

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MICHAEL'S CofE COMBINED SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110414

Headteacher: Mrs D O McClellan

Reporting inspector: Robert Cory
8705

Dates of inspection: 19 – 23 June 2000

Inspection number: 190845

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior school
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Michael's C of E Combined School Chapel Square Stewkley Leighton Buzzard Beds
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Appropriate authority:	Buckinghamshire
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs K England
Date of previous inspection:	9 December 1996

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Sally Hall, Lay Inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Chris Bolton, Team member	English Religious education Under-fives English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Laura Lindsay-Clift, Team member	Science Information and communication technology Geography History	
Tom Ferris, Team member	Modern foreign language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Michael's Church of England Combined School, Stewkley, is a voluntary controlled school, maintained by Buckinghamshire Education Authority, serving the village of Stewkley and the surrounding area. The school is of average size and has 252 pupils between the ages of four and eleven, with similar numbers of boys and girls. The school has seven pupils from ethnic minorities and three who have English as an additional language and whose first language is Finnish. None of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. Thirty four (15 per cent) of the pupils have special educational needs, mainly for learning difficulties, which is below the national average. The school has nine classes, nine full-time teachers, including the headteacher, and three part-time teachers. The average class size is 28. Since the last inspection the school has changed and now takes pupils between four and eleven years old, whilst at the last inspection the pupils were between five and twelve years old. The school has two normal admission ages, at four and at seven. Standards on entry to the school are above average.

The school's aims are to provide a warm, caring environment in which children can develop intellectually, physically, socially, spiritually, creatively and morally. At the last inspection the key issues were to improve curricular planning, to ensure planning and teaching are more closely monitored and to improve the teachers' expertise and confidence in information and communication technology.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. It consistently attains standards that are well above average in English and above average in mathematics and science. The teaching is good. The school management is very effective in highlighting and responding to challenges. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Current standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science are well above average by the age of seven, and well above average in English by the age of eleven.
- The leadership and management of the school are very good and the governing body is very effective.
- The strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are very effective.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance are very good and lead to effective action.
- The provision for spiritual, moral and social development is very good.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The parents' involvement in the work of the school is very good.

What could be improved

- The teaching of music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1996. Since then it has made good improvements. Since 1996 standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science have improved in line with national trends. The standard of teaching has improved and is now good, and the proportion of teaching judged to be good or very good has doubled. Curriculum planning has improved and strategies for assessment have improved in English and mathematics. The teaching of information and communication technology and the standards attained in this subject have improved.

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	A	A	A	B
mathematics	A	B	B	C
science	A	A	B	C

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

In the 1999 national assessments of eleven-year-olds standards in English were well above the national average and above the average of similar schools. In mathematics and science standards were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. Since 1996 standards in these three subjects have been consistently above the national average and have improved in line with the national trend. The inspectors found that current standards of the oldest pupils in English are well above average levels and that in mathematics and science they are above average levels. These standards are broadly in line with those expected of the school. The school's targets for eleven-year olds for 1999 and 2000 were that 86 per cent of pupils would reach the expected level for their age (level 4) in English and 84 per cent in mathematics. These were exceeded in 1999 and provide an appropriate challenge for the current Year 6 pupils.

Current standards of eleven-year-olds are above expected levels in religious education and physical education; they reach the expected level for the age of the pupils in information and communication technology and the other subjects.

In the 1999 national assessments of seven-year-olds, standards in reading were above the national average and in line with the average of similar schools. In writing and mathematics, standards were in line with the national average, but well below the average for similar schools. From 1996 to 1998 standards in these subjects were above the national average, but in 1999 standards were below those of previous years. The inspectors found that current standards have improved significantly in writing and mathematics, in response to the initiatives in literacy and numeracy. In reading, writing and mathematics, standards are now well above average levels. In science, current standards are also well above average levels. The current standards of seven-year-olds meet the expectations of the religious education syllabus and pupils reach the expected standard for their age in information and communication technology and the other subjects. On entering

the school attainment is above average. By the age of five the pupils exceed the expectations in all areas of their development.

Over both key stages the pupils' achievements overall are sound relative to their earlier attainment and in line with those of similar schools. Pupils with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language make good progress. The school has put in place developments based on the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies and changes to the way pupils are grouped that focus on raising attainment. These have resulted in good achievement in English, mathematics and science by the end of Key Stage 1, in Years 4 and 5 and in English at the end of Key Stage 2. However, these developments have not had time to be fully reflected in the achievement in Year 6, where there is a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in the previous year.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils' enthusiasm has a positive impact on their standards.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good; it has a positive effect on the pupils' learning.
Personal development and relationships	Very good; the pupils enjoy working together.
Attendance	Very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good	Good

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

The teaching is good. Of the lessons seen, the teaching was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons, good or better in 63 per cent and very good in 12 per cent. In only a few lessons (2 per cent) was the teaching unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 2, the teaching was good or very good in 70 per cent of the lessons whilst at Key Stage 1 the teaching was good in nearly 60 per cent of the lessons. The best teaching occurred in Years 4 and 5, where the teaching was good or very good in over 80 per cent of the lessons, over a third of the lessons were very good and the pupils made particularly good progress. However, with the under-fives, although the teaching was at least satisfactory in all of the lessons seen, it was good or very good in only 40 per cent of the lessons. The teaching of the under-fives is carefully planned and generally appropriate to their needs, but sometimes the teaching lacks focus. Generally, the teaching meets the needs of all pupils and their learning is good. They acquire good skills, knowledge and understanding and apply their intellectual, physical and creative abilities well. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very effective. The teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, religious education, physical education, design and technology

and history. The teaching is satisfactory in geography, art and French, but is unsatisfactory in music.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good; the curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets requirements and in addition includes French.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good; early intervention and effective support in class have a positive impact on their learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is very good, and provision for cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Support and guidance for the pupils' personal development and behaviour is very good. Procedures for monitoring attainment and progress are very good in English and mathematics, but are not satisfactory in science and information and communication technology.

The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The school works very well with parents. The parents' involvement in the work of the school has a very strong impact on the children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership promotes high standards and good teaching.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors are fully involved in the life of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Monitoring is very good and leads to effective action.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's priorities are supported well by its financial planning.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate for the work of the school. Financial planning is good and the principles of best value are applied well. The school provides good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best.• The parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems.• The children's behaviour is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information they receive on their children's progress.• The school working more closely with parents.• The arrangements for homework.

The inspectors strongly endorse the positive views of the parents. They found that the arrangements for homework are good and the information provided on progress is appropriate. They support the school in its plans to find ways of working more closely with parents and improving the information they get.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. In the 1999 national assessments, at the end of Key Stage 2, standards in English were well above the national average and above the average of similar schools. In mathematics and science standards were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. In these three subjects standards have been consistently above, or well above, the national average since 1996, and have improved in line with the national trend. The inspectors found that current standards in English are well above average and in mathematics and in science standards are above average levels. These standards are broadly in line with those expected of a school of this type. In other subjects current standards of eleven-year-olds are above expected levels in religious education and physical education, and reach the expected level for the age of the pupils in information and communication technology and the other subjects, including French. In the 1999 national assessments, boys did slightly better than girls in mathematics. However, in current work there is no significant difference between boys and girls.

2. In the 1999 Key Stage 1 national assessments standards in reading were above the national average and in line with the average of similar schools. Standards in writing and mathematics were in line with the national average, but well below the average for similar schools. From 1996 to 1998 standards in these subjects were above the national average, but in 1999 standards were significantly lower, particularly in writing and mathematics, and below those of the three previous years. The inspectors found that current standards have improved significantly, particularly in writing and mathematics, in response to the initiatives in literacy and numeracy, and in reading, writing and mathematics standards are now well above average levels. In science, standards are also well above average levels. In other subjects, current standards of seven-year-olds meet the expectations of the local religious education syllabus and reach the expected standards for the age of the pupils in information and communication technology and the other subjects.

