instruction and direction. In all lessons, clear teaching and demonstration captured and sustained pupils' interest, concentration and perseverance. This aided their learning. In Year 6 there were good opportunities for promoting discussion and clear expectations to achieve success collaboratively. Teachers successfully taught pupils the importance of handling tools carefully and using resources efficiently. Teachers give too little attention to extending pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in recording their work.

109. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has a clear vision for developing a subject that is at a very early stage of development. It has suffered from the significant change of teachers, little training and insufficient teacher knowledge and confidence. There has been a deliberate focus on developing skills in Years 2, 6 and 7, recognising that pupils have very little experience to build upon. Good links with the local secondary school result in support to teachers and an extension to the curriculum for Year 7 by the use of specialist resources. The leadership role of the co-ordinator is underdeveloped. There is insufficient focus on monitoring the quality of teaching and pupils' work. This does not ensure that the subject is taught appropriately in every class and that pupils' knowledge and skills are developed and assessed consistently.

GEOGRAPHY

110. Pupils attain average standards in Year 2, below average standards in Year 6 and well below average standards in Year 7. Evidence was based on classroom observations, a scrutiny of pupils' work from the previous academic year and on display and discussions with pupils in all year groups. The fall in standards as pupils progress through the school reflects the high level of staff change, the lack of detailed planning in previous years to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding and the 40 per cent of pupils with special educational needs in Year 7. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 1 to 6 and unsatisfactory in Year 7. Pupils with special education needs and those for whom English is an additional language receive good support with their learning. Overall, they make the same amount of progress as others in their year.
111. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 extract simple geographical information effectively from a variety of sources. For example, Year 1 pupils identify different forms of transport on an isolated island and Year 2 pupils categorise human and natural features accurately. By the age of seven, pupils use first hand experience to draw street, room and school plans soundly. Year 5 pupils use their research skills satisfactorily to find out about the aspects of geography of one of the Caribbean islands, but only the small percentage of higher attaining pupils have a confident knowledge of continents and oceans. Pupils in the previous Year 7 had not covered enough of the National Curriculum to attain the expected standard for their age. Their notebooks showed that pupils had some knowledge and understanding of features and processes but there was insufficient evidence of geographical enquiry. The presentation of the work of the small numbers of higher attaining pupils in all year groups is good, but many other pupils produce unfinished and untidy work.
112. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning observed in lessons was satisfactory overall, with very good teaching in Years 1/2 and 7. In these lessons teachers' planning was extensive and subject expertise high. They maintained a good pace to lessons and enabled pupils to focus on their learning throughout. Teachers ensure that pupils have the opportunity to develop the appropriate range of basic skills in their first two years. Year 5 pupils' worked on an environmental issue involving the local recycling centre. This improved pupils' knowledge and understanding of moral and social issues. It also extended their geographical enquiry skills even though they had not yet visited the site. More frequent and regularly planned outside visits are necessary to give a clearer base to

teaching and learning. Teachers manage the pupils well and use a variety of teaching strategies to interest and involve all pupils. This was particularly well handled in the Year 7 lesson observed when the teacher matched tasks accurately to pupils' ability. Pupils are mostly attentive in lessons and the younger ones are very enthusiastic. These positive attitudes help them to keep focused and complete the tasks set. Teachers do not use information and communication technology skills sufficiently. Marking is not informative, geographical spelling mistakes are often not corrected and teachers do not insist on high standards of presentation.

113. The role of the co-ordinator is not developed. Teachers are not supported by a subject policy. Planning is soundly based on national guidelines but is not monitored by the co-ordinator. There is no sampling of pupils' work to check the standards achieved. Teaching has not been monitored, but the co-ordinator does offer help and advice to colleagues as requested. There are no formal procedures for assessing pupils' attainment or the progress they have made. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social, cultural and moral development by raising their awareness of other societies, cultures and the moral issues involved in environmental geography. There are adequate resources to meet the requirements of the programme of work.

