

INSPECTION REPORT

SOMERHILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Hove

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114446

Headteacher: Mr B R Parkhurst

Reporting inspector: Mr M H Cole
3369

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th January 2003

Inspection number: 252910

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Barnard-Langston
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

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3369	M H Cole	Registered inspector	Science Geography Music	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9417	E Owen	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18498	D Morris	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Religious education	
28170	I Chearman	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
32336	A Meek	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology History Equality of inclusion, including race equality Special educational needs	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	9
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	14
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	21
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	23
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	27

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a large junior school which educates 380 boys and girls aged between seven and eleven. The school roll is now 60 higher than at the previous inspection. Pupils start at the school with broadly average attainment, though in writing attainment is a little below average. The social and economic circumstances of the area served by the school are very mixed but have declined in recent years. Incomes, for example, are now below average, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen since the previous inspection whilst nationally it has declined. At 23 per cent, the proportion is now above average. About one pupil in seven is from one of a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. One pupil in ten speaks English as an additional language but almost all have a basic competence in English. The proportion of pupils in the school with special educational needs (about one in six) is a little above average and in the last few years has come to include an unusually high proportion with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are statements of special educational needs for eight pupils, which, as a proportion, is a little above average. Unusually, the majority of these statements are in relation to emotional and behavioural needs. In September 2000 the school's strength in its curriculum provision led to the award of 'Beacon' status under a government scheme providing funds to schools with significant strengths.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school where teaching is good and a very rich curriculum leads most pupils to develop very positive attitudes to learning and to make very good progress in their personal development. Good leadership by the headteacher appointed four terms ago has resulted in some substantial improvement in recent months and pupils are now achieving well. Balancing pupils' achievement with the level of funds provided, the school is seen to provide good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching is helping pupils to achieve well in most subjects.
- Good standards are achieved in art and design, design and technology, history, music, physical education and speaking skills.
- Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development results in pupils having very good attitudes, making very harmonious relationships and developing some very constructive personal qualities, especially self-confidence.
- The quality and range of opportunities for learning are very good; these are lively and stimulating, and include excellent provision for activities outside the classroom.
- There is a good partnership with parents and parents have positive views about the school.
- The headteacher is leading the school well with good support from governors and staff.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing and science, though improving, are below national standards and geography attainment is unsatisfactory.
- Checks on teaching, learning and pupils' progress are not sufficiently thorough.
- The management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is not consistently effective.
- The level of provision for pupils with special educational needs is not now sufficient to meet the increased level of needs, although school staff work hard to help such pupils.
- The unsatisfactory layout of the school's accommodation hinders the teaching significantly.

All of these matters are referred to in the school's own planning for future improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in June 1998. Although scores in national tests of English, mathematics and science have declined recently, the broader range of evidence of pupils' attainment and of the changing profile of their abilities and needs shows that, overall, pupils continue to achieve well. Standards in history and in design and technology have improved. Previous school strengths such as its lively curriculum, good teaching and good promotion of pupils' personal

development continue. In the last year, under a new headteacher, the pace of improvement has quickened markedly. Previous weaknesses in provision for information and communication technology, in curriculum planning, in keeping parents informed and in providing collective worship have been resolved. Much has recently been done to raise less able pupils', and especially boys', standards in English, although this remains a challenge for the school as the number of boys with special educational needs has increased. The school's commitment to improvement is now strong and if greater stability in staffing can be achieved there is a good capacity for further improvement.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools ¹	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	D	C	E	E	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	D	D	E	E	
science	C	D	E	E	

¹ Similar schools are defined by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals; this measure has been found to be significantly related to the levels of attainment normally found in schools nationally.

The school's test results in 2002 compared unfavourably with both results for other schools and the school's own results in previous years. The majority of pupils reached the level of attainment expected at age eleven. However, overall results were well below average because the proportion reaching a higher level of attainment was smaller than in most schools and the proportion failing to reach the expected level was a little higher. Results fell well short of the school's official targets and of the attainment it expected for a good many individual pupils. These disappointing results reflect a combination of factors, some long term and others peculiar to the 2001-2002 school year. It has not been the school's practice to adapt its curriculum so as to provide substantial revision programmes or practice tests for Year 6. However, an additional factor in 2002 was that one in eight of the pupils had special needs in relation to learning difficulties, which in many cases were of a quite serious nature. Year 6 pupils' work was also distracted when they took part in a residential trip shortly before the tests. However, the school also acknowledges that some longer-standing weakness in the teaching, especially of mathematics, played a part in the low results. In English, a lack of opportunities to practise the kinds of writing tasks required in the tests has had an impact.

The work of the oldest pupils seen during the inspection paints a more favourable picture of standards in these subjects. In English, pupils' speaking skills, which are not subject to national tests, are above the level expected for their ages, while attainment in reading is average. Writing is of a better standard than test scores show but below the standard expected nationally. Work in mathematics seen during the inspection is in line with the standard expected nationally for pupils' ages. Science standards, too, are better than past test scores show, though not yet up to national standard. Following the disappointing test results the headteacher instituted a root and branch reappraisal of the teaching and curriculum in these three subjects. Much improvement has taken place in mathematics where standards have risen accordingly. Less progress has so far been made in implementing action plans for improvement in English and science but, here too, changes are beginning to raise standards. Lessons in these subjects, as in others, showed pupils achieving well as they responded with endeavour to the challenging tasks set for them. In other subjects, pupils' work exceeds the level expected for their ages in art and design, design and technology, history, music and physical education. In all of these subjects a lively curriculum and enthusiastic teaching inspire and challenge pupils. Pupils respond with high levels of interest and effort that promote good achievement. Standards in information and communication technology and religious education are satisfactory, but too little time is devoted to geography and standards here are unsatisfactory.

Overall, girls achieve better than boys, and to a greater extent than is the case nationally. However, this is largely a reflection of the fact that many more boys than girls have special educational needs.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show high levels of interest and enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils behave well almost all of the time. A minority show weak self-discipline and a small number behave poorly.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils become very self-confident, open and expressive. They make very good relationships.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The level is just below the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Following recent improvements, teaching is now good in both English and mathematics as well as across the curriculum generally. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are mostly well taught, with sound use of opportunities for practice in other subjects, but teaching of spelling is not sufficiently effective. Teachers know their subjects well and they often present work in exciting, imaginative and stimulating ways. They make good use of resources of books, equipment, practical experiences and visits or visitors to enliven the work. They work hard at encouraging pupils and promoting self-esteem. As a result pupils take a lively interest, show confidence and try hard to succeed. Teaching provides satisfactorily for the range of abilities and needs but there is room for improved provision for both the most and the least able. There is good collaboration with support staff and volunteers in making lessons effective. Good use is made of homework.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. An imaginatively planned curriculum provides rich and stimulating opportunities to learn which are much enhanced by an excellent quality and range of activities beyond the classroom. Very good community links add further breadth. Effective linking of subjects adds to pupils' enthusiastic involvement. There is a very good programme of personal, social and health education. The insufficient time given to geography is the only weakness.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The school works hard to meet pupils' needs but the resources devoted to this work need extending to meet the recent growth in the severity of the needs pupils now have.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are well supported by both the permanent staff and visiting specialists.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall and especially in moral, social and cultural aspects. The school takes these matters very seriously and plans a wide range of relevant activities. Provision for spiritual development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	All staff show caring attitudes and there are good procedures for pupils' welfare. Assessment of pupils' progress, though improving, is not rigorous enough. Good care is aided by the school's good partnership with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher shows good leadership. He has a clear vision for the school's future and a firm determination to maintain the school's strengths while improving it where possible. He is well supported by senior colleagues and leads a united and committed team of school staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors show a good and improving understanding of their role and are performing it in an increasingly conscientious and well-informed way.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory, following much recent improvement, but checks on the effectiveness of teaching and learning are not sufficiently thorough.
The strategic use of resources	There are satisfactory procedures for financial planning and control that strive to obtain best value from school funds and resources. The school is adequately staffed and resources for learning are good. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory; the design of the building hinders teaching significantly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>That their children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • like school • behave well at school • become more mature and responsible <p>That the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides good teaching • expects pupils to work hard • is approachable with questions or problems 	<p>A minority of parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would like to see an improvement in homework arrangements • would like more information about pupils' progress and to work more closely with the school

Inspectors' findings support parents' positive views about the school, although they judge behaviour to be satisfactory rather than good. Inspectors do not share some parents' concerns about homework or about communication and relations between school and parents. Parents nationally disagree about the amount of homework children should have and this is true for this school, too. Inspectors judge the school's homework arrangements to be good. They also judge that the school makes a good effort to work with parents and keep them informed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The 2002 National Curriculum test (SATs) scores in English, mathematics and science were a source of disappointment to the school and a cause of concern to some parents. Comparing pupils' test results at age eleven with those they had achieved at age seven before joining the school it appears that a significant minority of pupils did not make the progress to be expected during their time at the school. However, the test results understated to some degree the true attainment of the pupils and the progress they had made.
2. The work of the oldest pupils seen during the inspection paints a more favourable picture of standards than the test results. Further, work seen in other subjects provides a positive picture, with standards in five of the remaining eight subjects found to exceed the standard expected in relation to pupils' ages.
3. The school suggests a number of possible reasons for a decline in recent test results and the especially disappointing results in 2002. Some such reasons relate specifically to the 2001-2002 school year:
 - The Year 6 group taking the tests included a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties. The school decided to offer all of these pupils the opportunity to take the tests. This significantly affected the average point scores for the year group as a whole.
 - Year 6 pupils took part in a residential visit shortly before the tests at the very time many other schools would have been preparing pupils intensively for the tests.
 - The school reports that a small but significant number of last year's pupils in Year 6 were 'disaffected' and made little effort to do justice to their abilities in their test papers. The presence of some pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and the fact that very large classes (over 30) were being taught in inappropriately very small class bases is thought to have contributed to some pupils' poor attitudes.
4. Other reasons for the recent low test scores relate to longstanding features of the school:
 - As a point of principle the school chose not to depart from the broad and rich curriculum, for which it has been praised by inspectors previously, in order to prepare Year 6 pupils for the national tests with extensive revision programmes and practice testing. These strategies are employed in many other schools. Some parents applaud the school's stand on this while others express concern about test results.
 - The school's processes for assessing pupils' progress and for checking on the effectiveness of teaching and learning have not been sufficient to show clearly what weaknesses in pupils' attainment have needed to be put right. Specifically, the school has not until recently analysed pupils' test papers to identify where improvements could be made.
5. Since the publication of the 2002 tests the school has taken extensive action to review and improve its practices. The headteacher, appointed only four terms ago, is leading the school in a firm belief that it can both sustain its longstanding strengths in matters of curriculum while also improving standards and test results in English, mathematics and

science. Progress has been hindered by many staff changes over the last year but good progress has been achieved in mathematics and improvements have begun to take effect in English and science.