3. The school's targets for eleven-year-olds for 1999 and 2000 in mathematics and English, which were that 86 per cent of pupils would reach the expected level for their age (level 4) in English and 84 per cent in mathematics, were exceeded in 1999. The targets for 2000 provide an appropriate challenge for a year group with a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than the previous year.

4. Standards of literacy are well above average throughout the school. Literacy skills are developed well in English and are well supported by work in other subjects, including mathematics and religious education. For example, basic literacy skills are emphasised well in mathematics where care is taken to use language accurately when pupils describe their solutions to problems to their class.

5. Standards of speaking and listening are well above average at the end of both key stages. The pupils are keen to talk about their work. Pupils discuss ideas and answer questions with confidence. In Year 6, pupils understand the meaning of a wide range of words, articulate their ideas well and listen carefully to the points of view put forward. Standards of reading are well above average at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils read simple texts with confidence and fluency and most acquire a good range of reading strategies. Pupils express opinions about their stories with confidence and some begin to identify their favourite authors. By the end of Key Stage 2 many pupils are fluent readers and standards are well above average. They understand

the differences between poetry and prose and have a clear understanding of a wide range of texts. Standards of writing are well above average by the end of both key stages. By the age of seven pupils understand the importance of organising their work so that it follows a sequence and many write in a way that is interesting to the reader, such as their experiences of the recent school fete. Pupils in Year 6 competently structure and revise their work improving its quality. They produce thoughtful pieces of work that engage the reader. Higher attaining pupils produce some outstanding narrative poems.

6. Standards of numeracy are well above average throughout the school. Pupils in Year 6, for example, had a good understanding of percentages and could find percentages of different quantities accurately. They are very proficient at mental arithmetic. Science, information and communication technology and design and technology make good contributions to standards of numeracy and give pupils opportunities when they draw graphs, measure and calculate confidently.

7. Base-line assessments show that the children under five enter the school with above average standards of attainment in all areas. By the age of five their attainments are above those expected in language and literacy, mathematics, their personal and social development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and in the physical and creative areas of development.

8. The school has put in place developments that focus on raising attainment based on the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and the grouping of pupils by ability. These have resulted in good achievements in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1 and in Years 4 and 5. However, these developments have not had time to be fully reflected in the achievement in these subjects in Year 6, where there is a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in the previous year. Over both key stages pupils' achievements overall are sound relative to their earlier attainment and in line with those of similar schools. The most able and talented pupils make good progress. The pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress towards the relevant and realistic targets in their Individual Education Plans.

9. The last inspection in December 1996 reported that standards of attainment were "in line with the national average in English, mathematics and science" at the end of Key Stage 2. However, since 1996 national assessment results in all three subjects have been above, or well above, average and increasing in line with national trends. This indicates an improvement in standards in English, mathematics and science compared to those reported in the last inspection. In other subjects standards at the last inspection were at expected levels, except for geography and information and communication technology, where standards were below expectations. Current standards show an improvement in information and communication technology and geography where standards now reach expected levels.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The pupils' attitudes to school are very good and have improved since the previous inspection when they were good. Their enthusiasm has a substantial impact on the standards of attainment and progress. The pupils listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to work hard. This was seen, for example, in a design and technology lesson with Years 4 and 5 on designing biscuits. The pupils were very attentive and thought carefully before putting forward their ideas and some had undertaken extra research at home. The pupils usually settle quickly to their work and concentrate well on the tasks they have been

given. However, in some lessons younger pupils become restless and lose concentration. This is usually when they have to sit on the carpet and listen to their teacher for long periods of time. The pupils appreciate the very good range of extra-curricular activities and take part with enthusiasm.

11. The very high standards of pupils' behaviour have been maintained since the last inspection. The school is an orderly community. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good and this has a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Pupils understand that the teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and respond well to the system of rewards. Sanctions are rarely needed. Behaviour at lunchtime is very good and pupils enjoy the planned, structured activities that are provided. The pupils are trustworthy and show respect for property. Incidents of bullying are rare and there were no exclusions last year.

12. The pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. The pupils cooperate well together and work very well in pairs and groups. The pupils enjoy socialising at lunchtime. They have good relationships with adults working in the school and know that they can turn to them for help. The pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and talk to them with confidence. The pupils are keen to take responsibility and enjoy helping in the classrooms and around the school. Older pupils take their duties as lunchtime monitors very seriously, whilst others volunteer to be librarians and assist at the parent helpers' 'thank you' party. There are opportunities for pupils to use initiative: for example, some pupils organised a talent show and others were eager to perform in assemblies.

13. The pupils have maintained the very good attendance record found at the time of the last inspection. The attendance rate of 95.4 per cent is well above that found nationally. There were no unauthorised absences. Most parents bring their children to school on time, although some pupils arrive during registration due to the late arrival of the school bus. The pupils' very good attendance and punctuality have a positive impact on attainment and progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. The teaching is good. During the inspection the teaching was at least satisfactory in 98 per cent of the lessons observed, good or very good in 63 per cent of the lessons and very good in 12 per cent of the lessons. Very good teaching was typified by very good subject knowledge reflected in searching questioning of the pupils, and very good class management, which ensured that all the pupils were involved. For example, in a very good English lesson with Year 5, on persuasive writing, very good questioning constantly challenged the pupils to clarify their thinking and be precise, and revealed the teacher's very good subject knowledge. A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching occurred in 2 per cent of the lessons seen. The main weaknesses in the unsatisfactory lessons were a lack of pace and activities that were not well matched to the lessons' objectives. For example, in an unsatisfactory music lesson with Year 6, an inappropriate activity with a large class led to a lack of motivation, a slow pace and inappropriate responses from some boys.

15. The teaching was good at Key Stages 1 and 2, and satisfactory with the under-fives. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the teaching was at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons. At Key Stage 2 the teaching was good or very good in 70 per cent of the lessons, and very good in 16 per cent. At Key Stage 1 the teaching was good in 57 per cent of the lessons. With the under-fives the teaching was at least satisfactory in all of the lessons seen, but only good or very good in 40 per cent of the lessons, and very good in 10 per cent. In some of the under-fives' lessons the teaching lacked a clear focus. The teaching was strongest in

Years 4 and 5, where it was good or very good in over 80 per cent of the lessons seen, and very good in 33 per cent. This reflected teaching that was lively, had a good pace and involved activities that were well explained.

16. The teaching meets the needs of different groups of pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are taught well, have good learning opportunities and make good progress. Nearly all pupils reach at least average standards. Early intervention and effective support have a positive impact on pupils' learning. Good planning carefully matches work to their needs and there is effective communication between the special needs co-ordinator, class teachers and support staff. In close partnership with the parents, the school meets the needs of the few pupils with English as an additional language well. The pupils are well integrated. The more able and talented pupils have good, challenging learning opportunities, which enable them to make good progress and reach high standards, particularly in the core subjects.

17. The skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well and result in standards that are well above average by the age of eleven. At both key stages the teaching of English and mathematics is good, largely as a result of the impact of the literacy and numeracy strategies, which provide a good structure to the teaching and a wide range of learning opportunities. Mathematics lessons are based on the numeracy strategy and combine high quality input, with varied group work and effective plenary sessions, in which pupils readily contribute their solutions to problems. At both key stages the teaching of other subjects, including science, information and communication technology and religious education, is generally good, except for geography and art where the teaching overall is satisfactory. The teaching of the under-fives is satisfactory, where, although the work is carefully planned and appropriate, the teaching can sometimes lack focus. However, in music, the teaching was unsatisfactory in two of the three lessons seen, largely as a result of inappropriate teaching activities and strategies that did not meet the objectives of the lesson.

