

INSPECTION REPORT

WOOLENWICK JUNIOR SCHOOL

Stevenage

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117322

Headteacher: Mr John Pickett

Reporting inspector: John Messer
15477

Dates of inspection: 11-14 September 2000

Inspection number: 189674

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	7-11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bridge Road West Stevenage Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Lesley Bell
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Messer Registered inspector OIN 15477	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
	Art	How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
	English as an additional language	How well are pupils taught?
		How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Susie Messer Lay inspector OIN 19496		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
		How well does the school care for its pupils?
		Partnership with parents
Shelagh Halley Team inspector OIN 8203	Science	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
	Geography	
	History	
	Music	
	Religious education	
	Equal opportunities Special educational needs	
John Laver Team inspector OIN 1085	English	
	Information technology	
	Design and technology	
	Physical education	

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Inspection Quality Division
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
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?	12
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
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 community junior school has 227 pupils on roll, which is an average size. The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly over the past five years. There are rather more girls than boys, especially in Year 5. Around fifteen per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils are admitted to either one of the Year 3 classes in September, most having transferred from the infant school that shares the same site. Pupils are from a wide range of social backgrounds: some are the children of Traveller families and the proportion who come from relatively advantaged home backgrounds is in line with the national average. Most pupils live within walking distance of the school though a significant number come from other parts of the town. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average though a significant number of pupils have limited speaking and listening skills. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and a further 53 are entered on the school's register of special needs because they need some extra learning support. This number is slightly higher than the national average. Fourteen pupils, a higher number than in most schools, speak English as an additional language though nearly all have well-developed English speaking skills. Around ten per cent of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is close to the national average. The inspection took place very soon after the start of the autumn term when teachers had only been with their classes for three days. Most of the teaching staff, including the headteacher, are new to the school and new building work, including new classrooms, was completed just in time for the start of school. By the commencement of the inspection teachers had established good working practices and routines which enabled pupils to settle quickly and adapt to their new surroundings with impressive speed.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Over the past four years the school has been effective in raising standards of attainment and ensuring that the quality of education for the substantial majority of pupils is satisfactory. Teaching is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons and in a significant proportion it is good and occasionally very good. The governing body gives strong support and helps to maintain continuity and stability against a background of major changes in staffing. Careful financial management helps to ensure that the school gives sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good.
- The school strives to improve standards and has been largely successful in improving the quality of education provided.
- The school has established an orderly environment which is conducive to effective learning
- There is a shared commitment to improve standards further.

What could be improved

- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.
- The analysis of the data collected as a result of monitoring pupils' performance is not used effectively to plan the next steps in learning and tasks provided for pupils are not always well matched to their widely varying stages of development.
- The professional development of staff is not promoted effectively.
- There is a lack of awareness of child protection procedures.
- Information technology is not used sufficiently to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is not monitored adequately.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

When the school was last inspected, in October 1996, it had serious weaknesses. Since then significant improvements have been made; pupils' standards of attainment have improved by more than the rate of improvement nationally, the quality of teaching has improved significantly, teachers now have a better knowledge and understanding of the content of the National Curriculum and the act of collective worship now meets statutory requirements. The use of assessments of pupils' attainment and progress to guide teachers' planning for the next stages in learning remains unsatisfactory and teachers' lesson planning still does not always indicate how tasks will be matched to pupils' specific needs. Teachers' performance is now monitored more closely but there are insufficient links between such monitoring and the training programme for the further professional development for teachers and support staff.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E	C	C	D
mathematics	E	D	D	D
science	E	C	B	B

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

Over recent years there has been a steady trend of improving performance, especially in science. In 1999 pupils attained standards which were above average in science both when compared with all schools and when compared with schools which have a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. When compared with similar schools, standards were not as high as they should have been in English and mathematics. The school sets targets for its performance in English and mathematics and in 1999 it met its targets. The targets for 2000 were more challenging and the pupils' performance fell short of the school's anticipation. The characteristics of the groups of Year 6 pupils that take the National Curriculum tests varies widely from year to year. The group which took the tests in 2000 comprised a significant proportion of pupils whose attendance was irregular and a high proportion of lower-attaining pupils. In consequence the school's performance declined in English. Inspection findings show that pupils are making sound progress and that the performance of pupils currently in Year 6 meets national expectations in English, mathematics and science. Standards meet expectations and are generally as high as might be expected in all other subjects except information and communication technology, where there was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards, and art where standards are below national expectations of eleven year olds. In religious education standards meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and are therefore satisfactory. Standards attained by many of the pupils with special educational needs are not as high as they could be.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to learn and are eager to please.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are well behaved in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are good. Pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory and given insufficient emphasis.
Attendance	Rates of attendance are below the national average.

Pupils' good behaviour contributes to the positive learning ethos in the school. They settle quickly to the tasks they are given and are willing to do their best. There are too few opportunities for them to exercise independence and to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Pupils and adults get on well together and there is a high level of racial harmony. The unsatisfactory attendance is the result of a few cases of persistent absenteeism.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory

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.

Overall the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons; it is good and occasionally very good in 34 per cent and unsatisfactory in 6 per cent. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects except information and communication technology and geography where insufficient evidence was available to make judgements on the quality of teaching, and in English, music and physical education where it is mostly good. Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively, according to national guidance. Tasks are not always well matched to pupils' learning needs and this is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs for whom teaching is unsatisfactory. No special provision is made for pupils with English as an additional language but they receive satisfactory teaching and make sound progress. Pupils who come from Traveller families are well supported though none were in school during the week of the inspection so no judgements could be made about the teaching they receive. Very good teaching occurs where teachers adopt a lively, energetic approach and their enthusiasm is transmitted to the pupils. In the effective lessons tasks are generally well matched to pupils' needs and all are able to experience success. In these lessons pupils make very good progress. Teaching is less successful where pupils are required to sit listening to explanations for too long rather than getting on with activities and when being required to complete tasks for which there is no clear rationale. In the large majority of lessons pupils learn effectively and make sound gains in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A satisfactory curriculum is taught though there are shortcomings in the use of information and communication technology and the limited time allocations for physical education restrict progress.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. Staff have insufficient knowledge and expertise to give adequate support.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Nearly all the pupils with English as an additional language are fluent in English speaking skills but there are no procedures designed to identify their particular needs nor to monitor their progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Moral and social development are good. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. There is scope for improvement in the provision for multi-cultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Assessment procedures and provision for pupils with special educational needs are unsatisfactory and there is a lack of awareness of child protection issues.

The school is welcoming and parents are encouraged to work in partnership with the school. Most parents take an active interest in their children's education and a sound partnership has been established. A broad and balanced curriculum is provided and learning opportunities are enriched by an appropriate range of educational visits and after school activities. The curriculum provided, however, meets statutory requirements. The school is a caring community. A sound long-term curricular framework, based on satisfactory schemes of work, is in place but medium and short-term planning takes insufficient account of pupils' individual learning needs.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound. The headteacher is new to the school; he has a clear vision for improving the quality of education and improving standards. The roles of the deputy headteacher and curriculum co-ordinators are under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body was newly constituted six months ago and has not yet ensured that all legal requirements are fully in place. It offers strong support and is ably led by the chair of governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Sound. The school spends much time and resources on monitoring and evaluating its performance though the results are not always used effectively to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are in the main used well to support teaching and learning though computers are not used effectively and the potential for learning support staff to maximise their input is unrealised.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate to support teaching and learning. A good computer suite has just been created though it is not yet fully operational. Before commissioning such work the governing body seeks advice and considers various options carefully to ensure that the principles of best value are applied. There are several health and safety issues relating to possible fire risks and inadequate ventilation which governors should address. The headteacher is newly in post but has already developed a sense of teamwork and an ethos which is underpinned by a commitment to improve standards. The school has good capacity for improvement and is poised to improve further.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Children make good progress. • Teaching is good • They would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. • Children are expected to work hard and to do their best. • The school is well led and managed. <p>The school helps children to become mature and responsible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • Information about how children are getting on. • Contact with parents.

The inspection team agrees with most of the positive views expressed by parents. Strategies to help pupils to become responsible and to use their initiative require further development. The amount of homework which pupils receive is satisfactory and reports to parents, about how their children are getting on, are good. The new headteacher now writes a regular monthly newsletter to parents which includes information about what pupils in each class are learning. Sound contact with parents is an established feature of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils attain standards which meet national expectations in all subjects of the National Curriculum except art where standards are below national expectations and information and communication technology where there is insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards attained. Standards in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and are therefore satisfactory. There has been a steady rise in standards since 1996 and the upward trend in the school's performance has been above the national trend. National Curriculum tests in 1999 showed that the school's performance, both in comparison with all schools and in comparison with similar schools, was above average in science, though below average in mathematics. In English the school's performance was average when compared with all schools but below average when compared with similar schools. Results in 2000 declined because the group of pupils who took the National Curriculum tests had a higher proportion of lower attaining pupils than is usually the case. The work which the present group of Year 6 pupils produce is in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science and a significant proportion of pupils exceed such expectations. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now generally about as high as might reasonably be expected though there is scope for further improvement. There are considerable discrepancies between teacher assessments of attainment and test results, especially in English and science, which is partly because the school's assessment procedures are not sufficiently accurate. Attainment in art and in the use of computers to promote learning across the curriculum, are not as good as they should be.