HISTORY

114. Pupils attain satisfactory standards in the infant and junior stages, and at the end of Year 7. Attainment is consistent with national expectations for pupils aged 7, 11 and 12 years. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make sound progress as they build on their understanding of time passing and the significance of a range of historical occurrences and events. However, progress is often limited by poor literacy skills, which restrict pupils' ability to engage in independent research and to organise their own historical recording.
115. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn about old toys and compare them soundly with the ones they play with today. They compare holidays in Victorian times with those they have experienced. They show an increasing awareness of change and progress, and offer straightforward explanations of how and why things are not the same as they used to be. Pupils record learning in a variety of ways after studying information from pictures, photographs and reference books. By the age of seven, pupils have a simple but sound factual knowledge about the lives of people in earlier times. They understand the concept of the passage of time and know that life in the past was different from life today.
116. Pupils in the juniors and in Year 7 build on their previous knowledge soundly as they study the past in a variety of contexts. They learn about the Greek, Roman and Egyptian civilisations. They develop an increased understanding of the reasons why these societies were different and why the people conducted their affairs in particular ways. They also study developments in Great Britain over time. For example, pupils in Year 5 learn about both Tudor and Victorian times. As part of their studies they visit Ironbridge, and have the opportunity to gain insights into the lives of Victorian children and discover facts about the industrial revolution. The subsequent follow-up work, which incorporates the use of word-processing skills, is a strong reinforcement to their historical knowledge and understanding.
117. Pupils in Year 6 show the extent of their satisfactory learning as they talk about life in the post World War Two years. They compare and contrast transport, fashion and sport with that today. They show a satisfactory understanding of the differences in the role and status of women in society and the significance of this. Year 7 pupils show their sound understanding of chronology as they construct a timeline as part of the topic on medieval realms, placing monarchs and events associated with them correctly in order over a period

of 150 years. History homework is regularly set for Year 7 pupils and they frequently use electronic sources such as CD ROMs or the Internet to research topics independently.

118. Pupils learn about the social and cultural issues pertinent to different times. Their awareness of issues such as slavery in Egypt extends their understanding and offers insight into some relevant issues today, such as the importance of equality of opportunity. All pupils show positive attitudes towards history. They enjoy their lessons and are confident to discuss their learning.
119. In the lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory overall and, on occasions, good. Other evidence is consistent with the teaching of history being satisfactory overall. Teachers in a year group plan work together so that pupils cover the same work. They plan lessons carefully so as to meet the objectives of the scheme of work. Assessment and recording of attainment and progress are not well developed or related to National Curriculum levels. As a result, in some lessons, teachers expect pupils to undertake the same activities and there is a lack of a range of learning tasks to match and challenge pupils of all abilities and different ages.
120. The subject co-ordinator is effective in her role. A policy for the teaching of history has been drawn up, and a scheme of work, based on national guidelines, is in place. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is aware of the potential further contribution of information and communication technology to the development of the subject. She plans to enhance provision of suitable reference material as funds become available.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121. Pupils attain standards that are in line with those expected nationally for pupils aged 7 and 11 years. Insufficient evidence was found to make judgements about the standards of 12-year-olds. There was no evidence to show how well control technology has been taught and learnt and little evidence was available to judge work from previous years. In the work seen during the inspection, progress through the school was satisfactory overall. Teachers are currently undertaking training in the subject and their knowledge and understanding of information and communication technology are quite varied. Some teachers are not as confident as others. The subject manager has very good subject knowledge. She provides a positive role model for other staff. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with impaired hearing, are well supported and make good progress. Those pupils for whom English is not their first language get good English language support. This enables them to be included fully in the different activities and to make good progress.
122. Year 2 pupils successfully start up the computers, log on and choose the program they need. They choose drawing and painting tools using the icons to create a picture of lights in the city, based on *Yellow islands* by Jackson Pollock. Pupils choose suitable colours from the palette, using the 'flood-fill' command to cover large areas of the picture. They have good control of the mouse and select quite small areas of their design to change the colour. Several pupils became too enthusiastic trying out the tools to create different effects and this limited their achievement. The majority completed the task and chose colours and effects that represented city lights. Pupils were somewhat disappointed when the teacher could only print out the pictures in black and white, thereby losing the effect of the colours.
123. Year 6 pupils are becoming confident users of information and communication technology. They show their concerns about the dangers of using the Internet irresponsibly, but recognise the benefits it can bring in speeding up communication and the gathering of knowledge. Using the Internet, pupils collect information about the Harry Potter books.