18. The pupils' learning and the progress they make in lessons are good. They steadily acquire new knowledge and apply their skills well. As a result of good class management and teaching strategies, most lessons are productive and have a brisk pace. For example, in an effective Year 6 mathematics lesson, the pupils made good progress in consolidating their skills with fractions and percentages as a result of well explained work, effective class management and searching questioning. When the opportunities arise, the pupils show concentration and learn to think for themselves. For example, in a very good information and communication technology lesson with Years 4 and 5, pupils were able to search a data base to find information about musical instruments, demonstrating good understanding and concentration.

19. Generally the strongest features of the teaching are the effective teaching methods and strategies used, and the good management of the pupils. This ensures that the pupils are fully involved with the activities, behave well and work at a brisk pace. The effective teaching methods and strategies are well planned and generally provide a varied range of learning activities, which ensure the pupils understand their work and find it challenging. For example, a very good mathematics lesson with Year 3 started with a mental mathematics session and then continued with group work requiring pupils to search for patterns in a number table. The imaginative, well explained activities ensured that the pupils gained a very good understanding of this work.

20. The teachers' subject knowledge is generally good, particularly in the core subjects, where it is reflected in searching questioning. Expectations are generally high and reflect

the shared intention to raise standards. Classroom assistants are used well with the younger pupils, with pupils with special educational needs and with talented pupils. The scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that teachers' ongoing assessment is very good and used well in English and mathematics, but is not well developed in other subjects. Homework is used effectively, particularly in mathematics and English.

21. The last inspection report indicated that teaching was satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2 and was good in one third of lessons. The quality of teaching has improved and is good overall. The proportion of lessons judged to be good or very good has doubled.

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

22. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum overall is appropriately broad and balanced. It meets the needs of all the pupils in the school, including the higher attaining pupils and those with special education needs. The quality and range of learning opportunities for children under five are good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements for all subjects and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, and includes French at Key Stage 2. The curriculum is well supported by schemes of work in English, mathematics, science and religious education, which have been recently revised, and these help to ensure pupils make appropriate progress as they move through the school. The school is in the process of adapting schemes of work in other subjects to take account of the new "National Curriculum 2000". The strategies for improving literacy and numeracy are very good and have been implemented effectively. The school has also focused on strategies to raise attainment, for example by grouping pupils by ability. Together with the literacy and numeracy strategies, these developments have been effective in raising standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 1 and in Years 4 and 5. The good planning for personal, social and health education, drug awareness and sex education helps ensure pupils' personal development is addressed well.

23. The school's provision for equality of access and opportunity is very good. Extensive opportunities are provided for pupils with special educational needs to ensure that they have full access to the curriculum. They are supported well in classrooms and have effective additional support outside the classrooms, which provide them with high quality support in basic skills. The range of support is well matched to individual needs and has a positive impact on pupils' learning in the widest sense. Higher attaining pupils are challenged well in lessons, through questions and activities that extend the pupils' thinking. The achievement of both boys and girls is carefully monitored to ensure they make good progress.

24. The school provides a very wide range of popular sporting and cultural extra-curricular activities, which make a significant contribution to their overall development. The school welcomes and makes effective use of a number of visitors, such as a local artist and weaver, to extend pupils' experiences and perceptions of life. Particularly effective use is made of resources within the community to provide a very wide range of planned activities, all of which contribute positively to pupils' learning. The school has constructive links with schools in France, Germany and Italy through its membership of the 'Comenius Project', sharing curriculum investigations on themes such as 'water' and providing residential trips for older pupils to, for example, Strasbourg. An extensive range of historical, geographical and cultural visits also take place. These broaden pupils' experience and bring relevance to the curriculum. The Internet has been well used since the beginning of the year to access information on current topics and to e-mail other schools in this country and abroad.

The school is a member of a well-developed partnership of local schools, which work well together to support the curriculum. Productive links have been established with the local secondary schools to which the pupils transfer at the age of eleven. Good contacts exist with local businesses, which help to fund initiatives within the school.

25. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision has improved since the last inspection and is very good. The school's aims and values permeate the whole life of the school from the reception class upwards. Acts of collective worship are well planned and meet requirements.

26. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. It is promoted well through the care and concern shown towards all pupils by staff, and through religious education lessons. Younger pupils are encouraged to be reflective and experience wonder, for example, by observing plants growing and developing flowers. Pupils throughout the school are given many opportunities to develop their self-knowledge by reflecting on the beliefs of others. Pupils consider how religions are special to individuals. The oldest pupils show a high level of understanding of the spiritual dimensions of life, for example, in their poems about hostages.

27. Moral education is very good. From the earliest days in the reception class, pupils are encouraged to consider how their actions affect others. Assemblies provide ample opportunity to promote moral development and pupils' understanding of right from wrong through the telling of stories. This work is extended through the curriculum, for example when pupils empathise with characters in stories. Pupils are encouraged to care for their environment, and in science lessons, for example, are taught how to handle snails carefully and to return them to their original habitat afterwards. The school's code of conduct makes clear how pupils are expected to behave. These rules are discussed as part of the effective personal and social education programme.

28. The school has very good and effective provision for social education. There is a strong sense of community within the school. Pupils' social development is strongly supported by the very good role models provided by teachers and other adults who work in the school, and pupils are taught how to work together through well-organised group and team activities. Pupils are given many opportunities to take responsibility, for example, supervising, giving out and collecting equipment at playtime. Residential trips abroad broaden pupils' out-look on the world and make very good contributions to their social development.

29. There is good provision for cultural development. The understanding of the richness and diversity of other faiths is carefully planned for in religious education. A very good display of colourful Indian artefacts provoked many interesting questions from pupils. Visits to, for example, the British Museum, Sulgrave Manor and Stratford-on-Avon contribute well to pupils' understanding of their own culture. Using writers' and artists' work enables pupils to study cultural traditions well. The learning of French and very good links with schools in Europe through the 'Comenius Project' make a significant contribution to the pupils' cultural education. However, whilst some aspects of cultural development such as these are very good, the contribution of music to cultural development is limited.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The school is successful in its aim of providing a warm, caring environment. It provides very good educational and personal support and guidance for its pupils. This reflects the judgement of the last inspection. The pupils say that the school is a very

friendly place and that they can turn to the staff if they have problems. Lunchtime supervision is very well managed. The lunchtime play project enables the pupils to choose from a wide range of activities, and the lunch break has become a very positive experience for many of the pupils. Members of staff pay careful attention to the pupils' safety after school. Pupils are entered on bus registers and safely escorted to the coach. Very good procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are in place. Teachers keep good records of personal achievements, set targets and make comments appropriately in the pupils' annual reports.

31. Arrangements for the assessment and recording of academic progress are satisfactory overall. They are very effective in English, mathematics and religious education, where they have had a positive impact on raising standards. The results of annual tests are used well to inform planning, and individual pupil achievement is effectively monitored from year to year. The progress of all pupils towards achieving targets in literacy and numeracy is monitored closely. There are satisfactory arrangements for assessing the achievement of the children in the reception class in relation to reading, writing and number. However, across the school, assessment in science, information and communication technology and physical education is not sufficiently consistent and systematic. In these subjects the lack of good assessment information has a negative effect on the quality of planning and the setting of targets.