2. The school set realistic targets of 68% for the proportion of pupils who would attain the national target of Level 4 in 1999 and it succeeded in reaching its target in English and just exceeding it in mathematics. The pupils enter the school with average levels of attainment so this performance represents sound progress between Year 3 and Year 6. In 2000 the school set more challenging targets of 74% in English and 73% in mathematics for the proportion of pupils who were expected to attain Level 4. The school's performance fell well short of the target in English and short of the target in mathematics. The targets for the group of pupils currently in Year 6 is 84% in English and 86% in mathematics; these are high but on present form pupils are likely to achieve these results.

3. Most pupils read fluently and most enjoy reading. The soundly developed reading skills enable these pupils to access other areas of the curriculum, such as history, which are often dependent on reading skills for gaining information. Writing is less well developed but pupils attain broadly satisfactory standards and their skills help them to record information successfully in other areas of the curriculum. Listening skills are more fully developed and again assist learning. Speaking skills are not so well developed and younger pupils experience difficulty expressing themselves, as when endeavouring to explain how they have arrived at an answer in mathematics, for example. Older pupils speak more confidently and develop an increasingly wide vocabulary. The standards pupils' attain by the age of eleven are in line with national expectations in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils use the skills they develop in numeracy in other areas of the curriculum, such as recording data in science and when studying maps in geography, but there is scope for greater development in using mathematical skills practically in real life situations. Pupils' quick recall of number facts is not well developed and this skill requires sharpening. In science pupils have a good understanding of life and living processes, such as human physical development and the benefits of healthy diets and exercise, for example, but have limited scope to investigate and experiment. .

4. In the National Curriculum tests in 1999 the proportion of pupils who exceeded the national target of Level 4 and attained the higher Level 5 standard was above the national average in English and well above in science. This indicates that in these subjects the more able pupils are being challenged sufficiently. In mathematics, however, the proportion who attained Level 5 was below the national average. Insufficient attention has been paid to identifying talented mathematicians and ensuring that they are suitably challenged. Tasks are often not matched to the abilities of pupils with special educational needs; their progress and achievements are insufficiently documented and it is clear that, in

the absence of good quality support during lessons, other than literacy and to a lesser extent numeracy, their progress is restricted. Girls outperform boys in national tests at the age of eleven in all three core subjects but there was no evidence of this discrepancy in the lessons observed or the work analysed. The inspection team found no evidence that pupils with English as an additional language are attaining standards any different from those of their peers. Pupils who come from Travelling families achieve satisfactorily during their limited time in school and are helped by the special local authority teaching team that has responsibility for supporting them.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

5. Pupils' attitudes to the school and the learning opportunities that it offers are good. They respond with willingness and good levels of concentration to their lessons and enjoy taking part in the range of activities provided for them, such as homework club and football club. Inspection findings agree with parents that pupils' behaviour is good. They know how they should behave in lessons and at play and have written their own code of good conduct, which they follow. The very few instances of poor behaviour are frowned upon by other pupils and staff and quickly stop. Poor behaviour is sometimes caused by pupils with specific behavioural difficulties but the overwhelming majority of pupils behave well and tolerate the antics of their classmates with patience. There have been no exclusions.

6. The good relationships that exist between pupils and staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Many pupils have new teachers this term but staff have quickly forged positive relationships to support their work. Pupils show respect for adults and others. All pupils are well integrated and the school is free from racism, sexism or bullying. Most pupils are confident in giving their opinions and answering questions and there is a happy atmosphere.

7. Pupils' personal development is unsatisfactorily fostered or monitored. They are given insufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, such as finding spellings in the dictionary rather than asking the adults present. Although pupils do undertake a small number of minor tasks such as returning the registers to the school office, these are few and far less onerous than these pupils are capable of.

8. All pupils share the same good, and sometimes very good, attitudes and values. Their personal development, like that of their peers, is somewhat restricted in the field of taking responsibility for their own learning and evaluating their own progress and achievements. The attitudes and values of pupils with special educational needs are as good, and occasionally very good, as their fellows, dependent on the quality and extent of the support given to them during lessons. The personal development of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and their behaviour is mostly good.

9. Although attendance is unsatisfactory at 93.7 per cent, and below the national average of 94.6 per cent, this is caused mostly by the frequent absence of a very small minority of pupils. The school does all it can to improve attendance including working closely with the Educational Welfare Officer and the Traveller Support Team. The continued poor attendance rates of these pupils adversely affects their attainment as well as the published statistics about the school's performance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. Nearly all the teaching is at least satisfactory and in just over a third of lessons teaching is good and occasionally very good. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when just over a third of lessons were unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is at least sound in all subjects except information technology and geography where there was insufficient evidence to make judgements, and English, music and physical education where it was mostly good. Examples of very good teaching were seen in English, history and design and technology. The main characteristics of the very good teaching were thorough planning, exceptionally clear explanations, brisk pace, good subject knowledge, high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance, positive relationships and the effective deployment of learning support assistants. Teaching is less effective and occasionally unsatisfactory where time is not used well. Examples of unsatisfactory teaching were seen in art and music. Where pupils are required to sit for too long listening to teachers' explanations, rather than getting on with an activity, the pace of learning slows. On occasions the restlessness which this

causes is not managed well and a disproportionate amount of time is wasted when reminding pupils, sometimes unnecessarily, how to behave

11. Teachers spend considerable time preparing lessons and assembling the required materials. Most lesson plans include clear learning objectives and the best describe precisely which skills are to be taught during the course of the lesson. In the best lessons these learning objectives are shared with the pupils so that they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This does not always happen and there are occasions when pupils are asked to complete tasks without any explanation of why. Where pupils are not offered a clear rationale for an activity, as in several art lessons for example, learning is less purposeful because pupils are not entirely sure what the purpose is. Lesson plans rarely include details of how tasks will be matched to the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language or to the needs of the higher-attaining pupils. Plans do not include any details of how information and communication technology will be used to support teaching and learning nor how learning support assistants will be used. Learning support assistants are not always involved in the planning and this diminishes their effectiveness. In practice teachers organise lessons so that pupils at different stages of development are grouped and are given tasks which are broadly matched to their differing educational needs. The match is frequently imprecise, however, and this is often because teachers do not have sufficiently detailed information about pupils' prior learning. As a result tasks that have already been mastered are repeated or tasks are inappropriate and insufficiently structured to enable all pupils to experience success. This means that time is not always used to best effect. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are placed in sets so that pupils who are at broadly the same level of development are taught together. The lack of sufficiently well refined assessment procedures has resulted in a degree of misplacement with some pupils having been placed in inappropriate sets.

12. The national literacy and national numeracy strategies have been introduced successfully and the structure which they provide helps to ensure that basic skills are taught effectively. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the new National Curriculum and their planning follows the statutory programmes of study. Most teachers have sufficient knowledge and expertise to teach the full range of subjects though several teachers lack confidence in teaching mathematics, information technology and art. Teachers expressed the need for more in-service training in these areas. Teachers have appropriate expectations of pupils' performance and encourage all to do their best. On occasion expectations of the performance of lower-attaining pupils are unrealistic. This occurs when such pupils are, for example, expected to succeed in completing abstract mathematical tasks without the apparatus which would help them to understand the processes involved. Generally there is an over-reliance on text books and work sheets at the expense of practical activities. In several classes expectations of what can be achieved in a given time are too low and not enough work is completed. This occurred in several art lessons, for example, where the quality and quantity of work that pupils produced was lower than might normally be expected in the time allocated.

13. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. In nearly all lessons a happy learning atmosphere is sustained and the gentle use of humour helps pupils to feel comfortable and encourages confidence. Teachers are consistent in their approach to pupils which encourages a feeling of security and trust. Teachers quickly develop an understanding of their pupils and, even though the inspection took place a few days after the beginning of the school year, good classroom routines are quickly established. Expectations of behaviour are usually high and teachers' management of pupils is good. Classrooms are orderly and a purposeful, business-like atmosphere is sustained. Teachers generally give clear explanations and use effective methods to impart knowledge and understanding but the development of skills through first hand practical activities is under-emphasised. Pupils spend too long sitting at desks or sitting on the carpet listening to teachers rather than being actively involved in their learning. Sound standards of discipline are maintained though there are occasions when a disproportionate amount is spent reminding pupils about their behaviour and when the extremely challenging behaviour of one or two pupils is not managed successfully. In general the very small minority of pupils who exhibit disturbed behaviour are managed well and they are not permitted to be disruptive.

14. Lessons start on time and most proceed at an appropriate pace. Resources are mostly adequate to support teaching and learning though they are not always used effectively. Computers are

not used enough. Practical apparatus to support learning is not built in to lesson plans and is under-used. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning but they are not always deployed effectively; on occasions they spend too much time listening to teachers rather than being actively involved in supporting pupils. Their skills are not always used sufficiently and they are given insufficient scope to use their initiative.