Pupils have good knowledge of how information and communication technology is used outside school. They use word processing well to produce attractive pieces of work by altering the style and size of the font and importing pictures and borders, for example when writing about a trip to France. In a very good lesson about constructing pages to use in a computer presentation, pupils enthusiastically picked up a hint from the teacher about how they might make their titles more interesting. To do this they confidently tried out different effects and taught themselves the technique. This encouraged pupils to investigate other features of the program for themselves and several found a variety of ways of making the text appear on the screen. Very good learning resulted from this lesson.

124. Although some teachers use information and communication technology with more confidence than others, teaching is good overall. In some lessons with junior pupils, teaching is very good. The very good lessons are characterised by very good planning and management of pupils in the computer suite. Clear explanations were given and teachers and support assistants made sure that all pupils were ready to move on before new ideas were introduced. Teachers maintained a good pace to these lessons and had high expectations of pupils so that they learnt new techniques and made very good progress. Hearing-impaired pupils and lower attaining pupils were also able to make very good progress because of the high quality support they received from the support assistants. Teaching is less successful, but nonetheless satisfactory, when teachers are not confident users of computers themselves. In one lesson, the teacher used the correct vocabulary, referring to icons and the menu, but did not make sure pupils understood what the terms meant. The instructions given were not always clear and this meant that pupils became restless. Consequently, the pace of these lessons was slow.
125. Although the computer suite is used well to teach pupils new skills, information and communication technology is not used enough to support other subjects. There is very little evidence to show how computers are used to research information, for example in history and geography. However, a digital camera was used in an art lesson to produce portraits and with Year 6 pupils with special educational needs in a science lesson when they took photographs of living and non-living things. The digital camera was used to good effect when a visiting artist worked with group of pupils to produce pictures combining images and text. In mathematics, pupils collect information and produce graphs and charts. Pupils use work in English to learn how to amend their writing and present it in interesting ways.
126. Resources in the school are good and the computer suite is a valuable asset. However, teachers have not yet decided on the best way to use the overhead projector so that all pupils can see the image in comfort. The subject is managed well. The subject manager has a clear idea of what needs to be done to raise standards. Planning is based on national guidelines. Time taken to set up the new computer suite during the last year meant that the subject manager was not able to check teaching and learning during lessons, but this is planned for the future. Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development and there is not yet a collection of pupils' work to which teachers can refer to judge standards. Training has been arranged for all teachers and this, combined with the expertise and enthusiasm of the subject manager, puts the school in a good position to raise standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES - FRENCH

127. During the inspection, the school's provision for French was inspected in Years 3, 6 and 7. It was not possible to inspect provision for Spanish and German in Year 7 because of the timetable. Learning a foreign language does not become a statutory requirement until Year 7. However, the school teaches French from the start of the juniors, so this report provides an overview of standards and teaching from Year 3 to the beginning of Year 7.