32. Assessment procedures are good for pupils with special needs. Early intervention and assessment provides effective support for these pupils. Individual Education Plans are regularly monitored and reviewed, and parents are closely involved. The policy for special educational needs is in line with the Code of Practice. The teachers closely monitor the progress of pupils with English as an additional language.

33. Overall the school has effective procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. There is a clear child protection policy and all teachers have received basic awareness training. The headteacher is the designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection and carries out her duties effectively. The arrangements for first aid are generally good. Most members of the staff have received basic training, although no one is qualified in first aid. The medical room is well equipped and appropriate procedures are in place to care for pupils who are ill or injured. The school pays appropriate attention to health and safety, and regular checks of the premises are undertaken. The health and safety policy is generally satisfactory, but does not include details of risk assessment.

34. The school's arrangements of monitoring and improving attendance are very good. The school has an appropriate attendance policy. Holidays taken during term time are discouraged and the school successfully emphasises to parents the importance of notifying staff of pupils' absences. The school is vigilant with any unexplained absences and has very good procedures to ensure that they are immediately followed up. Certificates are awarded for full attendance.

35. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good and the school operates as an orderly community. The high expectations and ethos of good behaviour are reinforced in lessons, and by the examples of adults working in the school. These are underpinned by a clear behaviour policy, which emphasises the rewarding of good behaviour. Pupils value rewards and they understand the consequences of any misdemeanours. Both good and unacceptable behaviour are recorded and monitored by class teachers. A code of conduct, which has been successfully introduced at lunchtimes, further promotes good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. A clear anti-bullying policy

is in place and pupils say that bullying is rare. The parents are pleased that the school deals effectively with any anti-social behaviour.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

36. Overall, the parents and carers express positive support for the school, and say that their children like the school. They feel that the teaching is good and that the school expects their children to work hard. They are very pleased with the standards of behaviour and value the way the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. However, some have concerns about the amount of homework and some would like the school to work more closely with parents. The inspectors strongly endorse the positive views of the parents. They found that the arrangements for homework are in line with the school's policy, and that the school has plans to find ways of working more closely with parents and improving the information they get.

37. The school's links with parents are generally effective. The school has consulted parents on the home/school agreement and has taken parents' views into consideration when reviewing the homework policy. A parenting course was run at the request of parents. The parents' involvement has a very positive impact on the work of the school. The active Friends Association raises considerable sums of money to enhance the educational provision for the pupils. The parent governors make significant contributions to the life of the school. The parents are very supportive of events such as assemblies and special services.

38. The information which the school provides to parents is of a high quality. The prospectus and annual governors' report are informative and contains the necessary information. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are well informed and are closely involved in reviewing their children's progress. There is a well-developed partnership and close liaison with the parents of pupils with English as an additional language. Generally the school gives parents valuable information about future topics in the curriculum. The pupils' annual reports are satisfactory. Information about progress is regularly sent home to parents in the form of targets and the school invites parents to three parents' evenings during the year. However, a significant minority of parents would like more information about their children's progress and more consultations with class-teachers. The school is aware of these concerns and intends reviewing the current arrangements for parent consultations and pupils' reports.

39. The parents' contributions to their children's learning are very good and the school values their involvement. Many parents volunteer to help in the classroom and others assist with school visits. Parents listen to their children read and are involved with the work their children do at home. The parents feel that the homework diaries are often an effective means of communication between home and school. The school's strong partnership at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher, assisted by the deputy head, key staff and the governing body, have successfully promoted standards that are above, or well above, average in English, mathematics and science, and have promoted good teaching and learning. The headteacher, assisted by the governing body, gives a very good and clear educational direction to the school. This is shown by the response of the school to the issues from the last inspection, by the shared commitment to high standards and by the success in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The

school has explicit aims that reflect the school's values and implicitly encourage a warm caring environment, good relations and equality of opportunity. There is very good delegation of duties to members of staff. This is illustrated by the effective way teachers have been given responsibilities for preparing schemes of work since the last inspection and the successful way the teachers work in teams. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides strong leadership and good management. There is good liaison with external agencies and the visiting specialists to the school. Business and private sponsorship is strategically used to provide extra hours of specialist support. There is good use of new technology by the headteacher, particularly for financial management and the analysis of attainment data. This is used effectively to analyse value added and indicate areas for improvement.

41. The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities and accounting for the performance and improvement of the school. The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and in monitoring the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is shown by the governors' clear understanding of the issues raised by the last inspection and the importance of raising standards. The governing body is influential in shaping the direction of the school, and is involved in agreeing new school policies, deciding priorities for development and setting priorities for spending.

42. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is very good and effective action is taken to make improvements. This is a consequence of a very strong programme for monitoring teaching on a regular and frequent basis by the headteacher, and the subject leaders have a regular allocation of time to monitor standards of work and teaching. The governors are also involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The results of the monitoring and evaluation are considered carefully by the management and effective action taken. This has resulted in staff training, the development of new schemes of work and the introduction of grouping by ability to provide smaller teaching groups and raise standards. The school has a strategy for appraisal and performance management linked to staff development. There is a good policy for the induction of new staff based on mentoring.

43. The very appropriate priorities for development have highlighted the need to further raise standards in mathematics and English in line with the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies, to improve the provision and teaching for information and communication technology and to improve monitoring. The development plans in these areas have been successfully implemented and have resulted in significant improvements, most notably in further raising standards in mathematics and English at Key Stage 1, and in Years 4 and 5, and in the significant improvements to the teaching and learning of these subjects. Standards of information and communication technology have been raised and improvements in monitoring have resulted in changes to the way pupils are grouped for subjects. Test results are carefully analysed and good use is made of baseline assessments and attainment results to review performance. Appropriate attainment targets are set for the school.

44. The school makes good use of its financial resources. Educational priorities are supported well by effective, careful financial planning. However, there was a large financial surplus of 10.6 per cent carried forward in the last financial year. This is being spent partly on employing temporary teachers to allow grouping by ability and to reduce class size. In the longer term the school plans to increase the proportion of the budget spent on teachers to above-average levels. Effective use is made of new technology in management and administration, notably in efficient financial administration. The recommendations of the most recent auditor's report have been acted upon. Specific grants are enhanced

significantly, particularly using fundraising and donations. The school takes care to apply the principles of best value. It ensures that standards and costs compare favourably with those of other schools, that those with responsibilities are challenged to justify the use of resources, that there is competition in the purchasing of resources and services, and that there is consultation before major spending decisions are taken. The school provides good value for money.

45. The staffing is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum. There is an appropriate number of teachers, who have a good balance of qualifications and experience, although currently there is no member of staff with musical expertise. The teachers form an effective team, in which they have well-defined roles, which they carry out well. All subjects are co-ordinated and there is a co-ordinator for special educational needs, who ensures that pupils with special educational needs are well supported. The number of support staff is not large, but they are used well. The accommodation is adequate for the curriculum, although some of the rooms are small for the large teaching groups. Learning resources are adequate for most subjects and are used well. The school has recently significantly increased its number of up-to-date computers. There is a good stock of up-to-date books and the school library is currently being relocated to a more central position in the school. However, there are shortages of resources for music, which restrict learning opportunities.

46. At the last inspection the management and leadership of the school were described as “firm”, and the school provided sound value for money. The leadership and management of the school have improved and are now very good in most respects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Improve the teaching of music, by:

- providing better subject planning and co-ordination;
- providing better guidance on the teaching of the subject;
- improving the resources.

(See paragraphs 17 and 90.)

In addition to the key issue above, the following weakness should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- improve the procedures for assessment and their use in science, information and communication technology and physical education.