6. As a consequence of recent improvements, the standards of work in English, mathematics and science seen during the inspection were rather better than shown by the 2002 test results. In English, pupils' speaking skills, which are not subject to national tests, are above the level expected for their ages. Pupils speak confidently, clearly and at length. Attainment in reading is average. Writing is of better standard than test scores show but below the standard expected nationally. Although their writing has some good features, the pupils' spelling and their ability to write extensively on demand are weaknesses.
7. Much recent improvement in the teaching of mathematics has brought the oldest pupils' standards of work seen during the inspection to the level expected nationally for pupils' ages. They show a sound mathematical understanding, using appropriate strategies for mental calculation and solving problems, while they also show a sound understanding of shape.
8. In science, too, improved teaching means that standards are better than past test scores show, though not yet up to national standard, mainly because too few pupils show the higher levels of attainment some eleven-year-olds are expected to attain. The great majority of pupils, however, reach the expected level of knowledge, understanding and skills.
9. Pupils' work exceeds the level expected for their ages in art and design, design and technology, history, music and physical education. Pupils show a particularly high level of interest and endeavour in these subjects, a reflection of the impact of teachers who are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and confident in these subjects and able to inspire and challenge pupils.
10. In these subjects, as in most others, pupils are achieving well. They respond constructively to the high expectations teachers set and the well-planned work provided. Only in geography do pupils achieve unsatisfactorily. There is less enthusiasm amongst staff and pupils for this subject. Teachers devote too little time to geographical aspects of the cross-curricular topics pupils study and the result is pupils' patchy and sometimes superficial knowledge and understanding.
11. Overall, boys achieve less well than girls, especially in English. The gap in performance is wider than that found nationally. However, this is largely a reflection of the fact that many more boys than girls in the school have special educational needs.
12. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is mixed but satisfactory overall. Progress is good when supported by well-planned work linked to individual education plans and delivered by designated support staff. It is less good where pupils' targets remain in place for too long, or are not detailed enough, and work is not sufficiently adapted to their needs. Some pupils with acute behavioural difficulties make only satisfactory progress because the school has been unable to provide the resources or strategies to promote better progress.
13. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well in lessons. They make good progress towards the understanding of English, and in lessons they benefit from good support to help them understand vocabulary.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. Pupils' attitudes, personal development and relationships are very good, and they are as good as they were at the previous inspection. However, the standard of behaviour is not as good as reported then. This is consistent with evidence of a growing trend of admissions to the school of poorly behaved pupils.
15. Children enjoy coming to this school, and are interested and enthusiastic learners. They find the curriculum exciting and challenging and appreciate the way they are treated by the adults in school. Most pupils concentrate well on their work. They co-operate together extremely well, and discuss their work in a mature and sensible way. Pupils' attitudes to their work are generally very good.
16. The great majority of pupils behave well. They co-operate well with school rules and routines and they respond positively to teachers' wishes. There is, however, a small number of pupils in each class who have behaviour problems, and the strategies in place are not always effective in managing them. As a result their behaviour is, on occasion, a distraction for both teacher and other pupils.
17. As they move around school and at playtimes, some pupils can become noisy and over-excited. Behaviour improves when adult supervision is present and playtimes are noticeably calmer when playground activities are organised by lunchtime supervisors and pupil monitors.
18. There have been a number of exclusions during this school year and more than in most junior schools. However, the decision to exclude is only taken after much effort has been made to implement a range of strategies, involving parents, over a lengthy period of time. Correct procedures have been followed.
19. All the adults in school provide very good role models in the way that they treat pupils. This has a positive impact on all the relationships in school including the way pupils treat each other. Although inevitably there are disagreements, no bullying or other oppressive behaviour occurs. The school has been active in promoting anti-bullying strategies, and occasional instances of unkind behaviour are treated seriously. There is a high level of racial harmony across the school. Although, as yet, monitoring of the achievement of pupils with different ethnic backgrounds is not in place, the curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to discuss other cultures and beliefs, and there is a pervading ethos of inclusiveness and anti-racism amongst pupils and staff.
20. Pupils take on responsibility in school with enthusiasm, and there are many opportunities for them to do so. Nearly half of the Year 6 pupils have volunteered to be monitors and undertake a range of tasks including playground duties, helping the lunchtime supervisors and acting as a 'buddy' to pupils who are lacking friends.
21. Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils at this school become robustly self-confident, open and expressive individuals. Their development is much helped by the opportunities to take on responsibility, by the varied and exciting range of activities outside lessons and by the school ethos, which values all pupils.
22. Attendance is just below the national average and a significant number of pupils arrive after the register has been taken. Registers are taken promptly. The registers show that a significant number of pupils take holidays during term-time, which inevitably affects the attendance level.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. Teaching throughout the school is of good quality. This was also the judgement at the previous inspection. Over half of the lessons seen during the inspection were of good quality and a further one in five was very good. Virtually all others were of satisfactory quality.
24. The quality of teaching is consistent across the curriculum. Teachers know their subjects well. The school benefits from particular expertise and enthusiasm amongst the staff in the arts, including music. Following recent improvements, lessons in both English and mathematics are well taught. Basic skills of literacy and numeracy are mostly well taught, with sound use of opportunities for practice across the curriculum, but the teaching of spelling is not sufficiently successful.
25. The most distinctive strength of the teaching is the consistent and effective way in which the teachers implement the school's firmly and clearly held aims that underpin its published teaching and learning policy. The policy states: 'We believe that children learn best when they receive an education rich with direct experience which they find exciting, challenging and fulfilling'. It also stresses the intention that pupils be 'encouraged to be self-motivated learners and to develop their own creativity in thought and action'. All of the teaching seen during the inspection was true to these aims. Teachers strive constantly to encourage pupils and promote self-esteem. They undertake much hard work to excite and challenge pupils, using a wide range of resources and activities, including many visits and visitors. Teaching builds on the thorough and imaginative planning of curriculum topics to sustain pupils' interest and enthusiasm across the subjects of the curriculum. During the inspection, for example, Year 4 pupils' work across the curriculum was constantly linked to a 'Harry Potter' theme so that their enthusiasm, especially of boys, for these stories, inspired their work in a wide range of lessons.
26. The success of the school's policy in practice is clearly seen in the high level of interest and enthusiasm with which pupils respond to lessons. Many hands are raised in answer to teachers' questions and the answers are often thoughtful, extensive and confidently expressed. Pupils respond well to the teachers' challenging, open-ended questions and a measure of the pupils' self-motivation is the way they often volunteer their own ideas or questions about matters under discussion. Because they are self-motivated the great majority of pupils work at independent tasks with concentration, perseverance and care. The standard of presentation in the pupils' work is generally good.
27. Pupils' excited response and a lively pace is a feature of many lessons. Occasionally, though, these features hinder a few pupils' learning when the teacher moves discussion on too quickly, leaving puzzled looks on a few faces. In these situations, teachers make too few checks on how well all pupils are following the discussion and understanding the work. At these times there is also too little reinforcement and repetition of key knowledge or ideas of the sort necessary if all pupils are to understand or remember.
28. The level of teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve is generally good. The work presented to pupils is a suitable challenge to the great majority. This reflects teachers' assessment of pupils' day-to-day progress which is generally satisfactory but is also a key area for improvement if the school is to cater more successfully for the particularly wide range of abilities and needs in the school. The school recognises that the most and least able pupils are not always provided for sufficiently. This accounts for the pattern in the oldest pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science where too few pupils reach or exceed the level of attainment expected at their age. The school's recognition of this is reflected in its planning for future improvement and in some early steps recently taken to identify pupils who are gifted or talented and to plan special provision for them.