128. Pupils attain standards that are satisfactory overall, although Year 7 pupils, who have been studying French for one year, attain standards that are below expectations. The national expectation is that by the end of Year 7, after what is usually the first year of learning a foreign language, most pupils will have attained Level 3. Pupils currently in Year 6 and Year 7 have mostly attained Level 1 and are in line to attain Level 2 by the end of the year. For pupils in Year 6 this is on target, but for those in Year 7 attainment is a little low. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their first language are well integrated into lessons and make satisfactory progress.
129. Pupils in Year 3 are making a good start. In their second lesson pupils were already able to follow simple instructions spoken in French, to greet 'monsieur', 'madame' and 'mademoiselle' appropriately, to sing a song in French and adapt it so as to say goodbye, and say their own names. All pupils listened attentively and behaved well. They showed considerable enjoyment and enthusiasm in learning a new language.
130. In Year 6 pupils showed similar enthusiasm when 'buying' ice creams in French. They remembered well the work they had done in the previous year. They conducted a short conversation with a 'shopkeeper', asking for ice creams, specifying the flavours, asking the price, and paying for them in real euros – provided for them by their teacher. They spoke with increasing confidence and followed without difficulty the teacher's instructions in French.
131. In Year 7, pupils also showed good understanding of classroom language. They identified up to a dozen classroom objects and added adjectives of colour, sometimes with the correct masculine or feminine ending. Although they recognised the written forms of items of vocabulary, their ability to read these aloud was weak and their spelling, when unaided, was poor. Pupils showed confidence when speaking familiar words and phrases and their accents were often commendable.
132. The teaching of French is undertaken by a specialist teacher, who teaches all classes. Spanish and German are taught in Year 7 by specialist teachers from Lord Grey School, whose work was not inspected. The teaching of French is satisfactory with good features in every lesson seen. The teacher prepares lessons well. She makes very good use of visual aids such as toys or a 'shop' with very convincing ice creams made of cornets and coloured tissue paper. Pupils use authentic materials such as euro coins and a five-euro note. These authentic details make lessons exciting for pupils. They contribute well to their cultural development, as they become aware of differences and similarities in language and culture. Lessons are well paced with a good variety of lively activities that are well focused on key learning. In response, pupils are attentive and work well with the teacher and with each other. She uses French as the main medium of teaching, with suitable use of English to ensure understanding. As a result, pupils are developing good listening skills and she encourages them to be unselfconscious about speaking in a different language. The emphasis given to developing speaking skills and knowledge about language matches well the aims of the National Literacy Strategy and makes a valuable contribution.
133. In Year 6 and Year 7, pupils need to be encouraged to use French more independently. They are not given enough opportunities to develop dialogues and to put together several sentences, building new learning on to what they already know. By defining more clearly specific levels of speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, the assessment of the progress pupils are making will become easier, and so more useful to the teacher and pupils themselves. Pupils would also benefit from a wider range of reading materials, such as language magazines and other simple readers.

134. The inclusion of foreign languages in the curriculum of all pupils from Year 3 up makes a valuable contribution to the breadth of their learning. This is reinforced by the links with Lord Grey School and the opportunity to start a second language in Year 7, which can be followed through in the secondary school. The link with the College Andree Miclot in Normandy and the annual residential visit to Normandy for Year 7 enrich pupils' experience of language learning. The work on display by pupils who made the visit last term shows the deep impression made on many by that experience.

MUSIC

135. In the lessons seen, pupils attained standards in Year 2, Year 6 and Year 7 that were in line with national expectations. However, there is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the pupils' attainment in music overall and over time. The school does not have a policy of recording pupils' work in books or keeping individual folders and little work from the previous year had been retained. The limited evidence available indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with what is usually seen for pupils of this age. In lessons, Year 2 pupils used their voices in a variety of ways to suit different audiences and situations. They suggested instruments to accompany different kinds of sounds. By Year 6 pupils recognise the relationship between sounds, lyrics and rhythms, identifying what impact these have on creating mood and attitudes. For example, pupils changed the lyrics and the tempo of the song *Singing in the Rain*, turning it into a sad song. Year 7 pupils composed and recorded short pieces of music with sounds they could make with parts of their bodies, focusing on creating patterns and texture in the finished composition. In all three lessons, pupils practised their skills and their performance improved. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language learn satisfactorily alongside their peers with effective support from the teachers. Hearing-impaired pupils are fully included in lessons and well supported by the use of technology and communicators, enabling them to take a full part in the subject.
136. Across the school pupils attain standards in singing that are above what is normally seen for pupils of this age. Specific singing sessions provide some specialist teaching to large groups. In these sessions, the teachers' high expectations and effective instruction ensure pupils learn a variety of songs and learn to sing in unison. Older pupils sing songs with different parts. In the singing session with pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, there was a very strong sense of working together on a performance. This was because all staff present clearly enjoyed singing and taking part. Junior pupils learnt from the instruction and improved their performance, but the session lacked sufficient support from other staff.
137. There is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement about the quality of teaching across the school. The limited amount of pupils' work from the previous year gives little insight into the teachers' impact on pupils' learning. Work was largely unmarked, with teachers providing few comments to pupils on what they had achieved or how they could improve further. In two out of three lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers were well prepared, planned their lessons carefully and ensured they had appropriate resources to hand. However, they did not plan to make effective use of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology in recording their work. Teachers have secure knowledge of what they are teaching. They do not always use sufficient specific subject vocabulary. This limited pupils' ability to evaluate what they were learning in some lessons. Where the teaching was good, lessons had a clear structure and good pace. These features captured and sustained pupils' interest, concentration and perseverance and ensured effective learning. In these lessons, there were good opportunities for promoting discussion and clear expectations on working together. For example, Year 7 pupils demonstrated good negotiation skills, reaching a consensus view when recording their composition and performing well together.

138. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed to the subject. She provides several good extra-curricular activities that, together with visiting specialist musical tuition, enhance the curriculum and musical experience in the school. She manages the subject well. However, her leadership role is underdeveloped. She supports colleagues with advice, but does not take overall responsibility for standards or the implementation of the curriculum. She has limited time to monitor the quality of the provision. There is insufficient focus, within the music provision, on opportunities for pupils to listen to and appraise music. There are missed opportunities for this during assemblies. There is too little focus on a range of music from different cultures.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 attain average standards. Pupils in Year 7 attain below average standards because they do not have specialist physical education teachers or appropriate facilities to meet the demands of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and hearing impairment, is satisfactory overall. It is better in dance where pupils move expressively to capture a variety of moods. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls due to a good policy of equal access to all aspects of the physical education curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
140. The strengths of infant pupils' attainment are that most pupils are well co-ordinated and skip, hop, bounce, jump and run showing a good awareness of space, especially in the confined area of the hall. They have good ball skills and throw and catch over short distances successfully. The quality of junior pupils' movement lacks body tension and control. They have many creative ideas and work co-operatively and well in small groups and pairs. Boys and girls can mostly modify and refine their skills in order to improve their performances. In one lesson, Year 6 pupils developed an interesting dance sequence in pairs that imitated the movement of cats, using different levels and speeds. Year 7 pupils showed a low level of skills in a basketball lesson. They had little understanding of the game situation. However, the school does not have an indoor or outdoor court, there are basketball rings or posts and the outdoor playground is on slope. All pupils understand the importance of warming up and stretching their bodies before and after exercise. However, Year 7 pupils have not built on their previous knowledge and cannot name the main muscle groups or stretch independently or effectively.
141. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years with examples of good teaching in Year 6 and very good teaching in Year 2. All pupils are given the same opportunities to enjoy learning as they improve their skills. Teachers and assistants provide good individual support to extend more able pupils and to help those with special educational needs, including hearing impairment, and those who speak English as an additional language. Teachers share learning objectives with pupils at the start of each lesson and give good summaries at the end. This, together with most pupils' enthusiasm for the subject, ensures that learning is well focused. However, the disinterested attitude of a small number of Year 7 pupils hinders their learning. Although teachers try to address all required curriculum aspects in their planning, they do not identify sufficient opportunities for pupils to acquire new skills, especially in dance and gymnastics lessons. Teachers do not use demonstrations frequently enough for pupils to gain a clear idea of performance technique and to improve their quality of movement. Warm up and cool down sections are taught successfully in every lesson and teachers ensure pupils prepare for lessons with safety in mind. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and use consistent strategies to keep pupils on task.
142. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator, who has produced a comprehensive policy to help teachers in their planning. The required five activity areas are taught to junior pupils. Teachers are beginning to emphasise numeracy and literacy skills in their