15. Teachers mark pupils work thoroughly and the best marking helps pupils to understand how they might improve the quality of their work, though such good practice is not consistent throughout the school. Most teachers use good questioning strategies to assess pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking. Towards the end of most lessons a short time is set aside to discuss how well the learning has been achieved. Here the lesson objective, which may have been shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson, is reviewed. Learning is often consolidated as pupils explain what they have learned. In this way teachers evaluate progress well and this helps them to consider how successful the lesson has been. Pupils are provided with a useful homework book in which they record the tasks which they are expected to complete at home. Homework, such as reading, learning multiplication tables and the correct spelling of words or completing a piece of research, makes a sound contribution to learning and helps pupils with learning basic skills. A good system of target setting is used. In the back of exercise books pupils will have a short-term target, such as 'Learn the rule about how to spell words like 'hopping', 'hitting' and 'putting' by Friday'. Pupils rise to the challenge of meeting their targets and this helps to encourage effective learning. The system also helps pupils themselves to gain some understanding of their progress and what they need to learn next.

16. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They are eager to please and keen to succeed. Most make sound progress in developing skills, knowledge and understanding. The progress of pupils with special educational needs, however, is not always assured because tasks are not always well matched to their specific learning requirements. However, during literacy and numeracy lessons, these pupils are set work which suits their abilities and they are given adequate support. Pupils with statements of special educational need are well-supported with appropriate resources and a personal classroom assistant. However, the same support is not always available in other subjects of the curriculum and many pupils with special educational needs are often expected to do the same work as everyone else in the class and teachers do not make sufficient adaptations to the tasks set or to the vocabulary used. The school supplements the available financial allocations for pupils with special educational needs in order to ensure the employment of a specialist part-time teacher to support both the least able and the most able pupils, but this help is not always available where it is most needed. Pupils with English as additional language make sound progress because they have well developed English speaking skills but no specific checks are made to make sure that they are making the progress they should. Across the school most pupils work at a reasonable speed and in most lessons they produce an appropriate amount of work. Nearly all pupils appear confident and capable of using their initiative but they are given too few opportunities to do so. There are insufficient opportunities for them to become involved in their own learning and to exercise independence. As a result they become over-reliant on the teachers for support. It was noted, for example, that teachers do not always insist that pupils use dictionaries to find words or even have a go at spelling a word before requesting assistance. In mathematics many have few strategies for finding the solution to problems independently and are too ready to seek help before making endeavours to find solutions themselves. Overall pupils benefit from the sound and often good teaching they receive as this results in effective learning.

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

17. The school provides a curriculum which is broad and balanced, covering all subjects of the National Curriculum and meeting the recommendations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Sex education and education in drugs awareness is provided in an informal programme for personal, social and health education. However, the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are not identified or addressed systematically and this impinges on their full access to the curriculum and on their equality of opportunities within the programmes of study offered. The school has adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy and the daily lessons designed to promote literacy and numeracy are effective.

18. The time allocated to subjects is satisfactory in the main, although that allotted to religious education falls below that recommended to ensure full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus and the system of giving all physical education lessons in half-hour sessions impedes pupils' attainment and progress because, after changing, insufficient time is available for fully developing skills, knowledge and understanding.

19. Following the recommendations of the previous inspection report, the school has reviewed its schemes of work and is now in the process of revising them all to incorporate the new national guidance for Curriculum 2000. In the meantime, each subject has a policy document, either fully adopted or in draft, and these are supported by action plans which serve as programmes of study. These are currently, however, insufficiently detailed to give guidance for teachers to plan lessons which meet specific learning outcomes for each year group and take insufficient account of what learning has gone before.

20. The school has satisfactory curriculum liaison with the neighbouring infants' school, but links with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer at the age of eleven are not fully established.

21. The individual needs of pupils on the special educational needs register are not sufficiently taken into account when teachers plan their lessons. There are individual education plans which are insufficiently detailed to give teachers the necessary guidance in setting work which will help pupils to meet their learning targets. In this way, pupils with special educational needs do not receive the same equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum offered to other pupils. However, access to extra-curricular activities such as after-school clubs, visits and attendance at special events arranged by the school, is open to all. The lack of coherent assessment procedures, and teachers' ineffective use of the limited assessment data produced, has a consequent negative effect on curriculum planning and results in lessons that are not planned to take account of the particular needs of all pupils. Consequently the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory.

22. When the children of Travelling families attend the school, however briefly, they have full access to the whole curriculum and every effort is made to promote equality of opportunity. The school makes good provision for them.

23. The curriculum is enhanced through visits to museums and places of interest connected with topic work in history and geography. There is also an annual residential journey which supports learning in several subjects, as well as the social and cultural development of pupils. The range of extra-curricular activities is satisfactory and the after-school clubs are well supported, particularly the choir which can regularly call upon one hundred members for special events like the Schools' Concert at the Royal Albert Hall and local music festivals.

24. The school fields teams for netball and football, which include both boys and girls, who compete with other local schools and are quite successful. The school also welcomes visits from local clergy, including a Hindu priest, who take assemblies. Visiting authors, poets, musicians and theatre groups also enrich curricular provision. There is an effective link with a local business which promotes links with similar schools, at home and abroad, through the Internet.

25. Overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. The act of worship now meets statutory requirements, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Religious education lessons make a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of major religions other than Christianity. However, for the majority of pupils, the daily assembly is a passive experience and there is scope for their greater involvement through music and role-play. Pupils explore their thoughts and feelings through the informal programme of personal and social education. This includes provision of class forum time for discussions as well as discussion sessions that form part of time-tabled lessons, especially in the literacy hour. Pupils express personal feelings through empathic writing in history and produce a limited amount of reflective writing in religious education. Opportunities for more reflective and creative written work are currently very restricted, as are those for older pupils to take greater responsibilities, such as helping with younger pupils.

26. Provision for the moral and social development of pupils is good. Pupils negotiate their classroom rules with their teachers at the beginning of each academic year and both pupils and teachers reinforce these expectations as the need arises. They know the difference between right and wrong, and between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In discussion, pupils expressed the wish

that the School Council be revived. The school still includes the aims proposed by the last School Council in its prospectus. Pupils relate well to one another and to their teachers and other adults in the school. The annual residential journey to Winmarleigh Hall supports learning in social, cultural and environmental education. Social awareness is also raised through fund-raising for charities at home and abroad, for instance, the Blue Peter Appeal for Cancer Research, Comic Relief, and 'Operation Christmas Child.' Pupils also share their contributions to the annual Harvest Festival with the local Anglican community.

27. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are learning to appreciate their own cultural heritage through classic literature such as the plays of Shakespeare, through music in assembly and during lessons, and in art through the works of Monet, Van Gogh and Lowry.

28. However, provision for the study of other cultures in present day Britain is less well-emphasised and little attention is paid to the contributions of other cultures in mathematics, science and technology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. All members of staff work together as a team and everyone does their best to make sure that pupils are well looked after, with a good level of personal support and guidance, during the school day.

30. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. When pupils are late to school, or absent, staff know why and take appropriate action. The school development plan contains carefully considered strategies designed to improve the performance of pupils whose attendance is cause for concern and the school works closely with the Educational Welfare Officer and the Traveller Support Team to promote regular attendance.

31. Support and guidance offered to pupils with special educational needs is inadequate, since there are no systematic procedures for identifying their particular learning needs and there is not always sufficient support provided for them in lessons outside the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. Although statements of special educational needs are reviewed regularly for the pupils involved, in accordance with the national Code of Practice, the review of other individual education plans is too irregular and inadequate to be of help in enabling them to make the progress of which they are capable. The school makes good use, when required, of outside agencies such as the Specific Learning Difficulties support group, speech therapists and specialist teachers of the visually impaired.

32. There are shortcomings in procedures for monitoring and fostering the personal development of pupils. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take on meaningful responsibilities and to develop good independent studying skills and monitoring of personal development is not undertaken systematically. Where necessary, the school makes good use of external support agencies for pupils with particular needs, for instance, the Travellers' Children Support agency and the Ethnic Minority Teaching and Attainment Group. Assessment procedures are insufficiently rigorous and the use of the data obtained not effective enough to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils.

33. The school's assessment procedures and use of assessment as a means of raising standards of attainment are unsatisfactory. The inadequacy of the procedures was highlighted in the previous inspection report. The school improvement visit, made by the Office for Standards in Education in 1998, to monitor the school's performance, noted improvements in assessment. Initiatives such as the collection of samples of pupils' work in portfolios and the use of information about pupils' attainment from the infant school to set individual targets had been introduced. However, that progress has not been sustained, although further development of assessment procedures is prominent in the school's development plan.

34. The school collects assessment data on pupils from the infant school, and uses it to group pupils within some classes. The school also chooses to enter pupils for optional National Curriculum assessment tests during the time that pupils are in the junior school. However, regular assessments of pupils' attainment and progress are made only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In order to acquaint teachers with appropriate standards, samples of pupils' work are assessed against National Curriculum criteria and the results are moderated and collated. The procedures for

transferring assessment information from one class to another are not systematic. Assessment data is not used sufficiently to ensure that teachers' planning takes account of what pupils have achieved before. Consequently pupils are not always given appropriately challenging tasks, and this sometimes restricts progress in their learning. Formal science assessments are not detailed enough to be a useful learning tool.