29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory with some good examples where programmes of work are varied and well matched to individual needs. Relationships between all support staff, teaching staff and the pupils are good as they seek to celebrate achievements. Teachers and support staff are very patient and thoughtful in their management of pupils with special educational needs, and are particularly supportive of those with behavioural difficulties. Teaching is less effective, though, when it does not sufficiently meet some pupils' individual needs or when pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties behave poorly, distracting themselves and, occasionally, the teacher and other pupils from teaching and learning at some points in the lesson. This happens when long introductions to lessons require a degree of concentration beyond some pupils. Despite the very best endeavours of teachers and support staff in lessons, present strategies and resources are insufficient to meet the challenge presented by a small number of pupils with acute emotional and behavioural difficulties, some of whom are quite new to the school.
30. The quality of teaching for pupils with English as an additional language is good. Teachers and support assistants offer good guidance in lessons and there is effective additional support for pupils individually or in small groups from visiting specialist staff.
31. There is inconsistency in an area of teachers' practices. Teachers differ in their use of the school's strategies for managing behaviour. The school has clear basic rules for behaviour and a detailed whole-school strategy for rewarding those who comply and for sanctions against those who offend. These are applied in all classes but some teachers use the school strategy more effectively than others and in matters of detail expectations are inconsistent. As a result, the quality of learning in a few lessons is occasionally not as good as it might be because the atmosphere is a little noisy and hectic. The open-plan design of the building with its cramped bays for lessons and large open areas greatly adds to the challenge to teachers to establish a calm learning environment.
32. A few teachers rely too much on rewards and sanctions external to the lesson and classroom when the real need is for clarity of expectation and consistency of implementation on the spot. A good example of this is seen in whole-class discussions where most teachers consistently expect pupils to raise hands and wait to be asked to speak while a few teachers tolerate pupils shouting out their answers and thoughts. Where the latter applies, the minority of pupils with poor self-discipline, and especially the few with behavioural difficulties, sometimes find it hard to behave well.
33. A good practice has begun of teachers setting personal targets for pupils at the beginning of each term which are shared with parents and pupils and reviewed with them at the end of each term. Parents and pupils appreciate this practice which adds to the promotion of the pupils' self-motivation. The marking of pupils' work also encourages them and offers occasional pointers to improvement. There is room for further development of these good practices by the addition of more precise, short-term targets for specific skills such as spelling.
34. The teaching makes good use of homework and pupils, too, generally feel positively about it. Homework is used both to support systematic learning of basic skills and knowledge and to further the school's aim to make pupils self-motivated and enquiring learners. This is well served by the provision of challenging and interesting long-term research tasks. Pupils say teachers follow up and reward well the fruits of their labours at home. Some parents would like to see more homework and others less. However, the level of parent satisfaction on this issue is higher than in many schools.

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

35. The school provides a very good, broadly based and balanced curriculum that includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It includes many richly stimulating opportunities for pupils' learning. The curriculum was also a school strength at the previous inspection and became the basis for the school's award of Beacon status which has led it to provide guidance to other schools on curriculum matters. In some respects the school's curriculum has improved since the previous inspection.
36. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for all subjects. Comprehensive schemes of work are in place to give clear guidance to teachers' planning. The school has given a high priority to literacy and numeracy to raise standards, and work seen during the inspection shows that this is beginning to take effect. Planning for religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The use of topic structures is well supported by effective cross-curricular planning. For example, the topic on the Ancient Greeks is supported by a planning folder that defines coverage in all subjects, and this is used in year group planning by teachers. Pupils experience a rich, creative curriculum, especially in the arts, including music, drama and dance. This is exemplified in the award to the school of the prestigious Gold Artsmark award.
37. A key issue at the last inspection was to ensure that sufficient time was allocated to information and communication technology. This has been tackled effectively and all pupils now have sound opportunities to learn in this subject. Further, the school has refined curricula in many subjects by taking note of national guidance on the work to be covered. However, too little time is devoted to geography for pupils to learn in sufficient breadth or depth. The design and technology curriculum was judged to be patchy at the last inspection but this has been improved and is now good. The provision for art and design, music and history is very good. Within the physical education curriculum there is very good provision for swimming instruction for all pupils, and this is entirely appropriate in this coastal location.
38. The teachers plan thoroughly for literacy and numeracy taking account of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Year groups usually collaborate in their weekly planning and often in their daily planning so that there is a consistency of approach between classes. In numeracy, literacy and science, subject co-ordinators collect samples of work and scrutinise books to check for the consistency of pupils' experience against curriculum requirements.
39. The school prides itself on its determination to include all pupils in all opportunities to learn. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from this. Appropriate levels of additional adult support are available to help pupils benefit wherever possible from the same learning experiences as other pupils. A number of low attaining pupils, who are not on the special needs register, would also benefit from receiving similar additional support. Programmes of work for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily defined in individual education plans written through collaboration between class teachers and the co-ordinator for special educational needs. In a few cases of acute needs, especially where they are behavioural in nature, plans are not detailed enough concerning strategies to be used or are not refined often enough in the light of pupils' performance against short-term targets.
40. Pupils for whom English is an additional language prosper in the caring and supportive climate of the school and through the good relationships that exist between pupils. Good activities are planned and additional staff provide support for these pupils to ensure that they understand their tasks and develop awareness of vocabulary.

41. The provision of activities outside lessons is simply excellent, both in quantity and quality. Many pupils take part, showing enthusiasm and endeavour. All pupils have access, although there is less available for the younger pupils. These activities greatly enrich the curriculum, particularly in physical education and the arts. They also contribute significantly to the high standards achieved by sporting and competitive teams such as those for football, netball, swimming, athletics and chess. Inspectors could only manage a draw against the school's chess supremo! The good standards in music are also strongly supported by the exceptionally high number of pupils who learn musical instruments in sessions staffed by visiting teachers paid for by parents.
42. A major strength of the school is its excellent co-operation with the local community to enhance its provision for the pupils. Participation in, for instance, the Brighton Festival, choir performances and the Christmas concert is a significant stimulus to pupils' learning and their self-confidence. An excellent range of visits to and from the school spans the whole curriculum. It includes residential visits for adventurous pursuits, outings to historical sites and field trips, visits to the school by the police and firemen, drama workshops and visits from religious leaders with complementary visits to church and mosque. The school has very good contacts with partner institutions and makes very good use of the opportunities these create for pupils' learning. The school has good links with the local specialist secondary schools and co-operates well with them in extending the curriculum for its pupils. There are also productive contacts with the neighbouring infant school.
43. The school's arrangements for personal and social education are very good, and supported by clear policies that are effectively implemented. The very good provision permeates the whole curriculum. Much of the sex education and drugs education is taught within cross-curricular topics or science. Contacts and activities in the local community promote well a sense of responsibility for, and care towards, the environment and the community. The school was recently very successful in an anti-racist poster competition. The school council is well established and this gives pupils good opportunities to take responsibility and be proud of their input into improving the school. Plans are well in hand to introduce a structured programme in education for citizenship.
44. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and is a major strength of the school, as it was at the previous inspection. It is a main expression of the school's fundamental aims to include all pupils in all the opportunities for personal development it can offer, to foster respect and sensitivity toward others and to value every individual. This aim is reflected in all policies and procedures. Every cross-curricular topic the school devises includes an element of personal, social or health education and the school successfully promotes its aims and ideals throughout all it does. Local education authority personnel have recently assisted with a whole-school audit to inform an action plan for further development, and all related policies are either in place or awaiting governor approval.
45. Provision for spiritual development is good, and acts of collective worship now meet statutory requirements, with opportunities given to pupils for reflection and prayer. Signs of pupils thinking or feeling deeply about fundamental personal or life issues were observed in some lessons. This also happens in the regular circle times, when pupils have the opportunity to discuss personal feelings and concerns. Staff make considerable efforts with all pupils to raise self-esteem. Their relationships with pupils constantly reinforce the idea behind a mirror which pupils regularly walk past and which bears the caption 'you are looking at someone important'.

46. Pupils' moral development is very good. The school council, which meets fortnightly to discuss matters of interest and concern to pupils, provides a forum for discussing rights and wrongs. The school works very hard to promote its clearly defined 'golden rules', which are displayed everywhere and are effectively reinforced through rewards. Rewards are celebrated in assemblies and classes have their own 'golden books' in which they record deeds of which they are proud. Pupils who behave well are entitled to 'golden playtime' whilst those who have broken the rules lose this privilege. Discussion with pupils revealed a mature attitude to morality, accepting that rules were necessary for harmonious existence. Thinking about right and wrong behaviour is effectively promoted in assemblies, religious education lessons and in lessons devoted to personal, social and health education. The school council has presented an assembly on bullying and a very effective display on bullying includes photographs of pupils with interactive labels and pupils' own comments.
47. Provision for social development is also very good. School staff set a very positive example in the consistently caring and understanding relationships they make with pupils. Pupils are encouraged to take social responsibility and are understanding and tolerant of those pupils who are disadvantaged. Particularly impressive is the 'buddy' system for certain pupils needing support, a responsibility taken very seriously. Pupils are encouraged to have opinions and express these articulately, being able to debate points of controversy, such as equal opportunities, and make reasoned arguments. They are regularly taken out of school on visits, both day and residential, and welcome many visitors to the school, broadening their outlook on the wider community. They are linked by e-mail to a teacher currently seconded to work in Peru, and the school council has been active in organising fundraising for her as well as for other charities.
48. The school's strengths in art and design, in music and in history all lend strong support to pupils' very good development of an appreciation of the achievements of their own and other cultures. An improvement to the already positive picture painted at the previous inspection is the establishment of a two-year programme of multi-faith assemblies. This is supported by the strength in religious education in promoting understanding and respect towards a variety of faiths. The school has also recently been involved in an anti-racism training day. Several examples of cross-curricular themes embracing other cultures and faiths were seen, such as when art work involved Rangoli patterns and tie-dyeing, when history referred to the work of Charles Drew or when global citizenship was discussed in religious education. The school also won all the prizes in a local poster competition advertising racial awareness, and extra-curricular activities such as the salsa club encourage an awareness of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. In most respects, care for pupils is as good as it was at the previous inspection. The school has good procedures to safeguard pupils' welfare. Proper regard is paid to health and safety issues and risk assessment, involving school governors, is now carried out. Regular fire checks and drills take place, and there are good arrangements for first aid with a number of trained staff and efficient procedures. There are clear guidelines in place for child protection in line with local agreements. The headteacher has carried out some recent training with staff so all have a good awareness.
50. Pupils' personal development and behaviour is monitored very effectively by class teachers, who know their pupils well, and offer support and guidance to raise their achievements. A good feature is the way each term, personal, social and academic targets are set for pupils and shared with them and their parents.