(See paragraphs 31, 71, 85 and 92.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12.5	51	34	2.5	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	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		255
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		34

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	5

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	20	15	35

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	18	19	20
	Girls	14	14	12
	Total	32	33	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (92)	94 (92)	91 (96)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	17	17	17
	Girls	14	10	12
	Total	31	27	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (92)	77 (92)	83 (92)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest 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
	1999	21	19	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	19	21
	Girls	18	17	16
	Total	39	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	98 (90)	90 (74)	93 (90)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	21	19	21
	Girls	18	17	16
	Total	39	36	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	98 (94)	90 (81)	93 (94)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

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	202
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	27
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	69

Financial information

Financial year	99/00
	£
Total income	430590
Total expenditure	424128
Expenditure per pupil	1677
Balance brought forward from previous year	39184
Balance carried forward to next year	45646

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	255
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	48	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	28	60	5	0	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	63	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	52	15	3	6
The teaching is good.	37	57	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	49	20	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	45	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	45	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	42	9	11	6
The school is well led and managed.	38	51	0	2	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	55	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	40	5	3	5

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

They strongly support the work of the school. They like the way the school expects the children to work hard and achieve their best. The parents feel comfortable at approaching the school with problems. They think that the children's behaviour is good. They would like to see improvements in the information they receive on children's progress, the school working more closely with parents and the arrangements for homework.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

47. On entry to the reception class the children's baseline assessment results show a broad range of attainment and that, overall, the children are achieving standards above national expectations for this age group. By the time they are five, the majority of children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes in all the areas of learning. The children make good progress in the reception class. At the time of the inspection, there were twelve children under five years of age in the nursery class and ten in the reception class. The children in the nursery class, who attend for mornings only and are taught by a part-time nursery assistant, are mostly well on target to exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes by the time they are five. There is a wide range of attainment on entry to the nursery class, but many of the children enter with an above average level of competence and skills. The majority of these children make sound progress. However, the progress of the least mature children is, occasionally, hampered by a lack of additional adult support.

48. The majority of five-year-olds exceed expectations for personal and social development. In the nursery, the children settle well to self-chosen activities, to tasks that are interesting and practical and to those that are supported by an adult. For example, a group of children became engrossed in investigating bubbles in the water tray. However, in teacher-directed activities, without additional adult support, a few children became distracted and behaviour deteriorated as a result. Children in the reception class make good progress in their personal and social development and their attitudes and behaviour are good. They have settled well into the routines established by the teacher. They ask adults for help when needed and learn from their mistakes. The children co-operate well and enjoy role-play.

49. In language and literacy the majority of children exceed the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Their speaking and listening skills develop well. The teachers encourage them to contribute to discussions and listen to one another. Many opportunities are used to encourage children to extend their vocabulary. This was seen, for example, in a lesson when children were painting. The children used the words 'pale lilac' and 'mauve', and through colour mixing came to understand the meanings of the words. They extend their knowledge of stories well and make good progress in their reading. Children in the nursery learn to read and write their own names and some of their early writing shows many recognisable letters. Higher attaining pupils can write simple words unaided. They develop their knowledge of initial letter sounds well. Children in the reception class read simple texts and enjoy the humour in some of the stories they read. Care has been taken with the early development of literacy and this is making a significant impact on the quality of children's learning and children's progress in this area.

50. The children's mathematical development is good and attainment is above expectations for their age by the time they are five. Higher attaining children can order numbers up to twenty correctly. Most count out loud to ten confidently and accurately and many children can copy numbers. They have a growing awareness of simple shapes, like rectangles, circles and triangles. The teachers plan good opportunities for practical activities to allow children to investigate numbers, shapes and measures.

51. The children exceed expectations in their knowledge and understanding of the world. They develop their investigative skills well when finding out about different ways of making sounds. They gain a deeper understanding of the passage of time, for example, by

comparing 'bath-time' in the past with the present. They develop simple skills in information and communication technology and most children are confident in using the mouse to operate a simple computer program. They develop good skills such as cutting, joining and folding to make models.

52. The children's physical development exceeds expectations. They use construction toys and malleable materials well. They develop good manipulative skills and hand/eye co-ordination. They enjoy outdoor play, running, hopping and driving wheeled toys with increasing control. Their creative development exceeds expectations. They learn to mix their own paints and confidently blend colours to enhance their pictures. They gleefully join in making handprints in paint. They effectively learn about shape, space and pattern, for example, by arranging shells in sand trays. They sing traditional rhymes from memory enthusiastically and they listen carefully to the music they hear on entering assembly. The children show an increasing ability to use their imagination. For example, a group of nursery class children developed and sustained role-play very well, whilst acting out a family on a picnic.

53. The quality of teaching with the under-fives is satisfactory overall and is good in the reception class. Teaching is well planned within a relevant and interesting learning environment and the activities are well organised with effective use of the available support staff. The teaching carefully promotes appropriate learning opportunities to meet the needs of young children. The quality of learning is generally good. However, the presence of three very immature children in the nursery can, on occasions, disrupt the group and without additional adult support, there can be a loss of focus in the learning for some pupils. The teacher responsible for this stage has produced a good scheme of work incorporating the new early learning goals, to provide a smooth transition to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. The ongoing assessment in the nursery and reception classes is very thorough and informative, and gives the teachers a clear idea of the children's progress, which is used well in planning. There is a wide range of resources, which are used well to broaden the learning activities. There were no children under five at the time of the last inspection.

ENGLISH

54. The 1999 national assessment results at the end of Key Stage 2 show standards that are well above the national average and above average in comparison with similar schools. There was no difference in the results for boys and girls. Standards of attainment have been well above average since 1996 and have improved in line with national trends. The inspectors found that standards in English are currently well above average by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Key Stage 2.

55. In the 1999 national Key Stage 1 assessments, standards were above average for reading and average for writing when compared with schools nationally. However, when compared with similar schools the results for 1999 are average for reading and below average for writing. The inspectors found that current standards in reading and writing are well above average by the end of Key Stage 1. This shows a considerable improvement, particularly in writing, the result of the very good implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and a clear focus on raising attainment.

56. The well-above-average attainment at the end of both key stages indicates good achievement by the pupils in English. Standards of literacy are high and literacy skills are used well across the curriculum. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve

well relative to their earlier attainment.

57. Standards of writing are well above average by the end of Key Stage 1. By the age of seven, pupils understand the importance of organising their work so that it follows a sequence and many write in a way that is interesting to the reader, for example, describing their experiences of the recent school fete. Pupils make correct use of full stops and capital letters, and many know about the use of speech marks and apply them in their work. They apply their knowledge of word patterns and letter sounds to spell simple words. The majority of pupils have good joined handwriting. Standards of writing are well above average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils in Year 6 competently structure and revise their work improving its quality. They produce thoughtful pieces of work that engage the reader. Higher attaining pupils produce some outstanding narrative poems, for example, based on their own interpretation of Romeo and Juliet. They understand a range of narrative and literacy techniques used by authors, and are able to use these in their writing. Work is well presented, organised well into paragraphs and punctuation is used correctly. The pupils make good progress in learning to write.

58. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards of speaking and listening are well above average. The pupils respond well to questions and ideas in discussions. They are keen to talk about their work at the end of lessons. Good relationships in classes encourage pupils to share ideas and answer questions with confidence. By the age of eleven, standards of speaking and listening are well above average. In Year 6, pupils understand the meaning of a wide range of words and articulate their ideas well, whilst their classmates listen carefully to the points of view put forward, for example, when discussing the meaning of the word 'sacred' in a religious education lesson. They are able to articulate the feelings of the characters in the novels they have read, such as 'The Flour Babies' by Anne Fine. Pupils make good progress in using their speaking and listening skills across the school. The youngest pupils in Year 1, for example, read the Caribbean story 'The Flying Turtle' together, taking the parts of characters. They did this with confidence, fluency and expression. Older pupils successfully engage in debates and explain the differences between fact and opinion in an articulate manner.