35. Although pupils are given individual attainment targets, there is no rigorous approach to analysing the results and using the information to help raise standards further. There are no effective procedures for assessing the capabilities of pupils with English as an additional language. Assessment procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are inadequate: the school does not have reliable methods of using assessment information to provide effective learning goals for these pupils. Therefore, overall, the use of assessment to inform planning and to raise standards generally is under-developed and assessment is not sufficiently co-ordinated within the school.

36. Although there is a behaviour policy there is no whole school behaviour management at the moment. Class teachers take effective measures which ensure generally good behaviour in lessons and at play. Instances of bullying are rare and carefully monitored. Injuries are always reported in writing in the accident book and any problems arising are swiftly and justly dealt with.

37. Procedures for child protection are unsatisfactory. Some staff are untrained and do not know the best action to take in the event of suspected abuse. Although the school does have a designated person and a child protection policy which is in agreement with the local Acting Committee for the Protection of Children it is not well known by staff and not all staff would take appropriate action.

38. There are very few directional fire exit signs in the school and given the high level of new staff and pupils this poses a health and safety risk. The fire drill log book shows a last entry in 1997 and although it is understood that fire drills have been undertaken since that time there is no indication of how long evacuation of the building took.

39. The new information and communication technology suite has only one door which leads to another classroom and no easy way to open the windows which are fitted with metal grills on the inside. This is also a health and safety risk in the event of fire. The temperature in this room during the inspection was unacceptably high and a risk to health.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. This school sees a close partnership between home and school as fundamental to its work and is keen to increase the extent to which parents are involved in the day-to-day life of the school. Several parents come in to the school to hear pupils read and to support classroom activities and some of these do so two and three times a week. Parents have taken part in a barbecue and this raised a substantial sum of money but there are indications that a significant proportion of parents are not sufficiently involved. The school has tried to introduce a parent teacher association with little success so far. Parental involvement is an area for development identified on the school development plan and the school does all it can to foster parents' meaningful involvement with its work. The home-school contract is signed by parents but makes little practical contribution to pupils' learning.

41. The school has held literacy and numeracy meetings to explain what new legislation will mean in the classroom but few other meetings to explain curricular developments and new educational initiatives have been held. There is only a small number of pupils with English as an additional language but information provided by the school for parents is always in English and no alternative arrangements are made. The information provided for parents of pupils with special educational needs does not comply with the Code of Practice and they are insufficiently involved in the school's planning or provision for their children. The very new headteacher has a clear vision of future close working partnerships with parents and the school is ready to move forward in this respect as identified on the school development plan.

42. Whilst most parents are generally satisfied with most aspects of the school's provision, views expressed during the pre-inspection meeting and through the parents' questionnaire indicate some

dissatisfaction with; the amount of homework; contact with parents and the information about how pupils are getting on. Inspection findings disagree with parents views and show that end of year academic reports are of a high quality and give a clear indication of pupils' progress and that parents are invited to attend an evening to discuss their child's work and progress. Inspectors also found that the amount of homework given to pupils is adequate and that sound contact with parents regarding their child's progress is an established feature of the school. Thursday 'open afternoons' are used by some parents to discuss their child with the teacher and this is a good facility which contributes well to pupils' learning and well being.

43. The school prospectus is well written but does not contain all the information required by law. This includes; the address of the school, the school telephone number and pupils' absence rates. The governors' annual report to parents does not meet legal requirements in that it does not contain the following information; a statement on the progress in implementing the action plan drawn up after the last inspection; a description of the arrangements for the admission of pupils with disabilities; insufficient details of the steps taken to prevent disabled pupils being treated less favourably than other pupils; insufficient details of facilities to assist access to the school by pupils with disabilities; information about the next election of parent governors.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher is new to the school, only having been in post for a few days prior to the commencement of the inspection. He has already promoted a sense of teamwork and has helped to create good working relationships between teaching staff, most of whom are new to the school. The governing body was newly constituted earlier in the year and several governors are still under-going training to help them fulfil their roles. The previous headteacher and governing body worked together well to make significant improvements and the school is now much better than it was at the time of the last inspection. Standards of teaching and learning are much better than they were and standards of attainment have improved significantly since 1996. Most of the key issues raised in the last report have been tackled successfully though assessment is still not used effectively to improve teachers' planning, in mathematics there are still too few opportunities to investigate and solve problems. In science there are still too few opportunities to experiment. Whilst significant areas for improvement remain, there are now no serious weaknesses. The roles of the deputy headteacher, who is responsible for assessment and special education needs, and those of subject co-ordinators, are under-developed. There is an acknowledgement that subject co-ordinators are accountable for standards but they are not fully empowered to have much impact on developments. The school is entering a new stage in its development and is poised to make further advances. There is a shared commitment to improvement and the school has the capacity to succeed.

45. Last year there was a substantial financial under-spend caused mainly by an unexpected increase in allocations of money triggered by a significant increase in the number of pupils on roll. This was fortuitous and enabled the governing body to fund a well equipped computer suite and to create another classroom. Eight classrooms, two for each year group, rather than the previous seven, has resulted in a sound rationalisation in the organisation of the pupils into classes and precludes the need for mixed-age classes. The governing body still aims to maintain a prudent under-spend at the end of the current financial year, of some 5 per cent of its budget, for use as a contingency fund should extra money be required for unforeseen developments or unexpected emergencies. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning in most areas of the curriculum but the library has insufficient books and is not used well to promote research skills. There is a sufficient number of suitably qualified teachers and support staff. Classroom assistants are not always deployed in ways which makes the best use of their time.

46. The school's prime aim is set out clearly in the school prospectus. It is, 'to provide a caring and purposeful atmosphere in which all pupils enjoy their work, attain the highest standard and acquire a sense of achievement.' The school is effective and is largely successful in achieving its aims. Standards are, in the main, as high as might be expected though there is scope for further improvement and pupils with special educational needs could do better if tasks were more closely matched to their learning needs.

47. Although the recently revised policy document on special educational needs now complies with the national guidance, provision within the school is unsatisfactory. The school is aware of this and is beginning to address the issues of the accurate identification of pupils' particular learning needs, the support required by such pupils and the involvement of parents in their pupils' individual educational plans. The deputy headteacher, who is also the co-ordinator for special educational needs, has endeavoured to improve the situation, but he has yet to receive the professional advice or undergo the necessary training to fulfil his role effectively. The rest of the teaching staff are insufficiently aware of how to plan and provide for these pupils and there is an urgent need to address this through staff training. The governor responsible for monitoring special educational needs provision is recently appointed and is still learning about the duties of his role and increasing his knowledge of this area of the school's work. The school is a little uncertain of how much of the annual budget is earmarked for special educational needs and, in the annual report to parents, does not always make a full accounting of how resources are allocated.

48. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the school development plan focuses on appropriate areas for improvement. The school acknowledges that the current arrangements for the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are inadequate and has prioritised this as an area of development in the current development plan. Good arrangements are made for provision for Travellers' children and for pupils from ethnic minorities. Accommodation at the school is suitable for pupils with physical disabilities, with specific toilet facilities and ramps where necessary at entrances and exits. Procedures for identifying and addressing the training needs of teaching and support staff are not systematic. Teaching and support staff feel the need for greater in-service training in various areas, especially in the use of computers to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

49. The governing body does not fulfil all the legal requirements for providing information for parents. The school's annual report to parents contained a number of omissions, such as the school's progress towards meeting the targets set in the action plan designed to address the key issues raised in the last report, though the last annual report was the responsibility of the previous governing body. The school prospectus, which is the responsibility of the present governing body, omits such key information as the school's address and telephone number. The governing body has not ensured that all staff are fully aware of child protection procedures.

50. The governing body assigns the money it is allocated prudently and ensure that resources are adequate to support teaching and learning. Governors monitor expenditure carefully and keep well within budgetary limits. They are kept fully informed about all issues affecting the school and they are acutely aware of variations in the school's performance. Taking into account the significant improvements which have been made and the sound standards which pupils attain, the school gives satisfactory value for money. This is in itself a significant improvement on the situation in 1996 when inspectors found that the school provided unsatisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve standards further the headteacher, staff and governing body should:

- (1) *Take immediate steps to improve provision for pupils with special educational needs by:
 - meeting the professional development needs of all staff, including the co-ordinator so that they learn to identify, plan and teach these pupils in order to help them make better progress

- improving curriculum planning to take account of the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs in all subjects and in all year groups
- improving support given in classrooms by providing further training for classroom assistants
- improving assessment procedures so that class teachers can help pupils with special educational needs meet the targets in their individual education plans
- seeking greater involvement of parents of pupils with special educational needs to keep them more fully informed about their children's needs and progress.

(paragraphs 4,11,16,17,21,31,35,41,46,47,66)

*Many of these issues have already been identified by the school and included as priorities in the current development plan.

(2) Refine assessment procedures by :

- ensuring that attainment and progress are clearly and consistently recorded ;
- monitoring the procedures to ensure that records of attainment and progress are used to plan the next steps in learning ;
- making a closer match between the tasks presented to pupils and their individual learning needs;
- transferring information from one class teacher to another in order to promote better progress.