51. Use of the behaviour strategy is regularly in evidence but is not always effective with a minority of pupils who repeatedly lose 'golden time'. Most pupils are highly motivated by the merit system but some feel that there is a tendency to give merits too freely in Years 3 and 4 and not enough in Years 5 and 6. Pupils with behaviour problems are supported in a number of ways and are closely monitored by the acting deputy headteacher and special educational needs co-ordinator, who work with support staff to ensure that everyone is aware of any agreed strategies. A welcome recent development is the 'chill out' club at lunchtimes which provides a quiet haven for those who find outside play too challenging.
52. There are good procedures in place to monitor individual pupils' absence, to record lateness, and to follow up those with attendance problems. However, with one exception, teachers do not keep a running record of attendance percentages and therefore no one has an oversight of overall patterns and trends. This should improve with computerisation of attendance records as planned to begin shortly after the inspection. The school lacks a strategy to actively encourage better attendance throughout the year.
53. Procedures for assessment are unsatisfactory overall. Opportunities to track pupils' individual progress as they move through the school are missed, so that the school is not clear enough about how well pupils are progressing and what next steps in teaching and learning need to be taken to maximise each pupil's progress. There is a good model of assessment within the provision for mathematics. In this subject, good procedures have now been established that identify each aspect of mathematics to be assessed and enable teachers to change future planning according to what pupils know, understand and can do. End-of-year test results have been analysed well so that individual progress is evident. This is helping to raise standards in mathematics. Procedures have been established to undertake similar assessments in English, but these are not yet fully effective.
54. In other subjects, assessment is weak, except in history, where some good samples of pupils' work have been assessed against the national levels so that teachers know what they want their pupils to achieve. In swimming, assessment features as a positive indicator of individual successes and helps to improve standards.
55. The use of the assessment information that is available in the school is unsatisfactory. Teachers know their pupils well and ongoing assessment in lessons against the learning objectives set is usually a sound feature of teaching. Pupils are aware of these objectives and they often assess them with the teachers at the end of lessons. There is no systematic collation of such information, however, or of occasional end-of-topic tests set in science, to record how well pupils have achieved and to set targets for future progress. Such procedures are just beginning in English and mathematics and are helping teachers to group pupils, identify those who require additional help and set more specific targets. Plans are rightly in place to take this forward and extend it to other subjects in the near future.
56. The school makes good use of outside agencies to support and advise on pupils with special educational needs, and the co-ordinator is extremely knowledgeable about where to obtain assistance. All staff share in the reviews of targets and individual education plans, feeding back information on progress to the class teachers and co-ordinator. The progress of some pupils with more acute needs, especially behavioural ones, is not assessed often enough to ensure the strategies being employed are effective.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

57. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and its ethos, are happy with their children's progress, and believe the teaching is good. Their regard for the school is generally the same as at the previous inspection.
58. Parents receive good quality information, including a weekly newsletter, which covers a wide range of whole-school issues. In response to some past concern from parents, that they have insufficient information about their children's work and progress, a number of measures have been introduced. These include an open afternoon for each class every term, half-termly information sessions on different areas of the curriculum, termly information on curriculum content and targets, as well as two more formal open evenings. At the end of each term, pupils' topic books go home for parents to see and add their comments to the end-of-topic review. This is highly valued by parents and pupils. Reading diaries are used for younger pupils, which again allow for parental comments and input.
59. In the questionnaire, a small number of parents felt that the school does not work closely with parents, but inspectors' findings do not support this view. All staff observed were approachable and open to discussions with parents, and the administrative staff are particularly welcoming. Many parents come into school to talk to teachers before and after the school day and at the Friday assembly, when their children play a leading role. There are good links with parents of pupils with English as an additional language.
60. Parents give strong support to school activities and are involved in visits and sporting activities. A number of them help on a regular basis in school, and even some grandparents are involved. Overall, parents' input has a positive impact on the work of the school.
61. The governors' report to parents and the school prospectus are informative and meet requirements. Pupils' annual reports give good information on English, mathematics and science, and provide very thoughtful comments on pupils' personal development, but they have insufficient information on foundation subjects. There is a section for pupil evaluation and parental feedback is welcome.
62. The parent governors act as an effective link between parents and school, and much effort is put into getting a good attendance at the governors' annual meeting for parents.
63. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in the reviews of individual education plans, and in addition are often kept aware of their children's progress informally as they collect their children at the end of the day or by regular meetings with class teachers. A small number of parents expressed concern to inspectors about delays in identification of their children's special needs. This is consistent with inspectors' finding that there are insufficient resources allocated to provision for special educational needs.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

64. Since his appointment four terms ago the headteacher has worked very hard to improve the school. He has striven successfully to maintain the school's longstanding strengths that were recognised at the previous inspection. However, he has also made necessary organisational changes to smooth the running of the school and to tackle weaknesses noted at the previous inspection but which had not been resolved before his appointment. A good deal of improvement has been achieved recently and this has begun to raise standards, the clearest impact so far being in mathematics where the greatest priority existed and the most extensive activity has been directed. Improvement has been achieved against a very difficult backdrop of many staff changes and a newly appointed deputy headteacher's maternity leave.

65. Good leadership is seen in the headteacher's clear vision for the school and a clear understanding of what needs to be done to realise the vision fully and improve the school. The leadership and management of the school are now based on a more sharply focused and systematic evaluation of the school than was reported at the previous inspection. Convincing plans have been made that reflect a conviction that the school can both maintain its lively, wide-ranging curriculum which many parents admire, while also ensuring that pupils' national test results do justice to their attainments.
66. Effective leadership is also apparent in the very consistent way school staff work together in pursuit of shared aims and values which are strongly held and adhered to. This is a school with a very strong and confident sense of its own distinctive identity which is unerringly translated into daily reality. There are clear policies to guide staff in a consistent implementation of the school's aims. There is also a strong shared commitment to improve the school.
67. Amongst recent improvements promoted by the headteacher are the school's means for evaluating itself. These were relatively weak at the previous inspection and remained so for some time, the school being slow, for example, to implement fully national procedures for managing and rewarding teachers' performance. Processes for checking teaching and learning, and for assessing pupils' progress, have improved and have helped senior management make good plans with appropriate priorities for school improvement. However, still more extensive and rigorous checks on teaching and learning are needed for the school to have a precise and thorough picture of how it can further improve. They are also necessary to iron out some inconsistencies in lessons, particularly in the management of behaviour. Subject co-ordinators play too small a part in making checks on teaching and learning. The headteacher recognises this and such developments are a priority in planning for the future. He understands that the school's past strength has been in the energy devoted to planning what teachers should put into lessons and that this now needs to be matched by an equally energetic and careful evaluation of what pupils get out of them.
68. The school has received a good deal of support from its local education authority over the last year for its attempts to raise standards. Support for development in mathematics has been highly valued by school staff and has proved very effective.
69. Provision for special educational needs is soundly managed within the constraints provided by the level of resources available and the growing demands pupils represent. Teachers and parents alike value the support provided by the co-ordinator for special educational needs who is assisted by another senior member of staff, and an additional teacher who is responsible for gifted and talented pupils. They have regular meetings with the support staff and have carried out their own research, for example into boys' underachievement, as well as some training for governors. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs is extremely supportive of the school and the pupils, understands the needs of pupils and is aware of the work done. After concerns were expressed about falling national test scores, the local education authority has assisted with analysis and an action plan, although this is not fully monitored.
70. School governors share with senior management a strong appreciation of the school's distinctive qualities and are now working closely and energetically with them to promote school improvement. This follows a period after the previous inspection when governors played too little part in checking progress on the areas for improvement defined at that time and failed to meet the statutory requirement to report such progress to parents in their annual report.

71. Governors appraise the work of the headteacher and have set targets for school improvement. They review the effectiveness of school policies, check progress towards targets for improvement and evaluate the outcomes of initiatives taken. They offer good strategic support to the school and have a very good awareness of what needs to be done to improve standards. The finance committee translates this expertise into sound financial planning to maintain strengths in the school's provision for pupils, and to address areas for improvement. Good and systematic budgeting against current financial priorities is in place. There is effective control of earmarked funds for raising standards or particular purposes. An appropriate financial reserve is held to respond to unforeseen events or opportunities.
72. The headteacher, the bursar and the school administrator work well together to provide good day-to-day management of finances and administration of the school. Purchasing procedures are efficient in ensuring best value decisions. The minor recommendations in the last audit report have been adopted. The staff and governors use new technology effectively, for instance in assessment, record-keeping, in planning and financial forecasting, and in communications with governors. The school office staff give good support to the teachers, the pupils and the parents.
73. There are sufficient staff in the school to meet the demands of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. Senior staff are very experienced and highly qualified, and they provide very good role models for newer staff members. They are also very supportive, helping and guiding new staff in many different ways. A very good range of courses for staff helps to develop subject expertise, and past weaknesses in design and technology and information and communication technology have been addressed. Subject expertise in mathematics has also improved markedly with training. Four members of staff have attended a five-day mathematics training course for the numeracy strategy, and this is having a very positive impact on standards in mathematics across the school.
74. There have been challenging difficulties in staffing at the school since the time of the last inspection. A big turnover of staff has included six new class teachers in the last two years, and this has led to major training and support needs for the school. Staffing is not yet settled, due to some temporary absences and appointments. This has an impact on the pupils' education, particularly on the consistency of managing their behaviour. Induction procedures for the new staff are very good, however, and they value the high quality monitoring of their work and the support that they receive. This has helped them to quickly understand the special ethos within the school and to contribute to the consistent implementation of it across the classes.
75. National arrangements for performance management have now been implemented and training needs highlighted. Support staff feel valued and contribute very effectively to the pupils' education. Many work very closely with pupils who have special educational needs or behavioural difficulties, and have received appropriate training in these areas. The entire staff team works well together and is committed to providing an exciting range of opportunities for the pupils.
76. The school's accommodation is unsatisfactory. The compact, open-plan building is ill-suited to the teaching methods, the school timetable and the curriculum schools are encouraged to employ today. Although the total amount of space provided is satisfactory, the layout of the building presents many significant hindrances to teaching and learning, and to the provision of the curriculum. Despite work carried out recently to improve three of the open-plan class bases, the majority of them are too small and have a negative impact on pupils' learning. Pupils are crammed together and movement about rooms is difficult. It is not possible to gather pupils together in a suitable manner for class discussions, stories or demonstrations which are an essential element in the National

Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In some cases there is insufficient room for a classroom computer. The size of class bases also makes the management of pupils with difficult behaviour more problematic and disruptive and there are not enough quiet, private places to which such pupils may be withdrawn when desirable. The information and communication technology suite is too small to allow its effective use in whole-class teaching and cannot accommodate all the equipment efficiently. Although staff use the large areas of open space for teaching groups, it is unsatisfactory as there are too many distractions and too much noise. However, the school has two halls which are good facilities that are well used. The outdoor space is also a good asset for the school.