teaching. They do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology. Assessment has not yet developed to meet the new National Curriculum requirements. The co-ordinator has not monitored teaching in the subject, although teachers' planning is regularly monitored. The subject is well resourced by a plentiful and wide range of equipment and apparatus. Opportunities are considerably enhanced by good extra-curricular activities. Qualified sports coaches from local clubs and teams ran many school clubs in the previous academic year. These coaches also contributed to an in-service training programme for the teachers. There is very good liaison with these outside clubs, local schools and development groups. The residential visits for Year 4 and Year 6 pupils include some outdoor and adventurous activities. The school participates in inter-school matches for boys and girls in football and cross-country running. This extends their skills development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. Pupils attain standards at the end of Year 6 and Year 7 that are well below the levels expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils attain standards at the end of Year 2 that are below expected levels. Evidence was gained from a scrutiny of pupils' work from the previous school year, lesson observations and talking to staff and pupils. Standards of attainment are restricted by weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills, some inconsistencies in teachers' expectations of the detail and accuracy in pupils' work and some uncertainties in teachers' subject knowledge. Pupils do not have sufficiently detailed knowledge and understanding, especially in Years 6 and 7, of different religious beliefs and practices. Many have a sound factual knowledge of some moral and social issues, for example the conflicts in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. However, few understand some of the religious influences on their or other people's lives.
144. Year 2 pupils know that Christians worship in a church. Many know and describe how a Christian is baptised and recall enthusiastically the main events of weddings and christenings that they have attended. Some know that the Bible is the holy book for Christians, although few know or understand the meaning of such symbols as the cross. Most infant pupils have a sound understanding of the events behind some of the main Christian festivals, such as Christmas and Easter. Few could recall details of other Bible stories they have read. Year 2 pupils know that other religions worship in different places, for example a temple and mosque. They are attentive and keen to find out about other people's lives, for example the main Jewish festivals.
145. Junior pupils and those in Year 7 build soundly on their knowledge of Christianity, although few understand or explain how Christian values and beliefs influence their lives. They recall the main events in the life of Jesus and retell accurately some of the Bible stories they have studied, for example that of Abraham. Some write about these as illustrating Christian values, such as caring and honesty, although too few explain how such personal values influence their lives at home and at school. A scrutiny of the work of Year 6 and Year 7 pupils shows that some of them know the different religious practices of some other religions, for example the Muslim prayer ritual and their pilgrimage to Mecca. They know that the Jews, Muslims and Sikhs have special holy books, sacred to their particular religions. Many know the names of the holy books, such as the Torah, although they are not always aware of which particular holy book is sacred to each religion. Some Year 7 pupils know some of the main symbols of Judaism and Buddhism, for example the Star of David and the path to enlightenment. They show some knowledge of how these symbols have been developed and established, although have little understanding of their symbolic importance. Discussions with groups of pupils showed that opportunities for pupils from religious groups other than Christianity to share and discuss their views are not promoted consistently. Year 7 pupils' written work shows that they know historical and geographical facts about the Arab-Israeli War but have not considered some of the key religious factors involved.

146. Teaching is sound overall, although it varies from good to unsatisfactory. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teachers' expectations were not consistently high enough. Pupils' work was presented poorly too often and did not include enough accurate, detailed information. Teachers used worksheets too frequently, which required drawings or the completion of short sentences. This did not enable pupils to develop their answers and extend their literacy skills. In the lessons observed, teachers managed their pupils well to enable them to sustain their interest and concentration. They used questions effectively to extend pupils' understanding of how people's religious views shape their lives. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Buddhism, the teacher questioned pupils well to improve their understanding about how Siddhartha's family might have felt about his change in lifestyle to help others.
147. Where teachers do not maintain a brisk enough pace to lessons, and do not match the learning activity closely to pupils' needs, teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning. For example, in a lesson aimed at improving pupils' understanding of such terms as 'sacred' and 'holy', the information sheet provided was too difficult for many pupils. They were not clear what they were expected to achieve. The teacher did not maintain a good pace and few pupils achieved as much as they should have done in the lesson. Some teachers have weaknesses in their subject knowledge, for example in identifying the correct religious artefacts and holy books. This caused some uncertainties in pupils' understanding of Judaism and Islam.
148. The subject co-ordinator has developed a draft subject policy, although this has yet to be discussed and implemented by staff. She is developing a sound curriculum programme and is making good use of national subject guidance to meet the needs of the Milton Keynes Agreed Syllabus. She has had no opportunities to monitor lessons and evaluate the impact of teaching and learning, as the school's focus has been on literacy and numeracy. The range of resources, particularly religious artefacts, is limited, although the school makes good use of visits to local churches and to the city's cathedral. Teachers use assemblies well, linked to a weekly theme, to promote pupils' religious knowledge and their understanding of values and beliefs.