(paragraphs 21,32,33,34,35,44,62,67)

- (3) Develop strategies to determine the training needs of all staff and make appropriate in-service training provision. (paragraphs 12,47,48,63,64)
- (4) Develop the roles of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators so that they are able to take a lead in raising standards. (paragraph 44,63,73,80,87)
- (4) Heighten the awareness of all staff of child protection procedures. (paragraphs 37,49)
- (5) Develop the use of information technology so that computers are used to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. (paragraphs 14,48,59,63,69,71,83)
- (6) Improve attendance as proposed in the school development plan. (paragraphs 9, 30)
- (7) Monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils with English as an additional language and give support where necessary. (paragraphs 16,17,35)
- (8) Attend to the health and safety issues raised in this report. (paragraphs 38,39)

Other less significant areas for development:

There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative or to become more mature and responsible. (paragraphs 7,25,32)

There is insufficient scope for investigation in science and mathematics. (paragraphs 3,64,44, 61,64)

The library is not well resourced and is under-used. (paragraphs 45,58)

Classroom assistants are not always deployed in ways which make the best use of their time. (paragraphs 14, 45,63)

The information provided for parents does not always fulfil legal requirements. (paragraphs 43,49)

The periods of time allocated to physical education are too short. (paragraphs 18,92)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	55
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	7	27	60	6	0	0

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

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)	227
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	35
Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	53
English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14
Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	9
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.3
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	23	25	48

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	17	18
	Girls	15	16	19
	Total	29	34	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	60 (68)	69 (69)	77 (86)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	16	11
	Girls	9	16	11
	Total	23	32	22
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	48 (57)	67 (73)	46 (73)
	National	* (68)	* (69)	* (75)

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

* There are as yet no national comparative figures available.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	0
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.7
Average class size	28.4

Education support staff: Y3– Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124.5

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	394 204
Total expenditure	381 124
Expenditure per pupil	1 687
Balance brought forward from previous year	36 270
Balance carried forward to next year	49 350

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	223
Number of questionnaires returned	62

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	39	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	32	8	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	53	11	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	50	13	6	0
The teaching is good.	52	35	8	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	34	21	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	40	5	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	44	16	5	8
The school is well led and managed.	52	39	0	6	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	37	5	3	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	51	7	3	3

Other issues raised by parents

Parents support the school and are generally pleased with the education it provides. There were no common issues raised by any significant number of parents. There was a general agreement at the parents' meeting that they would greatly appreciate a clear explanation about the National Curriculum levels of attainment

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

ENGLISH

51. Overall, by the time pupils reach the age of eleven, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations, although for a substantial minority standards are below expectations in reading and writing. Standards are broadly satisfactory, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The results in 1999 showed that, whilst the school's performance was broadly in line with the national average when compared with all schools, results were below average when compared with similar schools. The National Curriculum tests in 2000 showed that the proportion of eleven-year-olds achieving Level 4 or above was below the national average, and had fallen since 1999. However, the group of pupils in Year 6 in 2000 was disadvantaged by having had temporary teachers, a transient pupil population, and very negative attitudes amongst some pupils, particularly boys, all of which had a detrimental effect upon results. The evidence of the inspection shows that the substantial majority of pupils in the current Year 6, both boys and girls, are achieving standards that are in line with national expectations. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection when a minority attained the expected level.

52. Pupils enter the school at the age of seven with standards of English that are just below national expectations. During the next four years, they learn to speak with increasing confidence and accuracy about their work. Most pupils respond well to questioning in class, and they enjoy reading their work aloud. They also quickly develop good listening skills, which assist their learning generally. By the age of eleven pupils attain standards in speaking and listening which are broadly in line with national expectations. The standard of reading for the substantial majority is close to national expectations, although a significant minority perform at levels that are below this level, and by the age of eleven this minority does not read with confidence, fluency, expression or sustained accuracy. Almost all pupils do enjoy reading, however. Pupils regularly take books home and their reading is monitored by teachers. More able readers enjoy a wide range of fiction and non-fiction and can talk readily about plot and character, and reflect maturely on the qualities of good writing. Most pupils also learn research skills such as how to use an index, although they have relatively few opportunities for independent research in lessons. By the age of eleven pupils attain standards in reading which are broadly in line with national expectations.

53. Standards in writing are variable. Whilst most pupils attain the level expected of eleven-year-olds, a large minority makes slower progress in developing writing skills. Pupils learn to produce a wider range of writing as they move up the school, and the range is an improvement on the situation noted in the previous inspection. For example, pupils write book reviews, formal and informal letters, grammatical and comprehension exercises, and a range of creative writing. However, the accuracy of much of the writing is very inconsistent. Several pupils even by the age of eleven write with a consistent joined-up script in some subjects, but not in others. Many pupils make frequent errors in the spelling of common words, and punctuation is often erratic. Although pupils know how to check their work for accuracy, for example by using thesauruses or dictionaries, many are reluctant to do so unless directly prompted by the teacher.

54. Pupils make the most rapid progress in developing their writing skills in Year 6. In the school as a whole, pupils with special educational needs make mostly satisfactory progress in developing their writing and reading skills, often with the aid of support from classroom assistants, and many of these pupils make every effort to contribute orally to lessons. Pupils with English as an additional language have well developed English speaking skills and most make sound progress.

55. The quality of teaching is good: it is always at least satisfactory, and it is good, and occasionally very good, in more than a half of lessons. Where teaching in English is good, it is characterised by several qualities. The management of classes is very effective, especially when teachers are following the structure of the literacy hour. Teachers monitor the progress of various groups, even when they are focusing their particular attention on one group, and as a result a purposeful working atmosphere is sustained, which promotes effective learning. Whole-class sessions are also handled

well: for example when introducing a topic, teachers usually give a clear explanation of the learning objectives. This was observed on several occasions when teachers were using 'big books' to prompt pupils into thinking about how authors create settings for stories and introduce characterisation. Before the end of the lesson, teachers review progress towards those objectives, and ask pupils to report back on their work. This gives a sense of achievement to pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils who respond well to short-term learning goals. Teachers train pupils to listen carefully to both teacher and fellow pupils and obey the conventions of speaking in turn. Teachers give due attention to extending pupils' vocabulary. They use word games and a range of materials when teaching pupils, for example, an understanding of prefixes and suffixes, or how to create more powerful verbs to make their writing more interesting. In some of the best lessons, teachers involve pupils directly in their own learning, as for example in a Year 6 lesson when pupils were encouraged to debate their own strategies for improving and checking their spelling. Careful attention is given to developing structures to assist pupils' language development: as when pupils in Year 3 were taken through the various stages of writing an evocative story, with an emphasis on introductions, developments and conclusions, whilst at the same time the teacher took the opportunity to reinforce basic writing skills and conventions such as paragraphing. Pupils respond well to these high expectations, and make good progress in these lessons. Good teaching is also characterised by careful efforts made to match the work to the various ability levels of pupils, often through the use of worksheets which all relate to a particular theme, but which are geared to different stages of development. Pupils form good relationships with teachers and most enjoy the subject. Pupils show an interest in language and concentrate well, particularly at the upper end of the school, as when pupils in Year 6 analysed each other's poetry compositions constructively and made thoughtful observations.

56. Where aspects of teaching are less effective, pupils in group activities are not given clear instructions or adequate support, so that they are not sure whether they are fulfilling the task properly or successfully. For example lower-attaining pupils in several year groups were not given enough examples before being left to work alone on creating words with prefixes and suffixes. On some occasions more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, as for example when given work which was pitched at a level which they had already attained lower down the school. Pupils are not always encouraged to check their own work by using dictionaries, and opportunities for pupils to do their own research are sometimes missed. Teachers' marking of work is not always constructive, and therefore pupils are sometimes unable to understand how they might correct their errors or improve their work.

57. Considerable progress has been made in raising standards in English through the introduction and development of the literacy hour, which all teachers are implementing effectively. However, there is no policy for promoting literacy across the curriculum. Although, for example, key words are sometimes emphasised in other subject areas, the lack of focus on language skills outside English lessons sometimes retards progress in other subjects, such as mathematics.

58. The English co-ordinator has made strenuous efforts to raise standards in the subject, by for example monitoring teaching and implementing strategies designed to improve spelling and by focusing on improving the attainment of boys. The results of these efforts are beginning to take effect. Although resources to support teaching and learning have been improved, and resources are mostly adequate, the school's central library is under-resourced and underused as a learning tool. Class libraries do not fully compensate for these deficiencies. There is little use of computers to extend learning.

59. The quality of teaching in English has improved since the previous inspection, and the range of writing has been extended. However, the inconsistent quality of the marking, and the under-developed use of information and communications technology were both noted in the previous inspection report and remain as weaknesses.

MATHEMATICS

60. By the time they reach the age of eleven years old, inspection findings show that pupils now attain standards which are in line with national expectations. This is not entirely consistent with the results of National Curriculum tests in 1999 which showed that, when compared with all schools and when compared with similar schools, the school's performance was, at that time, below the national average. This represents, however, an improvement since the last inspection when the school's results

were well below the national average. Whilst the proportion of pupils who attained the national target of Level 4 in 1999 was exactly the same as the proportion of pupils nationally, the school's overall performance was below average. This was because the proportion of pupils who exceeded the national target of Level 4 and attained the higher Level 5 standard was below average. Results in 2000 were almost exactly the same as in 1999 though again a slightly lower proportion attained Level 5 indicating that higher-attaining pupils do not always achieve as well as they should. Inspection findings show, however, that this year's group of Year 6 pupils are making good progress and teachers' expectations of the higher attaining pupils are appropriate. Standards are now as high as might reasonably be expected.