59. Standards of reading are well above average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Most pupils read simple texts with confidence and fluency by the age of seven. The majority acquire a good range of reading strategies, including letter sounds and blends, and use these well to tackle new and unfamiliar words. Pupils begin to show preferences for certain types of books and most understand the main points of stories. The pupils express opinions about their stories with confidence and some begin to identify their favourite authors. By the end of Key Stage 2 many are very fluent readers. They understand the differences between poetry and prose and have a clear understanding of a wide range of texts. They develop skills of inference and deduction in their reading. Pupils know how to use reference systems effectively to gain information they require for their work. The pupils make good progress with their reading. Year 1 pupils build on previously learned skills to tackle new words effectively. By Year 3, pupils use a variety of approaches to interpret text and recognise their own errors. Older pupils analyse aspects of persuasive writing successfully.

60. The teaching is good overall across both key stages. In over two thirds of the English lessons seen the teaching was good or very good, and none of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The teachers' subject knowledge of English is good and there is a sharp focus on precisely what is to be learnt. The quality of learning is good over both key stages. The learning objectives are shared with the pupils so they know precisely what is expected of them. The teachers expect pupils to concentrate in lessons and this has a

positive effect on their learning and the pace of the work. The teachers plan and organise their lessons well and use a variety of strategies to ensure that the pupils are interested. Effective use is made of questioning to help pupils learn by clarifying their ideas, and questions and learning activities are adapted well to the different needs within the classes. In the best lessons, for example a very good English lesson with Year 4, very high expectations and very good questioning encourage the pupils to refine and consolidate their ideas and to strive to achieve more. At both key stages, the teaching of literacy is very effective and well established in all classes.

61. The pupils respond well to the good class management, they behave very well and show a keen interest in their work. The leadership of the subject is very good and there is a clear commitment to continue to improve pupils' learning. The school has planned carefully to raise standards of English, particularly at Key Stage 1. A wide range of resources is used well in the teaching of literacy. Assessment is very good and is used well in planning. Teachers assess pupils' work positively through discussion with individuals and constructive use of marking. Good use is made of national and school tests to identify pupils who need extra support or further challenge, and appropriate targets are set for pupils to achieve. Literacy is used well to support other subjects.

62. There has been an improvement in the teaching of English since the last inspection, most notably in the use of literacy texts. At both key stages, the teaching of literacy is now very effective and is particularly successful in developing pupils' powers of imagination and understanding of the text that they read.

MATHEMATICS

63. In the 1999 national assessments standards were above the national average at Key Stage 2 and in line with those achieved by similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age (level 4) was well above the national average, and the proportion reaching level 5 was above the national average. Over recent years, the results of eleven-year-olds have been consistently above average and have improved in line with the national trend. There was a slight difference in the results for boys and girls in 1999, but the inspectors found that this is not currently the case. The inspectors found that current standards of the eleven-year-olds are above average by the end of Key Stage 2. For example, the majority of pupils in Year 6 confidently calculate the percentage that one quantity is of another and apply this to real life problems. Standards of numeracy are high and pupils in Year 6 mentally calculate accurately. Information and communication technology, science, and design and technology make good contributions to standards of numeracy and provide opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and draw graphs, measure and calculate. Throughout the school language is developed well in mathematics lessons.

64. In the 1999 national Key Stage 1 assessments, standards were average compared to schools nationally, but well below average compared to similar schools. Over recent years standards have been consistently above average, but declined significantly in 1999. The inspectors found that current standards of seven-year-olds in mathematics have improved substantially in response to developments in the school based on the national numeracy project, and are now well above average, and in line with the standards expected of the school. For example, the majority of pupils in Year 2 divide by numbers to 10 and find halves and quarters of quantities. Standards of numeracy are high, and pupils in Year 2, for example, could mentally add numbers to 20 and knew some of the multiplication tables. The inspectors found no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls.

65. The pupils' achievements are good at Key Stage 1 and in Years 4 and 5. Nearly all achieve standards at least in line with those expected of the school. The pupils are given good, challenging work and, largely as a result of effective questioning by the teachers, the most talented pupils achieve very high standards. The school has very effectively introduced the National Numeracy Strategy and has changed the way classes are grouped to raise standards. This has been particularly successful in raising standards at Key Stage 1 and in Years 4 and 5. It has yet to have its full effect in Year 6. However, the progress relative to their earlier attainment made by those with special needs, and the few with English as an additional language, is good.

66. The teaching is good at both key stages and some teaching is very good. One of the strengths is good class management, which results in very good behaviour and positive attitudes to mathematics. The pupils apply themselves well to their tasks, and particularly like problem solving. For example, after solving problems involving number patterns in a Year 3 lesson, one girl was heard remarking, "I am glad I was here for this". At both key stages most pupils' learning is good. The pupils acquire new skills, deepen their understanding and are able to apply their skills well. Strengths of the teaching are good learning activities and teaching strategies, based on the National Numeracy Strategy. These involve effective teacher input, an effective structure to the lessons, using a range of well-focused activities, and good plenary discussions, when pupils confidently talk about their work. For example, in a very good lesson with Years 4 and 5, the pupils enhanced their understanding of place value as a result of well-focused learning activities which were very well explained by the teacher. In general teachers have high expectations, and a good understanding of how to teach the subject. There is effective use of the class assistants with the younger pupils to provide support and simple practical resources are used well, although information and communication technology is not used appropriately. Planning is generally thorough. Teachers' assessment is very good, and is used well in planning and setting targets. Homework is used well. The management of the subject is effective. The teachers receive valuable support from the scheme of work and the subject leader, and work is carefully monitored.

67. The last inspection reported that standards were average at the end of both key stages and that teaching was satisfactory. However, since 1996 standards have been above average and have improved in line with national trends. As a result of thorough monitoring, carefully planned developments to implement the National Numeracy Strategy and a focus on raising attainment, there has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and in the standards attained, particularly at Key Stage 1.

SCIENCE

68. In the 1999 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2, standards were above the national average and in line with the average for similar schools. The present standard of work of the oldest pupils at Key Stage 2 is above the national average. At the last inspection, standards were reported as being average. However, since 1996, national assessments show that standards have been consistently above the national average, and in some years well above. Given their attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, the achievement of the pupils currently at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with that expected. Good focused teaching in Years 4 and 5 has led to improvements in standards in science in those years, although these improvements have not yet been reflected in the results of national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2.

69. In the 1999 national assessments at the end of Key Stage 1, attainment was broadly in line with the national average and below the average for similar schools. The

inspectors found that current standards are well above the national average and above the average for similar schools, based on the standards in lessons observed, the examination of work and school records. With the exception of 1999, since 1996 the results of national assessments have been above the national average and in some years well above. The achievement of pupils is good. Good progress has been facilitated by a renewed focus on teaching at Key Stage 1, help being given by the subject co-ordinator and an emphasis on science investigative work.

70. At Key Stage 1, the pupils make good gains in scientific knowledge. Discussions with pupils show, for example, that they know about the differences between living and non-living things; and that a complete circuit is needed for electrical devices to work. At Key Stage 2 they successfully add to and consolidate their knowledge. By the end of the key stage the higher attaining pupils are beginning to understand the scientific principles associated with their knowledge. Discussions with these pupils show, for example, that they know about and can explain the basic structure and main functions of the human skeleton and how to separate specific mixtures such as sand and salt. At Key Stage 1 the pupils carry out scientific investigations effectively, learning to make predictions, and with help, recognise a fair test, record findings and link predictions to outcomes. These skills are built upon substantially at Key Stage 2 and at the end of the key stage the pupils have a good understanding of investigative work. However, in Year 6, pupils have insufficient opportunities to carry out open-ended investigations. The pupils at both key stages learn to use scientific vocabulary effectively.