77. Resources of books, equipment and materials to support the teaching of the curriculum are good for many areas of the curriculum and at least satisfactory in others. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when resources were inconsistent. Satisfactory steps have been taken by subject co-ordinators to audit their resources and address any shortfalls. All co-ordinators have a budget which they take care to spend wisely and they are able to approach the governors to bid for more if they have a priority which supports the school improvement plan.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. To raise standards and improve the quality of education further, the school should press ahead with its published school improvement plan in order to:

- (1) Raise standards in writing, science and geography, by:

- providing more systematic daily opportunities for pupils to practise their skills of spelling and of writing at length;
- ensuring expectations of writing and spelling are consistently high;
- pressing ahead with implementation of the published science action plan, paying particular attention to the use of assessment information and checks on teaching and learning to show where improvement should be sought; and
- giving more time to geography so that sufficient breadth and depth is achieved in the curriculum for the subject.

(paragraph nos. 89-90, 104-105, 117-120)

- (2) Introduce more thorough checks by senior staff on teaching, learning and pupils' progress, by:

- evaluating the ability of teachers' planning to meet the full range of pupils' abilities and needs;
- evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning by direct observation of lessons;
- tracking each pupil's progress in each subject and using the information derived fully to:
 - plan the next steps in pupils' learning, and set targets,
 - identify aspects of teaching and learning that can be improved; and
- involving all subject co-ordinators fully in these processes, having provided the guidance and training necessary for them to be effective.

(paragraph nos. 28-29, 33, 53-55, 67)

- (3) Ensure that the management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is more consistently effective, by:

- evaluating the effectiveness of the management of behaviour in each class;
- extending effective practice to all classes; and
- giving training, guidance and support to help staff develop skills of managing pupils.

(paragraph nos. 16, 31-32)

- (4) Extend the level of provision for pupils with special educational needs to meet the increased level of needs, by:
- making earlier identification of pupils' special needs;
 - defining more precisely the strategies teachers and support staff should employ; and
 - carrying out more frequent monitoring and evaluation of these pupils' progress, geared to the nature and severity of their needs.
(paragraph nos. 12, 29, 39, 56, 63, 76)
- (5) Take all reasonable steps to make the accommodation more suitable for the teaching and learning the school aims to promote.
(paragraph no. 76)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

- Improving attendance with better strategies for monitoring and encouraging attendance.
(paragraph nos. 22, 52)
- Striving to achieve greater stability in staffing. (paragraph no. 74)
- Raising the profile of mathematics as an important subject which is valued and enjoyed by teachers and pupils. (paragraph nos. 99, 100)
- Extending the good quality of annual reporting to parents on English, mathematics and science to other subjects. (paragraph no. 61)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

58

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	8	34	15	1	0	0
Percentage	0	14	58	26	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y3 – Y6

Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	380
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	86

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	62

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	36

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	55	41	96

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	34	31	39
	Girls	32	24	31
	Total	66	55	70
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (75)	57 (64)	73 (84)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	36	35
	Girls	32	28	31
	Total	68	64	66

Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (68)	69 (64)	69 (66)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	325	10	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	14	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	19	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	31.2

Education support staff: Y3 – Y6

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	274

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	738,746
Total expenditure	741,447
Expenditure per pupil	1,951
Balance brought forward from previous year	39,089
Balance carried forward to next year	36,388

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	8
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	374
Number of questionnaires returned	149

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	40	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	42	11	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	53	7	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	51	19	2	1
The teaching is good.	44	48	3	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	48	25	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	40	9	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	50	8	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	23	46	27	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	32	47	7	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	52	6	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	43	9	3	3

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

ENGLISH

79. Standards in English are below average for eleven-year-olds in writing and spelling, but are broadly average in reading. Standards in speaking are good and are above those expected. Pupils are confident communicators. Listening skills are less well developed, and some pupils do not listen well.
80. Results in the 2002 national tests were well below those in similar schools, particularly in writing and spelling, although the significant number of pupils with learning difficulties partly explains these results. The writing of the present oldest pupils seen during the inspection was better than these test results would suggest but still below the national standard. Too few of the present Year 6 pupils attain the higher National Curriculum Level 5 compared with the national picture. However, in lessons, most pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Those with English as an additional language make good progress in their acquisition of skills and knowledge, and those pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards meeting their literacy targets. Because pupils are achieving well in lessons, standards are beginning to rise. New procedures are being put in place to improve provision and these are helping pupils to make good progress. Joint planning across year groups, training for the National Literacy Strategy, a range of texts to motivate boys in particular, and more settled staffing are all beginning to have an impact. The impact of these factors on the present Year 6 is likely to be limited and the school's own predictions are for below average results in this year's national tests. However, as new procedures begin to take effect there is a good prospect of better results in future. Signs of this are already apparent in the work of younger pupils.
81. Pupils in Year 3 have regular opportunities to read to adults and to themselves. They are beginning to show awareness of different settings and use different voices to dramatise their reading. They predict story endings while reading with the teacher, and describe characters and events in their own words. As they move into Year 4, pupils read more complex texts. When following a project on 'Harry Potter' they were very keen to read as much and as often as possible. Because this is a very popular class reading text, the pupils' enthusiasm for reading was very good. They were highly motivated by the story and boys, in particular, showed good improvement in their reading behaviour during the project. They are able to read parts of the text fluently, extending their skills and, in particular, their vocabulary and grammatical understanding. They are able to find a good range of adjectives within a piece of text, contributing ideas of their own to describe some of the events in the story.
82. By Year 5, pupils of higher ability are able to evaluate a story critically, using a range of vocabulary to explain themselves as they study a story by a local author. Some other pupils have limited reading skills and are hesitant and unsure of some aspects of their reading. A few lack the confidence to be independent readers.
83. In Year 6, pupils show that they are beginning to develop more advanced reading skills as they skim a piece of text, looking for evidence. They identify persuasive aspects of a text about the explorer Hernán Cortés, and construct their own arguments for and against one of his expeditions. Higher attaining pupils present their arguments to the rest of the class in a clear, expressive and logical way, showing that they have understood the text well. Other pupils identify specific argumentative words within the text and highlight them to share with others, but some do not read or complete enough tasks to improve their standards in reading further.

84. Some pupils' writing and spelling skills are weak across the school. There are times when pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to write or spell on a daily basis. Consistent practice to improve standards is not always evident, and expectations are sometimes not high enough.
85. In Year 3, pupils benefit from good demonstrations by teachers to promote appropriate writing skills. In one class, pupils were engaged in writing instructions for a simple recipe. Because of good modelling, they quickly understood what was expected of them, enjoying the practical nature of the example given, a banana meringue! Using writing frames to guide them, pupils showed good awareness of the purpose of instructional text, but their writing and spelling skills were limited because of prior attainment and the standards they achieved were low, despite the good teaching that they received.
86. In Year 4, pupils benefit from some very good stimuli to promote interest in writing. In one lesson, pupils were amazed by some stuffed owls that were used to create a scene from the 'Harry Potter' story. The use of these resources promoted good learning and creative thinking as pupils conjured up words such as 'silky', 'smooth' and 'soft', to describe the owls. However, insufficient opportunities were created for pupils to write these words for themselves, and their lack of independence in putting their thoughts on paper had an impact on their writing skills.
87. By Year 6, the vast majority of pupils have developed a clear, fluent writing style. Work is neatly presented and they write for a good range of purposes. Writing is used to support many other subjects. In particular, pupils use writing well within their topic work. Some good, well-presented writing as part of their 'Tudor' topic showed a significant range of genres, including commentaries, summaries and in-depth accounts. The final draft of their work is good. However, not enough evidence of pupils writing immediate, extended stories and accounts was seen. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise writing to a time frame, thinking carefully about the content, spelling and handwriting. Because of this, they do not do well in tests. Occasionally, lessons lack pace and not enough writing is completed, limiting progress.
88. Pupils' speaking skills are developing well. The ethos in the school encourages pupils to be confident speakers and offer their own opinions freely. Good provision is made to promote communication skills as pupils move through the school. A particularly good example was seen in Year 5, where pupils were observed talking to 'characters' from the poem 'The Highwayman'. They had prepared questions well and they showed maturity as they took turns, waited for answers and developed the themes of love, hate and jealousy through their enquiries. In the main, speaking skills are better than listening skills. A significant number of pupils across the school find it difficult to listen to others, and the often noisy class bases are not conducive to quiet listening and careful thought.
89. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the vast majority of lessons, particularly those focused on reading. Teachers have good knowledge of how to develop reading skills. Recent new book resources are having a positive impact on standards and on pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Teaching and learning in writing and spelling lessons are generally satisfactory, with a few unsatisfactory features. The time allocated to writing during English lessons is often too little to improve standards. Occasionally, 'teacher talk' at the beginning of lessons is too long. Explanations of tasks sometimes takes almost half of the lesson. This reduces the amount of time for pupils to become independent learners, read their own tasks and complete their writing. Hence, there are times when work remains unfinished.
90. Not enough examples of pupils consistently and regularly practising their spellings are seen, and there was too little rigour in the spelling lesson seen. However, the stimuli and

resources used to encourage creative thinking are very good. Real resources, exciting interviews and careful demonstrations, promote good understanding of what is expected. Although not all pupils yet have the skills to achieve good enough standards in writing and spelling, they can often communicate their thoughts well, showing that they are beginning to improve their creative thinking skills. Teachers use rich and varied vocabulary to promote interest in words and scenarios. Drama is well used to foster understanding and confidence. Satisfactory use is made of information and communication technology to support English. Some good examples of wordprocessing as part of topics take place. The management of behaviour is usually good, but there are a few very challenging pupils, whose behaviour sometimes causes distraction from teaching and learning.