61. Pupils in Year 3 are developing a good understanding of the number system and that digits have a different value if placed in the 'hundreds' or 'tens' column rather than in the 'units' column. A significant proportion of pupils find difficulty in expressing themselves and their command of mathematical vocabulary is weak. When asked, for example, what the digit two was worth in the number 729, few could answer confidently. They are not good at quickly recalling number facts and have to rely on their fingers to add seven to five, for example. They know how to count in tens and fives and have begun to learn the easier multiplication tables. By the age of eleven most pupils in Year 6 can use their knowledge and understanding to collect data on the most popular brands of training shoes or chocolate and can work on the data to create graphs and frequency tables. They create line graphs on the frequency of absences and interpret the results sensibly. They use the skills developed in work on shape and space to create good three-dimensional shapes, such as triangular prisms, from carefully drawn nets which challenge the accuracy of their measuring and drawing skills. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are grouped by ability into four separate sets. Pupils in the top set have a good understanding of place value and know how to multiply and divide by tens, hundreds and thousands. Pupils in the second set understand how to estimate and refine their estimation to achieve the correct answers to problems such as $99p \times 40$. Many of these pupils find difficulty in remembering the answer to simple problems, such as 7×8 , and have few strategies to work out the answer to such sums as 24×40 . The school has noted that pupils' skills in mental arithmetic are not as sharp as they might be and have made plans, described in the school development plan, to take action to improve standards in this area of the subject. Generally pupils have not developed sufficient practical skills and strategies for problem solving. They understand the notion of capacity, for example, but are unable to estimate the capacity of containers or to describe clearly how they could find out how much liquid, on average, they consume each day.

62. Overall teaching is satisfactory; it is always at least sound and much of it is good. This results in effective learning for most pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language have well developed English speaking skills which enable them to make satisfactory progress. Teachers group pupils according to ability and prepare activities which are designed to match the differing learning needs of pupils. In practice the work is not always well matched to pupils' needs. This is partly because teachers are often unsure about what pupils already know and understand. It is also because the tasks are not always divided into sufficiently graded steps and insufficient practical apparatus is provided to foster understanding. Consequently the progress which pupils make, especially the lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, is restricted. Teachers often assume more prior understanding than has actually been developed. In Years 5 and 6 the stages of developing the skill of multiplying a two digit number by another two digit number, for example, are not explained with sufficient illustration or with enough emphasis on the different strategies which might be used to solve the equation. In Year 3 the term 'partitioning' is used with insufficient explanation of what the word means. The reasons for activities are not always made explicit to the pupils who, therefore, do not have a clear idea of the purpose of the lesson. The teacher will explain, for example, that the learning objective is to understand the relationship between multiplication and division but not why it might be useful to develop such an understanding. Several teachers lack a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the subject. Most teachers use effective strategies to promote learning, such as the number rod which is divided into sections and each section can represent, say, seven. The rod is then used as an aid to counting in sevens, forwards and backwards, and developing and understanding of the seven times table. Another effective strategy involves a question and answer card game which involves the whole class being alert, listening, concentrating and responding with the answers to simple number problems. Homework is used effectively to support learning and pupils have clear short-term targets designed to improve their performance.

63. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good with much praise and encouragement offered. Pupils are willing to learn and most have a positive attitude towards the subject. Pupils' work is carefully marked and the best marking shows pupils how to improve their work. Teachers' have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and ensure that an orderly learning environment is maintained. Pupils' work is neatly presented and there is a clear understanding that fewer errors will occur if work is presented in an orderly way. The co-ordinator is new to the school and has not yet been able to make much impact on raising standards. Several teachers lack confidence in teaching the subject and this indicates a need for more in-service training. Resources are adequate to support teaching and learning though computers and practical equipment are not used sufficiently. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the quality of teaching but they are not always used to best effect. On occasions for example, they patrol the class to give general support if needed rather than being actively involved in supporting a particular group with a particular task. The school uses the National Numeracy Strategy as a planning framework but there is an over-reliance on text books and work sheets at the expense of practical activities. Links are made with other areas of the curriculum and pupils use their skills well in geography when working with maps and atlases on co-ordinates and when collecting data in science. Standards of teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection when only a quarter of pupils attained the expected standard and teaching was unsatisfactory in a high percentage of lessons. The school is now well placed to make further improvements.

SCIENCE

64. Results of the National Curriculum tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999 showed that the school's performance was above average both when compared with all schools and when compared with similar schools. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are currently above average though the results in 2000 fell because the group of pupils which took the tests had an unusually high proportion of lower-attaining pupils. Results have improved significantly since the previous inspection. At this early stage in the school year pupils are attaining standards which are in line with national expectations, although achievement in investigative and experimental science is not as satisfactory because this strand of the subject receives insufficient attention. This was noted as an area for staff development at the time of the last inspection.

65. Almost all pupils in Year 4 are aware that they still have 'milk teeth' and they understand how their permanent teeth must be cared for because they are irreplaceable. They know that 'biting' teeth are at the front of the mouth, 'tearing teeth' are at the side and that 'chewing teeth' are at the back of the mouth. Higher attaining pupils know that these teeth are called incisors, canines and molars. Many pupils in Year 5 correctly identify an acorn and a sycamore leaf and they understand how seeds can be carried on the wind or by birds or on the wheels of lorries. Most pupils know that some materials are subject to changes which can be reversed through their investigative work on melting chocolate or making jelly, and that certain are attracted to magnets. By the age of eleven, the majority of pupils have a good understanding of forces, naming four types and understanding how gravity pulls to the centre of the earth whilst friction slows objects down and causes heat. Most can 'read' and interpret a topic web on forces with little difficulty, and know that forces are measured in Newtons. However, scrutiny of past work shows that there is little use of information technology in the science curriculum, with all data handling being done by hand, for example. Pupils' literacy skills are used satisfactorily across the curriculum and numeracy skills are used effectively in the variety of presentation which pupils record their findings in graphs and charts. Higher-attaining pupils sometimes present reports very well and very little work is left unfinished by any group. However, much of the information recorded is copied from a common source and pupils of lower ability and those with special educational needs do not know the topics they have studied as well as the rest of their peers. There is scope for providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently in their investigations and enquiries.

66. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. There were instances of good teaching in Year 4 and in one of the Year 6 classes. Teachers plan lessons which are interesting and share the learning objectives with the pupils so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers' maintain high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their management of their pupils is consistently good – a remarkable feature so early in the term when many teachers and pupils are new to the school. However, the scientific investigations planned are formally carried out by the teacher and pupils have few opportunities to make their own enquiries and research. Very few opportunities are provided for pupils to

use information technology as a tool in their learning. Support for pupils with special educational needs during lessons is often inadequate mainly because classroom assistants lack the necessary training and prior knowledge of teachers' planning to enable them to help pupils to make progress. Lessons are sometimes insufficiently exciting to arouse interest, particularly that of lower-attaining pupils. Marking is often minimal, with insufficient comment on how pupils can improve their work.

67. Planning for science is based on national guidance and is being satisfactorily revised to meet the requirements of Curriculum 2000. However, teachers' short-term planning does not take sufficient account of what pupils already know, understand and can do and little attempt is made to adapt tasks for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. This sometimes results in repetition of topics already learned or in a lack of progress for the less able. Assessment procedures are not rigorous enough to provide teachers with sufficient detail so that they can introduce new topics without time-wasting initial assessment lessons.

68. Resources for the subject are adequate, and the school makes effective use of the environment in its immediate surroundings. Teachers' displays are a satisfactory reflection of topics being, or to be, studied in the current term. They are attractive and enhance the learning environment but do not provide enough challenge and are insufficiently used as a learning resource.

ART AND DESIGN

69. By the age of eleven, pupils' attain standards which fall below national expectations. The development of this subject has not been high on the list of the school's priorities and standards have declined since the last inspection but it does feature in the school development plan as a priority for next year. Pupils produce a limited range of work and there is little three-dimensional work in evidence. Pupils study the work of other artists, such as the work of Escher and Lowry, and gain inspiration for their own drawings. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists and craftsmen is, however, limited and less than would normally be expected of eleven year olds. In Year 6 pupils have produced good drawings of training shoes as a result of observing the features of the shoes closely. In Year 4 pupils have experimented with printing techniques and have produced effective prints based on their sketches of flowers. Pupils use their skills well in other areas of the curriculum such as carefully observing and drawing seeds as part of a scientific investigation in Year 5 and illustrating how sound travels in Year 3. They illustrate their history topic books well with carefully coloured drawings. Little use is made of computers to support teaching and learning and pupils' skills in this area of work are under-developed. This was also noted in the last inspection report.