71. The teaching is good. The teachers are confident in their subject knowledge and prepare lessons and practical work thoroughly. They question pupils skilfully to establish what they know, revise previous learning effectively and consolidate learning at the end of sessions. Pupils respond positively, are keen to participate in activities and show interest in the work. Their learning is good and they apply considerable intellectual effort and practical skills. In one very effective lesson on organisms and their habitats in Year 4, the pupils were observing snails. The teacher was enthusiastic, provided good quality equipment and printed resources and encouraged accurate observation. The pupils were excited about the work, observed closely and described in detail the snail's structure and activities, before making good quality drawings. The teachers make good use of the school grounds and environmental area in connection with the teaching of science. The teachers mark work regularly and assess pupils' achievements at the end of topics. However, throughout the school there is a lack of consistency in assessment procedures in science, which hinders planning and the setting of targets to further raise achievements.

ART

72. Few lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence from these lessons, the pupils' work, displays and discussion indicate that pupils at Key Stage 2 achieve the expected levels for their age. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of pattern and colour, using pastels and paint well to create different effects, for instance in their lively character portraits inspired by Picasso. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 also achieve satisfactory standards. Their work shows good use of colour mixing and they are developing different painting techniques to create texture and mood. The pupils effectively explore contrast in colour and shape in their collages. Standards are similar to when the school was last inspected. The pupils make sound progress overall but the volume and pace of work is inconsistent between classes and year groups. The pupils do not make the expected progress in observational drawing, and the skills developed in Years 2 and 3 are not further developed throughout Key Stage 2.

73. In the lessons seen teaching was satisfactory at both key stages. Where teaching is best, the pupils are encouraged to explore ideas and find solutions, for example in a Year 6 lesson, where pupils worked from observational drawings of nature to create fabric appliqués. The teachers use artists' work effectively to inform pupils' knowledge and skills, such as the lively studies of colour and shape in Key Stage 1, inspired by Klee. However, there is limited evidence of pupils working from their imagination, or of variety in three-dimensional work and textiles. Sketchbooks are insufficiently used to record ideas, collect information and reflect upon results. Planning for art does not yet adequately link activities with clear learning objectives and this has a negative impact on continuity and progression. Pottery and art and craft clubs enhance the curriculum and the pupils' art is attractively displayed throughout the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. The standards attained in the lessons observed and the standard of the completed work examined indicate that standards reach those expected for the age of the pupils at Key Stage 2. For example, pupils in Year 6 had designed and made models of fairground rides with mechanisms to make them move. They carefully evaluated their designs and indicated how they could be improved. At Key Stage 1, the pupils' attainments reach the expected standard for the age of the pupils. For example, in Year 2, pupils had previously planned and made models of a lighthouse incorporating a winding mechanism. Pupils' achievements are sound and they make satisfactory progress over both key stages. In most lessons the pupils are given challenging tasks, which result in a good pace to the work.

75. No lessons were taught at Key Stage 1 during the inspection. In the few lessons seen at Key Stage 2 the teaching was good. The quality of the learning is good and the pupils learn to plan their work, with notes and sketches, to make items as accurately as possible, to apply their skills in cutting and joining and to evaluate their finished products. The pupils complete their tasks and the lessons have a lively pace. The pupils with special educational needs and the few with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. The teaching is effective in encouraging the pupils to achieve the expected standards and apply their skills productively. Classes are carefully organised and teachers keep pupils enthusiastically engaged with their tasks. The pupils are very well behaved and have positive attitudes. They show responsibility, particularly when working co-operatively in groups. Good teaching strategies are used, tasks are well explained and there is a strong emphasis to practical work in designing and making. Expectations are appropriate for the age of the pupils. The teachers are well supported by good subject guidance and support from the subject co-ordinator. The last inspection reported that standards were average. Since then standards have been maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

76. During the inspection, only one geography lesson was seen at Key Stage 1, and two at Key Stage 2. Additional evidence was obtained by discussion with teachers and pupils and the analysis of pupils' completed work. Currently the attainment of the oldest children at both key stages is in line with expectations for their age. Achievement overall is sound. However, for some topics the standards attained exceed expectations, for example, the in-depth study of the local village at Key Stage 1 and of the local town at Key Stage 2. At the time of the last inspection standards at Key Stage 1 were in line with national expectations and those at Key Stage 2 were below. Standards at Key Stage 2 have improved.

77. The oldest children at Key Stage 1 have a good knowledge about their local village and competently concluded traffic surveys there, comparing two locations. Year 5 pupils undertook a substantial study of their local town and learned a lot from a visit to it, which included interviewing people. They are able successfully to compare and contrast this local town with the village where their school is located. The pupils achieved high standards in this work and said that they enjoyed this very much and found it exciting.

78. In the lessons observed the teaching was satisfactory overall. The quality of learning is sound. Teachers use a wide range of resources to enhance learning and make effective use of field trips and visits. They are beginning to use information and communication technology to further enhance learning in geography, for example by setting up databases of surveys, and researching topics using CD-ROMs and the Internet. The teachers often successfully link work in geography with work in other curriculum areas, such as history and literacy.

79. At the time of the last inspection attainment was below average. Some resources were inadequate, the policy statement was out of date and there was no formal monitoring of standards. These shortcomings have been remedied and standards have improved.

HISTORY

80. The standards achieved by the oldest pupils at both key stages are in line with expectations for the age of the pupils. In some topics studied at Key Stage 2, however, the standards attained are above national expectations, for example, the work on the Victorians in Year 6 and on the Tudors in Year 5. Standards in history are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Whilst achievement in individual lessons is often good, achievement at both key stages is sound, because of the limited curriculum time available to the subject.

81. At Key Stage 1, pupils find out about aspects of the past, for example, from adults talking about their past, and from pictures. They also learn about famous people such as Florence Nightingale. At Key Stage 2, pupils in Year 4 show a sense of chronology, for example with respect to the invasions and settlements of the Romans, Anglo Saxons and the Vikings. Year 5 pupils have a good knowledge of life in Tudor times and have produced good quality project files on this topic. Year 6 pupils readily discuss life styles, health, schooling and child labour in Victorian times.

82. Teaching in the lessons observed was good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for history, which they pass on to the pupils. The teachers provide a wide variety of learning activities, supported by good quality resources. The quality of learning is good. The pupils show interest, and ask questions to further their understanding. They concentrate well, quickly learning the facts. In one very good lesson with Year 1, the children were studying 'bath night' as it was in the recent past and comparing it with washing arrangements today. The children were attentive and very interested. They participated enthusiastically in the role-play and at the end of the lesson readily made comparisons with present day arrangements for bathing. Pupils' experiences in history are much enhanced by trips and visits to places of historical interest, such as a Tudor Manor house, a Roman museum, the Normandy beaches and war memorials and cemeteries in northern France.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

83. The standards attained by the oldest children at Key Stage 1 and 2 are in line with national expectations. Standards have been improved since ten networked computers were installed in a dedicated computer room in January 2000. Since then, teachers have consistently followed the revised scheme of work in teaching information and communication technology skills. Standards have improved since the time of the last inspection, when they were below national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory. The oldest pupils at Key Stage 1 use a word processor to create a sentence and edit it. They move words to produce lists, and experiment with fonts, size of print and colour. They use a drawing package to create pictures and patterns, and flood areas of the patterns with particular colours. At Key Stage 2 the oldest pupils use information and communication technology well to present information in different forms and styles, and for specific purposes. Many Year 6 pupils understand how to set up a spread sheet and use it to solve numerical problems. Year 6 pupils can also use a digital camera to produce, for example, pictures of their fashion show. Many pupils at Key Stage 2 competently use CD-ROMs and the Internet to research information.