91. Leadership and management in English are good. The co-ordinator has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses within the subject. Effective monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance has led to the development of appropriate procedures to assess pupils' achievements. These are not yet used effectively, neither are there sufficient procedures to track progress as pupils move through the school, but these are developing well and plans are rightly in place to undertake more in-depth analysis of test results, so that weak areas can be targeted to ensure improvement. Recent audits and improvements in resources are helping to promote pupils' interest in books and, in particular, this is helping to keep boys interested in reading. The English curriculum is very individual to the school. Some very exciting activities are planned that contribute very effectively to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The ethos in which the subject is taught, is fully inclusive. It promotes pupils' creative thinking well, and is a strength of the provision.
92. Accommodation for English remains an issue, and has a significant and negative impact on the drive to raise standards. The noisy atmosphere created by the open-plan, small, class bases is a real weakness that creates opportunities for those pupils with behaviour difficulties to lose concentration and disrupt others. The use of the open space outside Year 6 for booster classes is unsatisfactory, due to constant movement in and around the area. The library was rarely used during the inspection week and pupils confirmed that they did not regularly use the library for research or reading. This inhibits pupils' ability to be independent in finding things out for themselves.

MATHEMATICS

93. The work of the oldest pupils is far better than last year's below-average test results would suggest. The present Year 6 pupils' work seen in lessons, in exercise books, and in discussions with inspectors is in line with national expectations for this age group. After much improvement, the hard work of the subject co-ordinator and much valued guidance by a local education authority specialist mathematics teacher, the school now makes good provision for its pupils and they are now achieving well in their lessons.
94. By the time they are aged eleven, pupils have had a good balance in their mathematical experience. Year 6 pupils are developing sound strategies for mental calculation because teachers give them opportunities to compare their thinking with others and so refine for the best methods. Interactive whiteboards¹ are used well to aid mental calculation. Pupils solve money or measure problems with sound thinking strategies. Polygons are classified for common properties with good understanding. Fractions and decimals are studied, leading to a sound grasp of equivalent fractions and percentages. Most remember the Year 5 work they are extending at this level, for example in perimeters and areas.

¹A large touch-sensitive screen on which images are displayed by a projector linked to a computer, as an alternative to a conventional monitor. By touching the screen, teacher or pupils can control events instead of using a keyboard or mouse.

95. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is sound. The school has adopted and is making sound use of the National Numeracy Strategy to ensure that teaching is largely consistent and effective. Staff provide a well-structured programme of work which is firmly based on the strategy's key objectives for learning and ensures that pupils' learning builds on previous knowledge in a proper sequence. There is a shared resolve to improve pupils' mathematical vocabulary. Most teachers employ a good variety of teaching techniques. Lessons have a mental mathematics warm-up session, and most have an appropriate session at the end of each lesson when the pupils' learning is reviewed and consolidated. Sometimes though, the behaviour of a minority of pupils is a distraction from teaching and learning so the pace is slowed and no time is left for this important element. Usually, however, teachers maintain pupils' interest and most are well-behaved and keen to learn. They work well in groups and show respect for each other and the teacher. Resourceful teaching assistants plan well with teachers to support pupils' learning. This helps pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory progress.
96. At the last inspection the arrangements for assessment needed improvement to ensure the correct level of challenge for the highest and lowest attaining pupils. This is now good in planning for independent work in lessons, and most pupils are set an appropriate level of challenge. The work is very well matched to the needs of those with English as an additional language who make good progress. The level of challenge for the most able pupils at the last inspection was in need of improvement. This is better now, in the quality of pupils' tasks, but still not good enough in the whole-class discussion that is an essential element of the numeracy strategy. This was evident in discussions with older, more able pupils and in examination of their work. There is not enough opportunity for pupils to work collaboratively at solving mathematical problems by themselves.
97. Where teaching is very good the mental sessions are lively and exciting, and have a sense of urgency that encourages rapid thinking so that all participate fully. In the less successful lessons the questioning does not challenge all abilities, and does not allow pupils to make extended statements outlining their discoveries and achievements, so that others learn with them. In implementing the numeracy strategy, lessons usually make good use of time for an appropriate range of teaching methods. However, those parts of the lesson given over to whole-class teaching and questioning are taught with varying success. In a few of the lessons seen this part of the lessons did not challenge the full range of abilities. In one less effective lesson the more able were marking time in a discussion on fractions and the questioning was solely aimed at the middle group. They stopped learning because the teacher talked for too long when their interest had gone. The leading of discussion is an area where some teachers can improve their skills for more effective learning, particularly in their questioning skills, and in pace.
98. By contrast, a very good lesson on reflective symmetry did challenge all pupils. Targets for learning were expertly shared with pupils. They drew on their previous learning, giving them the confidence to jump into the unknown in this very secure and rich learning environment. These targets were effectively reviewed at the end of the lesson and pupils' knowledge of their own learning was good. The teacher's very good questioning controlled the excitement and pleasure the pupils had in their learning, to maintain a good pace and leave plenty of time for the task of identifying symmetries in polygons. All were challenged. The most able were solving a more difficult problem. Like other learning groups, they were discussing and exchanging ideas because the teacher encouraged and organised this collaborative learning very well. She modelled problem-solving behaviour very effectively. High expectations of all abilities ensured that all knew what they had learned in the closing review of the lesson and they took pride and pleasure in reporting their learning to others. This very skilled and inclusive teaching gave very good opportunities for pupils to learn

from each other. The pace and excitement in learning was maintained throughout to produce very good progress.

99. The cross-curricular use of pupils' mathematical skills in solving real-life problems in other subjects, such as through using graphs and tables in science, is satisfactory. Opportunities that consolidate and extend learning are used well in information and communication technology. Teachers' wall displays are colourful and usefully reinforce essential mathematical vocabulary. However, they rarely include pupils' work, for instance in problem-solving or interactive puzzles, to stimulate interest and give pupils pride in their efforts.
100. The subject co-ordinator, in place for two years, is providing good leadership to raise standards. Planning across the school is good and effective. Setting in Years 5 and 6 aids learning. An extensive system of assessment is now in place and this monitors individual pupils and tracks the progress of groups. There has been focused monitoring of teaching through classroom observation to identify areas for improvement and share the best practice to improve expertise for all. Detailed action planning has been successfully implemented. A very successful 'mathematics day' was held to raise the subject profile. There remains a need, however, to make mathematics a subject clearly valued by school and pupils. Pupils' work is often untidy with few working calculations to be seen, especially in Year 6. Few pupils could be found who thought mathematics was their favourite subject and no pupils' work in the subject was seen on display. This contrasted with the good standard of presentation and the positive attitudes taken in other subjects.

SCIENCE

101. Work in science seen during the inspection was of better quality than is shown by the 2002 national test results which were well below average. However, the overall standard remains below the national standard, a view confirmed by teachers' own assessments. This is principally because of the proportions of pupils achieving at the different levels of the National Curriculum. Most of the oldest pupils reach the attainment expected for their age. However, the proportion exceeding this level is lower than in most schools, while the proportion falling short of the expected level is higher.
102. Most pupils show a range of sound knowledge and understanding for their age. The oldest know, for example, how plants reproduce through seed dispersal or how the body's circulatory system works. They understand how the behaviour of the earth and sun produce night and day and can describe a variety of methods for separating liquids and solids. In discussion, a group of the oldest pupils showed sound investigative skills. Asked to evaluate an imaginary investigation they recognised well the variables that needed to be controlled to make a fair test.
103. In most of the lessons, teaching is of good quality and in the remainder it is satisfactory. A good feature of several lessons seen during the inspection was the incorporation of investigations that both demonstrated scientific ideas very well and captured pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Year 3 pupils, for example, were excited by their tests of the rates at which different paper shapes fell and they showed good progress in understanding the relationship between gravity and air resistance. Year 4 pupils were making good progress in understanding and skills through testing a range of materials for their heat insulation properties. Teachers generate interest well and conduct lively discussions in which most pupils join, sometimes providing substantial well-argued answers in responses to teachers' good questions that probe and challenge pupils' understanding. Teachers make provision for the range of abilities in classes through adapting tasks or providing extra help when needed, as in the case of pupils with special educational needs. However, work could sometimes be adapted more sharply to ensure

that the most able are working at their full potential. Throughout the school the teaching encourages pupils to record observations methodically but rarely makes use of pupils' skills in information and communication technology to organise or present data. However, in one lesson the teacher successfully used a thermometer linked to a laptop computer to display graphically the different rates water cooled depending on the insulation around it. In a few lessons seen the need for teachers to manage the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils slowed progress at times.