70. Teaching is mostly sound but there is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is satisfactory and promotes effective learning of skills where teachers explain the nature and purpose of different types of sketching pencil, for example, and demonstrate techniques such as shading and hatching. Pupils enjoy the subject and most make satisfactory progress during these lessons. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory where the purpose of the activity is unclear and where techniques are not taught with sufficient precision. Time is not always used effectively and at the end of several lessons little work of quality had been produced. There are occasions when too long is spent managing pupils' behaviour rather than getting on with an activity. Several teachers lack subject knowledge and confidence. There is an outline scheme of work but this is outdated. The subject lacks cohesion and there is insufficient emphasis on the progressive development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Several teachers lack confidence in teaching the subject and have limited subject knowledge. There is no designated subject co-ordinator responsible for maintaining and improving standards. However, the school has produced a good plan for developing the subject next year.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

71. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards in the key areas of designing, making and evaluating that meet national expectations. Standards are, therefore, satisfactory, and the level of attainment noted in the previous inspection has been maintained. Pupils show a good ability to work both individually and co-operatively on a variety of short- and long-term projects. They work with a variety of tools and materials. For example, pupils in Year 3 design and make frames for photographs to

a good standard, and then evaluate the finished product. Pupils in Year 4 make money containers, and pupils in Year 5 musical instruments and moving toys. In Year 6 pupils progress to making slippers. The level of skill shown in designing and making in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional formats is in line with expectations. Pupils are adept in using tools and materials such as wood, cardboard, sheet and mouldable materials, and they refine techniques such as accurate measuring. Further variety is promoted by developing a range of stitches in textile work, and by pupils learning to prepare and classify different foods. Pupils make sound progress in learning to modify and improve their finished products, as seen for example in the work done by older pupils in designing and adapting a model fire engine. However, relatively little use is made of information and communications technology in design and technology applications. Pupils with special educational needs mostly make satisfactory progress in improving their skills, especially when they receive additional support.

72. Although relatively little teaching of design technology was observed, what was seen was always at least satisfactory, and teaching is very good in one lesson in three. The overall quality of teaching in the subject has improved since the previous inspection. Where the teaching is good or better, the teacher clearly explains the objectives and the processes to pupils, so that they have a clear idea of learning outcomes; and at the same time teachers reinforce the acquisition and understanding of appropriate vocabulary such as 'detachable'. Particularly helpful is the emphasis given to pupils developing and experimenting with their own ideas, as when they design and make book covers. In this way pupils become less dependent on the teacher. The good teaching, particularly in Year 6, challenges the pupils to reflect on and to modify their designs, particularly by skilful questioning. The effective combination of explanation and questioning helps to establish in pupils' minds the potential of creating and using design templates. Precise time targets are given to stimulate pupils to concentrate on their tasks, as when pupils in Year 3 make frames for photographs. Pupils enjoy their design technology lessons, and older pupils in particular talk enthusiastically about the knowledge and understanding they have gained, thereby helping to demonstrate the satisfactory progress they have made in their learning.

73. The monitoring of lessons in design technology and its assessment have been unsystematic and unsatisfactory. However, the new co-ordinator is beginning to review the design technology scheme of work and is committed to further developing the subject and its profile within the school.

GEOGRAPHY

74. Only one year group was studying geography during the inspection and only one lesson was observed. Judgements are therefore based on a study of previous work, teachers' planning and the display of work. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the teaching of the subject throughout the school.

75. Past work shows that standards by the age of eleven are broadly in line with the national expectation. Projects on India and Kenya show some personal research and independent writing covering climate, routes, modes of travel, farming and tourism. Some incorporate a plan of the chosen area with a colour key, also prominent buildings, for example the Taj Mahal. Good work has been produced on the differences and similarities of Stevenage, India and Kenya. Work on a variety of maps and plans shows a progressive development of mapping skills from simple drawings to detailed plans with colour keys. Satisfactory work on directions and bearings has been produced but there is little development in the study of route-finding or man's interaction with the environment. This subject has not maintained a high profile in the school's curriculum as a result of the nationally promoted emphasis on literacy and numeracy over the past couple of years. There is no evidence of the development of a vocabulary associated with the subject, or of the use of numeracy in surveys or data-handling, or of the use of information and communication technology. In the lesson observed, pupils looked closely and described what they saw on their walk around the school, identifying specific areas from the outside, for example, their own and the parallel Year 3 classroom. As most of them came from the adjoining infants' school, they have a good knowledge of their immediate environment and some can describe accurately the route they take home from school. Most understand the purpose of a key and how to use colours to signify differing or similar features.

76. The present programme of study is being revised to take account of new national guidance. There is no co-ordinator for the subject at the moment, the head teacher is holding a watching brief. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum and for assessment are unsatisfactory. Resources are adequate and good use is made of the immediate environment and visits to places of environmental interest. At the time of the inspection, there were very limited displays of pupils' work, which is still not yet developed as a learning resource.

HISTORY

77. By the age of eleven, pupils' standards of attainment are broadly in line with the national expectation. This judgement is made in the light of the reduced curricular requirements over the past two years. The stage of development which the subject has reached is much the same as it was at the time of the last inspection.

78. Pupils' work in Year 3, on a topic on Romans, shows some independent research and writing on the Romans and Celtic Britain. The research on Boudicca's rebellion is well-presented and provides good evidence of the selection, use and interpretation of secondary sources. There is a little imaginative and empathic writing in the 'Roman Times,' a mock newspaper article about the effects of the Roman withdrawal from Britain. Higher-attaining pupils produce satisfactory work on the contrast between Roman toys and baths and those of today in their own homes. In Year 4, pupils are beginning to understand that historians get information by asking questions and investigating and some already have a broad knowledge of the Tudors, their current area of study. By the age of eleven, pupils have a sound understanding of life in Britain since the 1930s, and particularly about the events and personalities of World War II. Their empathic writing as a child evacuee shows a satisfactory understanding of the period. The majority of pupils place Stevenage securely in England and the United Kingdom and locate 'the old town' in modern Stevenage, appreciating the growth of the town over the centuries. They understand, for instance, that diet has changed because people are no longer so dependent on local agriculture and higher-attainers identify differences in women's lives through the ages.

79. The quality of teaching is sound overall and, for the younger pupils, sometimes very good. In the best lessons, teachers plan, prepare and organise the lesson very well. Their good subject knowledge and enthusiasm is conveyed to pupils who become excited and interested in the work they are given to do. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond very well, the majority listening eagerly and being keen to take part in discussion. Teachers value all contributions made by pupils and use them as further teaching points or to generate further discussion. They make good use of praise and encouragement to sustain pupils' interest and effort. They give clear instructions when setting tasks, but do not always take into account the differing abilities in the class, particularly when they expect pupils with special educational needs to perform the same tasks with no adaptation of worksheets or vocabulary. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils which ensures they have no problems with management or discipline and they stress the benefits and necessity of working as a group. Pupils are excited by the work, keen to begin and animatedly discuss what to do, sharing the learning they have already done. At the end of the key stage, teachers build well upon previous work, giving clear explanations of conditions of life, work and diet in the past, using pupils' existing knowledge and understanding and their own experience, for example, one child had tried spinning wool by hand. The task is the same for all abilities but teachers make their expectations quite clear, for instance, higher attaining pupils use the worksheet as a prompt for independent writing. Uses of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory in the subject, but there is no evidence of the use of information technology, except in the use of a CD-ROM for research, usually carried out by the teacher.

80. The programme of study is insufficiently detailed to give teachers sufficient guidance on what has gone before and what is to follow. The school is aware of this and is in process of revising all subject policies and schemes of work to incorporate the new guidance for Curriculum 2000. The curriculum is enhanced with visits and role-play as evacuees or as Tudors. There are no formal assessment procedures, only informal discussions, which are not recorded. The co-ordinator has a satisfactory understanding of the role which is very much under-developed in terms of monitoring and evaluating provision and classroom practice. Books and other resources are adequate and the small collection of artefacts is being build up as the topic occurs and finances allow. Display celebrates

pupils' achievements, is attractive and informative but is not challenging enough to provoke further curiosity and take learning forward.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

81. It was not possible during the inspection to evaluate standards of attainment in information and communications technology. At the time of the inspection a new computer suite had just been established. However, not all the software had been installed, and the computers were experiencing 'teething difficulties'. Older pupils were only at the stage of learning to log on to the new machines. There was insufficient evidence to evaluate pupils' practical ability to research information using computers, and then to interpret and use this information, nor was it possible to ascertain how successfully pupils could create and modify a series of instructions.

82. It was evident from teachers' planning and the scheme of work, and from discussions with pupils, that classes are introduced to a series of relevant information technology processes during their time in the school, although pupils in Year 6 used very little information and communications technology lower down the school. Pupils do gain the experience of combining text and graphics, for example when creating and illustrating their poetry. They also collect data, for example when carrying out surveys of their classmates' leisure habits and preferences, and then they display the results in various graphical forms using computer programmes. Older pupils are introduced to the use of spreadsheets and they prepare a multimedia presentation. However, little evidence of this work remains, and no examples of pupils handling the data were seen, so it is not possible to judge the extent of pupils' abilities in these areas. Pupils in Year 6 were able to talk knowledgeably about the importance of information and communications technology in the modern world, and, for example, they discussed ethical issues raised by the use of computers in the world outside school. Pupils enjoy using computers - many have them at home - and they would like more access to them in school.