84. Pupils' attitudes to information and communication technology are very good. Many are interested in and enthusiastic about computers. They concentrate well and work collaboratively, willingly sharing the tasks.

85. Teaching is good in the dedicated lessons on the new computers. Teachers are confident in using the equipment, thoroughly prepare before starting the lesson and give clear explanations. Learning is good; the pupils concentrate well, follow instructions and quickly learn new skills. The teaching is well supported by good co-ordination of information and communication technology. New schemes of work have been successfully implemented and the co-ordinator monitors pupils' work effectively. Substantial recent in-service training and help and advice have increased teachers' knowledge and confidence in the use of the new computers, which in turn has contributed to the improvement of standards. Not enough use, however, is made of information and communication technology to support and enhance learning in other subjects. Consistent assessment procedures are not yet in place across the school to help the monitoring of achievement and planning, although there are plans to improve this.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

86. The pupils start to learn French in Year 3. They have one short lesson per week in each of the four years. During the inspection it was only possible to observe some of the lessons in Year 6.

87. The attainment of the majority of the oldest pupils is broadly in line with the expectation for pupils after one year of learning French in a secondary school. The attainment of the other pupils in Year 6 is below this. Most can read simple sentences containing familiar language. They have satisfactory pronunciation when reading aloud. The higher attainers can write simple conversations. The achievement of almost all of the pupils is sound. They make satisfactory progress over time. Standards are broadly similar to those observed at the time of the last inspection. There is scope, however, to challenge the more able further, for example in more extended writing and speaking.

88. The teaching observed in Year 6 is satisfactory. The good emphasis on how the language works, for example, the different forms of important verbs, the different pronouns and their uses, ensures that the pupils make a reasonable degree of intellectual effort. The

teacher's constant checking that the pupils have understood what words mean ensures a good level of comprehension of the written language. However, the fact the lessons are taught almost exclusively through English holds back the development of the pupils' listening skills. Overall, the teaching has a satisfactory impact on the pupils' learning, which is also satisfactory. Good relationships with the pupils, the teacher's enthusiasm for French and the appropriate pace at which the lessons are taught contribute to the good levels of concentration and to the positive attitudes that almost all the older pupils have toward learning French. Almost all of the Year 6 pupils participate in the annual trip to Normandy. Those who had recently made the trip had obviously enjoyed the opportunity to try out what they have learnt, for example when ordering snacks and drinks.

MUSIC

89. Only three lessons were seen during the inspection and evidence from these, and from assemblies, recordings of concerts and discussions with pupils, indicate that the pupils at Key Stage 2 attain the standards expected for their age. These standards are similar to those reported at the last inspection. All pupils at Key Stage 2 learn to play the recorder. They play from conventional notation with good timing and sense of style. However, the musical experience of the Year 6 pupils arises mainly from their recorder playing and instrumental tuition and their understanding of composition and the music of other times and places is unsatisfactory. The pupils at Key Stage 1 receive a broader musical experience. They translate symbols into sounds with an awareness of pitch and dynamics, and sing tunefully and sensitively, along with older pupils in assemblies and concerts. The pupils who receive instrumental tuition make good progress but the majority of pupils make unsatisfactory progress over time as a result of patchy provision and poor planning for continuity of experience.

90. In the few lessons seen the majority of the teaching was unsatisfactory. The pace of learning was too slow and the pupils lost interest because the material and lesson organisation failed to engage them creatively. Where teaching was good the teacher's enthusiasm, together with clearly focused activities, ensured that the pupils made progress, although this was limited to recorder playing. The absence of a music co-ordinator has resulted in poor provision, and a lack of guidance and resources to support teachers, many of whom have limited musical abilities. Learning is unsatisfactory for most pupils. The school has plans to address these issues and is endeavouring to provide better musical experiences for the pupils. Although there is no regular choir or orchestra, the pupils have opportunities to participate in musicals and concerts. One quarter of the pupils receive instrumental tuition in woodwind, keyboard, brass and violin and this has a positive impact on their learning. The last inspection reported limited opportunities for group work and undeveloped assessment procedures, and these still apply.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

91. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above that expected nationally in athletics and games. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. The pupils have good ball skills, throwing for distance and accuracy, and demonstrate good running technique. In 1999 all Year 6 pupils achieved the national expectation in swimming. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in dance is at least in line with national expectations. The pupils have sound spatial awareness and express feelings, such as happy and sad, in their dances. They work with a partner by copying, leading and following, and link actions into sequences. Pupils at both key stages, including those with special educational needs, make good progress.

92. The quality of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. In most lessons tasks are structured and developed to improve pupils' skills. There is an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, as shown by two indoor team games lessons, where the variety of tasks and brisk pace tested pupils' stamina, control and co-ordination in a number of ways. However, assessment is not used well. In almost all of the lessons seen there were too few opportunities for pupils to evaluate their performance and suggest improvements, although teachers gave good individual feedback. This was an issue raised in the last inspection and has not improved. The pupils have very good attitudes to their lessons. They listen well to instructions and work hard to improve. They co-operate well in mixed gender and ability groups, and have a good sense of fair play. The physical education programme provides an appropriate range of activities, including a good range of out of school activities, and pupils achieve good results in local schools' athletics competitions.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

93. Standards in religious education exceed the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus by the end of Key Stage 2. They attain the levels expected by the Agreed Syllabus by the end of Key Stage 1. The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 is similar to that recorded in the last inspection report. The attainment of pupils in Key Stage 2 is higher and has improved since the last inspection.

94. Key Stage 1 pupils understand that people of different faiths have their own special places for worship and they know that Christians worship in a church. They visit the local church and see the font, the altar and the cross, and record these through drawing and writing. They explore the value of friendship and know, for example, that friends do not talk behind your back. They write about caring for and helping others and can relate these to stories Jesus told, such as the Good Samaritan. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils gain a deeper understanding of the importance of Jesus in the Christian faith as they study significant events in his life. They study other faiths such as Judaism and Buddhism and are able to compare these with the Christian faith. They recognise that religion is very important in some people's lives and understand why people go to church and pray. They make good use of their study of the Bible to substantiate their arguments.

95. The pupils' achievements are good overall. Pupils study topics in increasing depth. The younger pupils develop a simple understanding of ideas about human experiences, such as bravery, through stories from the Bible. They learn about David and Goliath and they can relate this story to their own personal experiences, for example, being afraid of the dark and discussion of how they could overcome this. Older pupils build upon their understanding of the Christian year through their study of the significance of Lent and Easter. In Year 6 they are well challenged by studying the symbols and feelings represented in paintings. They develop an understanding that art can be sacred and spiritual for believers.

96. It was not possible to make a judgement about the quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 as no lessons were observed during the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes very good at Key Stage 2. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is conveyed sensitively and appropriately. They keep pupils fully involved throughout the lesson by asking appropriate questions. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective and thoughtful as they record their work. Teachers manage pupils well. They treat them with respect and value their contribution. As a result, pupils pay good attention to the teacher and listen carefully to one another. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and she leads the subject well. Assessment procedures are very good, have

improved since the last inspection and are built into the planning of the lessons. Short tests are used in Key Stage 2 to check pupils' understanding. Local ministers contributed to the spiritual life of the school and to religious education at the time of the last inspection and this is still the case.