104. The evidence from lessons seen, from pupils' exercise books and from discussions with them, is that pupils are presently achieving well in science. This has not been apparent in recent national test results for a number of reasons. It has not been the school's practice to provide substantial revision programmes as employed in many schools or to conduct practice tests. One effect of the latter is that some pupils are found to have answered test questions too briefly to gain the marks of which they were capable. The school has, in the past, made too little use of analyses of past test performances or assessments of pupils' ongoing progress through the school to show those pockets of misunderstanding or weak knowledge that tests may expose. Although teachers have tested their classes at the end of each topic taught, this information has not been collated in a systematic whole-school way to show where improvements to teaching and learning could be made.
105. Since last year's disappointing test results a good deal has been done to make amends and plan for future improvement. With good support from the local education authority's adviser, a close analysis of the 2002 test papers has been made together with a review of the work pupils' routinely undertake in their exercise books. This has led to the formation of a detailed action plan which has recently begun to take effect. If fully implemented, the plan provides the potential for raised standards and better test results in the future. Leadership and management of the subject, currently by a temporary co-ordinator, is satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

106. Art and design is a strength of Somerhill, where it is given a high profile throughout the school. The standards of pupils' work are good, as at the previous inspection. They have been acknowledged in the award to the school of the Gold Artsmark. By Year 6, pupils show a good ability to explore ideas and interpret images and artefacts, often from other cultures, and have a good understanding of a range of processes, as well as using the visual and tactile to convey ideas and meanings. Pupils benefit from a wide range of well-planned artistic experiences, which develop knowledge, skills and understanding, and art is well used across the curriculum to enhance and enrich the pupils' learning.
107. At the time of the inspection pupils in a Year 6 class had been responding successfully to some interesting and challenging work in self-portraiture, in the style of Picasso, where they had emulated the style well. In Year 5, pupils had responded impressively to the stimulus of a visit to the Brighton Pavilion in creating their own abstract designs, where colour and form are used to very good effect. In the art room a display of a series of lessons in Year 4 sketching owls demonstrates revising and refining of pupils' original designs, resulting in a finished product of a high standard.
108. There are many examples of work celebrating the art of other cultures, such as a display of Rangoli patterns, and the work of classical artists like Matisse and Picasso are studied. Good use is made of information and communication technology to support the subject, including using digital cameras to photograph local rock-pools. The locality is frequently used as a focus, as in designing head-dresses and costumes for the Brighton Festival parade, when pupils showed their ability to take good account of the purpose for which their designs will be used.

109. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils respond with enjoyment and enthusiasm, listening carefully to instructions and collaborating sensibly with each other when working. Sketchbooks are used effectively. There is a rich range of opportunities for pupils to paint, draw, sculpt, make collages and experiment with various media, textures and materials, such as tissue and fabric, and explore both primary and secondary colours.
110. Pupils' work is displayed well, with bold, often interactive, labelling. There are examples of pupils' work displayed in public areas, some framed. This emphasises the value attached to art and design and celebrates pupils' good achievements. A popular calligraphy club runs every week, and during the recent 'arts week', professional artists visited the school.
111. The co-ordinator, who is extremely enthusiastic, has recently taken up the post and has many ideas for the future for still further enrichment of the curriculum, for example by use of a recently acquired printing press to extend the curriculum into print processes. She has a comprehensive portfolio of photographic evidence of past work and is effective as a source of advice and inspiration. She has begun to assess work in an informal way and has a detailed action plan which will include more formal assessment. Resources for the subject are good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

112. There have been significant improvements in this subject since the previous inspection. During the inspection, work in the subject was integrated with art and design in some lessons seen. Evidence from these, from the products of past work undertaken and from discussion with pupils, is that good standards are achieved. No lessons devoted solely to the subject were seen and no judgement about teaching is therefore made.
113. The oldest pupils explore their designs carefully and refine them well. They are able to use a wide range of tools and materials. They make realistic plans and, in discussion, they show a good understanding of the processes involved. They can select the most appropriate processes, techniques and tools, and they describe competently what they have done, evaluating thoughtfully the success or otherwise of their achievement.
114. The quality of pupils' work is seen in well-designed structures with moving parts, such as hydraulic bridges and pneumatic monsters, very realistic animals made from clay and modroc, and a variety of other mouldable materials, as well as butterflies with moving wings and Greek chariots with wheels.
115. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and to revise their original designs, and were observed planning masks to represent emotions or elements, in which they could carry out a critical analysis before making the final design. Particularly impressive was the use of a microscope connected to a computer to look more closely at fabrics, resulting in a greater understanding of textiles by pupils when doing their own weaving.
116. Provision for the subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator. Planning of the curriculum is comprehensive and effectively linked to other curriculum areas, as when paper pop-up Harry Potters are made as part of an English topic. The allocation of time for the subject is satisfactory, the curriculum covers the full range of skills, and resources for the subject are good. The co-ordinator has worked hard and successfully to resolve issues raised in the last inspection, and has led staff workshops on developing the teaching and curriculum. She has devised a checklist against which class teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. Formal assessment of pupils' progress is in its early stages and forms part of the co-ordinator's action plan for the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

117. Standards in geography are below the level expected for pupils' ages. This is principally because too little time is effectively spent on the subject and coverage of the geography curriculum is patchy and sometimes superficial. During the inspection, lessons were timetabled only for Years 3 and 4. Standards were also judged, however, by examination of pupils' past written work and by discussion with a representative group of the oldest pupils.
118. The oldest pupils show a sound level of skills in using maps. They understand how to use co-ordinates and keys. They are quickly able to find an unfamiliar place from an atlas by using the index and co-ordinates and they can use compass directions to describe locations on maps. They also have acquired some sound factual knowledge about continents, countries and capital cities. However, pupils' geographical understanding is noticeably weak. They have difficulty explaining why places are as they are by reference to geographical ideas that explain, for example, the links between location, climate, landscape, crops and people's jobs and lives. They are also unclear about processes of change to places caused by physical processes, such as the work of water and rivers, or the impact of people and industry. Although work planned for Year 6 later this year may address some of this shortfall, the inadequacy of the geography curriculum as a whole remains.
119. These findings are entirely consistent with the lessons seen and the evidence from pupils' topic books throughout the school. A Year 3 lesson seen was teaching knowledge about countries effectively and in two good Year 4 lessons seen pupils were taught skills of using maps and keys successfully. Pupils made good progress in these lessons. Topic books in which geography work is recorded show little evidence of the other aspects of the subject being tackled in any depth. Often the cross-curricular topics chosen by the school lend themselves successfully to substantial work in history but leave geography to be integrated somewhat unconvincingly and very briefly. As a result pupils achieve less than they are capable of.
120. The subject co-ordinator, who also co-ordinates history, acknowledges that the implementation of cross-curricular topics has favoured history at the expense of geography. The subject action plan within the whole-school improvement plan promises future improvement. There is no systematic assessment of pupils' progress in the subject or substantial checks on the quality of teaching and learning. Had these been employed the school would have had a greater and earlier awareness of the weaknesses in the subject.

HISTORY

121. Standards in history at the end of Year 6 are judged to be good and have been maintained since the last inspection. History is frequently a focus within an overall topic plan, such as 'the Aztecs' or 'the making of Brighton and Hove', and examination of topic books reveals a good breadth of study and extensive use of both primary and secondary sources of evidence. Discussion with some Year 6 pupils shows that many have a good understanding of the past and are able to consider sensibly the reasons for discovery, and the contrasts between lifestyles of the past and present. For example, they express well the conditions on board sailing ships and are able to put themselves into the position of the sailors.
122. Pupils achieve consistently well throughout the school. Pupils have good research skills and can use them to good effect. They use the Internet, for example, as in a lesson on

Charles Drew, where pupils added considerably to the knowledge conveyed by the lesson. They worked enthusiastically on compiling a list of additional facts gleaned from over 30 websites.

123. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy history, debating issues with each other and the teacher in a lively manner. They are confident speakers and teachers manage debate well so that effective learning takes place. A range of visits forms part of the curriculum and local people, one who lived to be 100, have visited the school to talk to pupils about their lives. Pupils have a good understanding that past events are open to interpretation and they are able to make links between the past and the present.
124. History links well to other subjects in the curriculum, such as art and design and music, and topic books show good use of extended writing. There is a strong, planned contribution to the personal and social aspects of the curriculum. In one lesson, pupils discussed at length the racial tensions in America in the 1930s, listening well to each other and putting forward well-argued judgements.
125. Good leadership and management of the subject are provided by the co-ordinator who is enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, having contributed to several professional publications. She has made a point of enhancing the history element of the curriculum with realistic and meaningful links to pupils' lives, such as role-play activities and learning a regency dance. This encourages high achievement by capturing the pupils' imagination and making the link to the past clearer. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory. The co-ordinator regularly sees samples of work which she assesses against the expectations of the National Curriculum and gives advice to staff to use as a guide for their own assessments. Planning for improvement appropriately includes providing a more accurate match of tasks to pupils' ability and related staff training. Resources for teaching and learning are good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

126. Standards in information and communications technology are in line with national expectations for pupils' ages. The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection when the time allocated to the subject was insufficient and pupils' range of skills was limited. Sufficient time is now spent and a structured programme of work ensures that pupils progress well by developing skills sequentially in the computer suite, building firmly on previous experience. The school has kept up with the rising standards nationally as the range of resources available to schools has improved. All pupils, including those with special needs and those learning English as an additional language, are now achieving well.
127. By the time they are aged eleven the pupils create a range of documents and demonstrate satisfactory wordprocessing skills. They access the Internet and CD-Roms to search large databases with the minimum of adult assistance. For example they use 'Maths at 11' and navigate their way around this program to consolidate effectively their skills in finding percentages. They are beginning to use a good range of programs to support their learning in other subjects, such as when they locate countries in Europe and present information, or make videos of their dance performances in physical education. There are satisfactory links with literacy, the pupils writing stories and letters using their wordprocessing skills. They are able to use spreadsheets and use formulae to explore the effects of changing data. No work was seen on control technology. The school has good resources, for programming traffic light sequences for instance, and these are planned to be used in the summer term.