83. Teachers' planning indicates that a varied range of computing activities is taught in information and communications technology lessons, so that statutory requirements are met in terms of breadth, but not always in sufficient depth. Other than the one computer lesson which each pupil attends weekly, there is relatively little application of computers in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils have very little access to computers for individual work. With a few exceptions, for example the occasional piece of word processing, the application of information and communications technology is not built into the various subject areas of the curriculum as an integral teaching and learning tool, and many opportunities are missed. Although pupils appreciate the potential of computers, they have few opportunities to use them in school to research and present information in different forms or to use models based on computer technology as a regular part of their learning. In this respect the situation has not improved since the last inspection, although there is now a scheme of work for information and communications technology and pupils and teachers have more confidence in their ability to use the technology when it becomes more accessible.

84. Because of the limitations during the inspection week outlined above, it was not possible to evaluate the overall quality of teaching and learning in the subject. Teachers expressed a desire for more in-service training in using computers to support teaching and learning across the curriculum. Assessment of pupils' capabilities is currently unsystematic and unsatisfactory. However, the newly appointed information and communications technology co-ordinator is an experienced practitioner. Although only recently in post, she has already begun to monitor planning and to develop teaching ideas in order to ensure that the newly acquired hardware is used to develop pupils' expertise in a range of curriculum areas. The new computer suite has the potential to be a valuable resource, but the room is very poorly ventilated and in hot weather the atmosphere is very detrimental to concentration and effective learning.

MUSIC

85. By the age of eleven, pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with national expectations, as was the case at the time of the previous inspection. The majority of pupils clap rhythmically and in tempo. They respond to music by smiling, nodding and swaying and recognise different kind of dance music, for instance, a waltz. Pupils of all abilities sustain a common beat, observing and following the

instructions of the 'conductor, whilst clicking their fingers or nodding their heads. They distinguish between loud and soft, fast and slow music. More than half pick up the chorus of a sea shanty quickly, correctly observing tempo and pitch. Most distinguish a beat or no beat in poems and environmental sounds. The majority correctly identify percussion instruments, for example, triangle, tambourine, guiro and maracas. They successfully match sound with the instruments and are beginning to use descriptive language, for example, the onomatopoeic sounds of 'ding' and 'crash'. They successfully sort instruments into sets made of wood or metal, or according to whether they are shaken or struck. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils explain that a pulse or beat is a regular rhythm used in music and some poetry. They conduct and keep two, three and four beat time. Higher-attaining pupils and those musically talented use the term notation correctly. The majority of pupils devise, practise and then perform a composition to suit the mood and beat of the music and improve their ensemble work. They perform percussive rhythms in three parts quite well. They listen carefully and evaluate their own and others' performances. In assemblies and in lessons, they sing tunefully, competently and enthusiastically in unison, having learned the words by heart.

86. The overall quality of teaching is good. There are rare instances of unsatisfactory teaching due to the inexperience of new teachers. In the better lessons, teachers plan purposeful lessons with clear learning objectives which they share with their pupils so that all can evaluate their progress. Their control and management of pupils who present challenging behaviour is good. Teachers give clear instructions and demonstrations and give clear guidance on the correct use of instruments, for instance, a more musical sound is produced on Indian bells if they are held by the string. They make their enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of the subject clear which ensures rapt attention and the delighted participation of pupils so that they learn well. They make a good choice of music for listening which is appropriate to age and experience. Pupils thoroughly enjoy making percussive rhythms and concentrate hard, sustaining their interest and effort to the end of the lesson because of the brisk pace and variety of absorbing activities. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, the relationship between the teacher and pupils was not well enough established for good management in a practical activity in the early days of the school year. Pupils become very restless and silly, fussing with photocopies and chatting among themselves. This slowed the pace down which led to more disruption. There is little musical expertise among the staff and this results in a lack of confidence in teaching the subject. Visiting specialist teachers make a valuable contribution to learning and those pupils able to benefit from these regular weekly lessons make good progress in developing skills with woodwind or stringed instruments.

87. The music curriculum is based on a commercial scheme which ensures that teachers' planning takes account of what has gone before and what is to follow. The curriculum is enhanced by the opportunity to join an after-school choir, which is very well-supported. The school can call upon one hundred voices, for instance, when they participate in local music festivals or the Schools' Concert at the Royal Albert Hall. Occasionally, the school welcomes visiting music groups and last year, pupils from Years 5 and 6 participated in a 'rock' musical presented by a local secondary school. The school also organises good end of term concerts. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of her role, which is effectively exercised to provide a positive influence on the teaching of the subject throughout the school. However, there has recently been little in-service training in the teaching of music, the co-ordinator has no release time for monitoring and evaluating classroom practice and provision and there is no formal procedure for assessment. The use of information technology is restricted to Years 5 and 6, who had some experience of mixing sound on their residential journey. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development. Book and taped music resources are good and include works from other cultures apart from white and European. The range of tuned and untuned percussion is satisfactory and is also multicultural. However, keyboards need repair and replacement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

88. In physical education it was possible during the inspection to observe only gymnastics, although dance, games and outdoor activities also form part of the curriculum. Pupils usually have swimming lessons, but the closure of the local pool has led to the suspension of swimming this year.

89. Standards in gymnastics are in line with the expectations nationally for pupils by the age of eleven, and are therefore satisfactory. This represents a substantial improvement since the previous inspection, and reflects the efforts put into developing teachers' expertise since then. Although standards between individual children are variable, most pupils, both boys and girls, show levels of physical co-ordination that are in line with national expectations, and are able to use the floor space of the hall to construct a series of controlled movements with a variety of balances and directional changes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their previous stages of development.

90. The teaching of physical education is mostly good. Teachers use the short time available to the full, involving pupils promptly in effective warm-up sessions before introducing a progressive range of gymnastic activities which provide challenge and purpose. This motivates pupils, who enjoy the lessons: pupils of all abilities make a sustained effort to improve their skill levels. Teachers' confident approach and firm control, both characteristics of the good lessons, succeed in creating a purposeful working atmosphere. Most pupils listen to instructions, and follow them, well. Another characteristic of the good teaching is the attention paid to developing pupils' planning and evaluative skills. Pupils are taught to think carefully about the movement routines which they construct. They are also taught to evaluate both their own efforts and those of others, and the skill of the teachers in demonstrating and explaining the qualities of good display work assists the pupils in developing their ability.

91. Although pupils enjoy physical education, the inspection was too early in the term to ascertain the level of pupils' take-up of the extracurricular activities which are planned for the forthcoming term.

92. The new physical education co-ordinator is approaching the task of developing the subject with enthusiasm, and there are plans to improve monitoring and assessment, since current procedures are unsystematic and therefore unsatisfactory. However, the short length of physical education lessons is not conducive to consolidating or extending the range of physical education skills to the level of which many pupils are capable.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

93. As was the case at the time of the last inspection, standards at the age of eleven meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. There is, however, a shortcoming in learning about how religious beliefs affect the lives of believers and non-believers alike.

94. Younger pupils have a satisfactory understanding of Christianity and Hinduism, their festivals and patterns of worship. Their work shows some independent research and writing on Hindu gods and goddesses. The majority show, by their answers to questions, that they have a satisfactory understanding of the life of the Buddha and are becoming familiar with the terms Buddhism, enlightenment and Nirvana. They understand that Buddha's first venture outside his palace profoundly affected his way of life and led to the beginning of Buddhism. By the end of the key stage, most have a good knowledge and understanding of Judaism, its beliefs and practices and have a satisfactory knowledge of the lives of several Sikh gurus, including that of Guru Nanak. These studies make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The majority of pupils understand some qualities of leadership as authority and teaching ability but many have forgotten who founded Christianity. The scrutiny of past work reveals only a slight volume and superficial coverage of how religious beliefs affect societies past and present. Much of the information is copied from a common source and is well-presented but little adaptation of task or vocabulary is provided for pupils with prior lower attainment and those with special educational needs. Nor are any adaptations made for those pupils with English as an additional language or those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills, but the use of numeracy in religious education is restricted. Very little use is made of information technology, except for a little research from a CD-ROM, usually carried out by the teacher.

95. The overall quality of teaching is sound. Teachers research topics thoroughly and impart their new-found information in an interesting way so that pupils' attitudes are positive and they tackle the work willingly. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well, except that they do not ensure that the work set

suits the ability of individual pupils, both higher and lower attainers, which sometimes results in a lack of sufficient progress at all levels of ability.. They do not take into account the previous achievement of pupils with special educational needs which restricts their rate of learning.

96 The curriculum for religious education meets the requirements of the 'Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus' but there is an under-emphasis on learning from religion and how various faiths deal with the ultimate questions such as bereavement and suffering. This is because the subject is not taught every term, but only two terms in three in the lower years, only Year 6 pursuing their religious studies all year round. Therefore the time allocation is inadequate for the depth of study required. Distance and cost inhibits the study of places of worship, although pupils do visit the local Anglican church and a Hindu temple which is in easy reach. The school does welcome visiting representatives of Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism, but helpful links with other faiths have not yet been established. The co-ordinator has a satisfactory understanding of her role which is very much underdeveloped in terms of monitoring and evaluation classroom practice. There are no formal assessment procedures, only informal discussions with pupils, the results of which are not recorded. Books resources are good with a good supply of reference material for teachers, but the collection of artefacts for the teaching of major faiths is small. Teachers' display pupils' work which is attractive and informative, but does not provide challenge to take learning forward.