128. Pupils' very good attitudes contribute to their good progress. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good teaching. Teachers have worked purposefully, through sharing good practice and in training to improve their knowledge, and all have at least satisfactory skills. However, in some generally satisfactory lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils' time on the independent task is short. This limits active learning and opportunities for the most able to extend themselves. In a good Year 3 lesson the teacher used the 'Toy Shop' program to present money problems effectively at different levels to challenge pupils of all abilities. Most lessons are planned well, with clear learning objectives, and with a review period at the end of the lesson when pupils' achievements are shared and assessed to aid planning for the next step in learning. The pace of a few lessons is slowed by the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils, leaving no time for discussion and so limiting learning. In a very good Year 4 lesson pupils' attainment was very good when they constructed a 'PowerPoint' presentation for their work on Harry Potter, confidently importing images and text effects to produce a series of slides. This was because of the teachers' very good skills, planning and excellent assessment of pupils' learning. Support staff play an important role in learning and provide high quality assistance to teachers in lessons.
129. Resources for the subject are adequate. Satisfactory numbers of computers are in the suite and in class bases, and sufficient software and other equipment such as cameras and sound equipment is available to pupils. However, the computer suite is too small. It is an awkward shape in which to teach or to make best use of apparatus such as the interactive whiteboard. There is a good, comprehensive policy for teaching, learning and Internet access. The school website is newly in place and the first items for parents accessible. Safety in the use of equipment is stressed in lessons. Leadership of the subject is good and a clear action plan sets the development of systematic assessment of pupils' attainment as a priority, so that areas of learning requiring improvement can be targeted to raise standards further.

MUSIC

130. As at the previous inspection, pupils' standards in music are above the level expected for their ages. Music is at the heart of the school's declared aim to provide a 'creative and cultural curriculum' and the school benefits from an unusually high proportion of staff with musical expertise. Staff and pupils alike are enthusiastic about music and there is a high level of participation in the many activities beyond the classroom, which support pupils' good progress in musical skills. Formal lessons could be seen during the inspection only in Year 3 and no overall judgement about teaching is therefore made. Judgements of pupils' attainments are also based, however, on singing in assemblies, singing practices, choir sessions, response to music in dance lessons, small-group instrumental tuition and video recordings of past performances.
131. All of this evidence shows that most pupils develop a good understanding of basic musical concepts of beat, rhythm, pitch, tempo and dynamics which they are able to apply in their own musical performances. Singing is accurate in pitch, expressive, varied in volume and tone when appropriate and shows good diction. Even as early as Year 3, pupils sing in two parts accurately and successfully. In dance lessons, and in the optional lunchtime Salsa club, pupils' movement shows a good awareness of beat and rhythm.
132. Year 3 pupils also achieve well as they use percussion instruments to perform substantial sequences in which they combine a variety of rhythmic patterns suggested by the teacher and represented by conventional notation of crotchets and quavers. The good progress of pupils in understanding the 'language' of music and in their instrumental skills is further enhanced by the fact that an exceptionally large number of pupils receive instrumental

tuition, funded by parents, from visiting specialist teachers. Pupils are learning a wide range of instruments. A large number also participate in the choir.

133. In the Year 3 lessons seen, very good teaching and learning on one occasion was marked by the high expectations shown in the challenging tasks set, the lively pace and the enthusiastic and determined response of the pupils. Another lesson was satisfactory overall. It had some good features but its overall impact was diminished when teaching and learning were interrupted by the teacher's need to deal with a few pupils who showed poor self-discipline.
134. The subject co-ordinator has very good musical knowledge and skill and leads the musical life of the school with great enthusiasm. With good support from her colleagues she organises and promotes a wide range of good musical opportunities for pupils including opportunities to perform in assemblies or at concerts outside the school. She also gives good guidance to colleagues with planning and good provision of resources to support their teaching. Apart, though, from assessment linked to visiting teachers' instrumental tuition, there is no systematic assessment of pupils' progress to show where pupils need either more help or more challenge and no formal monitoring or evaluation of teaching and learning takes place.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 are good overall. Although no games or athletics lessons were on the timetable during this inspection, other evidence shows that standards are likely to be at least good. The school's records, its frequent success in competition with other schools and discussions with teachers, pupils and parents support this view. Lesson observations show that standards in gymnastics are in line with the national expectation, while a Year 6 dance lesson showed pupils achieving a good standard in this aspect of the curriculum as they created a group sequence to reflect a musical stimulus.
136. There is very good provision for outdoor adventurous pursuits and orienteering. The excellent extra-curricular activities supporting physical education enhance the performance of pupils of all abilities, including the gifted and talented. The provision for swimming is very good in all year groups. Swimming skills reach a high standard and 97 per cent of pupils in Year 6 are already well above, or at least at, the National Curriculum requirements. Some pupils have benefited from visiting coaches and they are encouraged to attend training in the local area.
137. Most pupils achieve well. Only a small number of poorly behaved boys do not do so. In lessons in dance and gymnastics most pupils make good progress. The highest quality of work was seen in a Year 3 lesson when pupils were able to create and perform a fluent sequence of movements with good balance and control using different levels in the activity. The good support of the teaching assistant and teacher enabled a pupil with special educational needs to sustain effort and achieve at a very good level. Throughout the school, attitudes to learning of almost all pupils are very good. They work well together when assessing each other's performance as part of the lesson, are enthusiastic learners, and applaud spontaneously to celebrate others' achievements.
138. Teaching and learning are usually good. A common strength is the teachers' good use of pupils to demonstrate. This concentrates pupils' attention and reinforces good practice. In a very good lesson the level of challenge was high and the teacher modelled the skills expected of pupils and they knew exactly what was expected of them because instructions were clear. A very good discussion helped pupils to clearly understand the movements required. An excellent ending to the lesson enabled pupils of all abilities to

demonstrate their very good learning, thus helping the teacher to assess them for their next step in learning. The pace of lessons and learning is sometimes slowed when teaching does not successfully manage a few boys who lack self-discipline and who therefore achieve less well than others.

139. The subject is well led and well managed by the co-ordinator. Good cross-curricular opportunities are built into the curriculum, such as when pupils chart their personal best performances in athletics. Information and communication technology is used when Year 6 pupils make video recordings of dance for assessment. Systematic assessment of pupils' skills is still unsatisfactory, except for swimming, and this limits teachers' ability to identify areas for development in learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

140. Standards of work in religious education are in line with those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. This is a similar picture to that at the time of the last inspection. Some good spiritual activities enhance the provision, and religious education contributes very well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The use of pupils' own beliefs to inform others and enhance provision, is also a strength.
141. Pupils in Year 3 learn about signs and symbols in everyday life, and become actively involved in describing what each symbol means. Good resources keep pupils focused and they make appropriate comments as the lesson progresses. In Year 4, very effective use is made of pupils' own religious beliefs. Pupils follow stories well and show that they have good knowledge of differences in belief. They show empathy with others who are different from themselves. In one lesson, they were observed learning about the Buddhist religion. They showed that they had remembered many facts about the five promises of Buddhism and many could recite them. Pupils identify similarities with other religions, and benefit from a good, dramatic approach.
142. Pupils in Year 5 show good knowledge of the four different religions followed by pupils in their own class. The strategy of using their own experiences to help others understand more about these religions results in good learning by almost all of the class. Pupils had brought photographs of family celebrations to share with their peers. They exhibited high levels of interest as one pupil, for example, showed photographs of a Barmitzvah, while another explained about a Buddhist blessing. Pupils talked clearly, confidently and maturely about their own experiences, and answered many questions.
143. By the time pupils reach Year 6, they show good empathy, understanding and tolerance of others. Their current topic on the Aztecs is helping them to learn about ancient religions and the differences and similarities between them. They learn about pilgrimage and devise their own plans for a pilgrimage that they would like to undertake. Overall, pupils achieve well in religious education and benefit from the good range of learning opportunities provided.
144. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good. Teachers plan lessons well and ensure that many practical tasks are in place to keep pupils focused. Good questioning helps pupils to improve their speaking skills and enables them to learn new knowledge. Good teacher knowledge of the different religions taught, and good use of resources, promote good understanding. Occasionally, behaviour is not well enough managed and the noise and disruptions caused by a very small minority of pupils with challenging behaviour sometimes inhibits learning for others. Teachers make effective use of class assemblies, visits and visitors to enhance learning. For example, pupils in Year 3 have visited a mosque, those in Year 5 visit a synagogue, and almost all pupils take part in a carol service in church at Christmas. Pupils are encouraged to celebrate

other festivals and there is good evidence that they enjoyed the Hanukkah celebrations as well as a Diwali assembly.

145. The curriculum for religious education is closely linked to the locally agreed syllabus and it contributes very well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. High quality experiences that celebrate multicultural aspects of learning are a secure part of school life. The subject is appropriately managed with strengths in the range of exciting experiences provided. However, there are weaknesses within the provision, mainly linked to assessing what pupils know, understand and can do, and this impacts on the monitoring of pupils' progress. Resources have improved recently and there are good links with many of the local churches and places of worship.