

INSPECTION REPORT

St Helen's RC Primary School

Westcliff on Sea

LEA area: Southend on Sea

Unique reference number: 115147

Headteacher: Mrs S Reynolds

Reporting inspector: Terry Elston
20704

Dates of inspection: 18th to 20th September 2000

Inspection number: 224836

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	North Road Westcliff on Sea Essex
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body, St Helen's RCP School
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Newman
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

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Tony West 9588	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the school with in partnerships with parents?
Judith Howell 18083	Team inspector	Children aged under five, Science, History, Geography.	
Dorothy Latham 16760	Team inspector	Pupils with English as an additional language, English, Art, Music.	
Arthur Evans 19897	Team inspector	Mathematics, History, Design and technology, Equal opportunities.	How good are curricular and other opportunities?

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Helen's Roman Catholic Primary School educates boys and girls aged between four and 11. The school has 30 children who attend on a part-time basis in its Reception class. Over 80 per cent of pupils are of the Roman Catholic faith. There are 208 full-time pupils, which is about average in number for this type of school. The school has 12 more girls than boys on roll. There are 12 per cent of pupils for whom English is an additional language, which is above average. About six per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which is about average. Just over 20 per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is around the national average. The school has over 21 per cent of pupils on its register of special educational needs which is broadly the national average. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs, which is also around the national average. During the last school year, 14 pupils entered the school other than at the usual time of first admission and 17 left it at times which were not those of the normal leaving or transfer for most pupils. This degree of mobility amongst the pupils in this school is not unusual. Pupils enter the school at standards lower than the level of the national average, and well below in terms of pupils' literacy skills. Standards on entry are significantly below those of pupils at the time of the school's previous OFSTED inspection, a change is reflected in the much higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs which the school now has.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a sound school, where standards are improving year by year in the national assessment tests. The headteacher leads her team well, and has a good understanding of how to improve the quality of education in the school. The consistently good teaching shows how well teachers are supported, and how much their knowledge of the curriculum and planning of lessons have improved since the previous inspection. The high expectations that staff have of pupils' behaviour mean that this is an orderly school, where pupils are happy, and keen to learn. Given the higher than average costs per pupil, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' standards by Year 6 in the 1999 national assessment tests in English were well above those of similar schools, and in mathematics, they were above average. Indications are that they have improved again this year.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers work hard to improve their knowledge and methods, and make lessons demanding and interesting for all pupils.
- The headteacher knows how to raise standards, and has high expectations of teachers and pupils.
- The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good, and the provision is managed well by the co-ordinator.
- Pupils are very well-behaved, and keen to do well.
- The provision and support for pupils with English as an additional language are good, and they make rapid progress.

What could be improved

- Standards in information and communication technology by Year 6 are below average, and not all the required elements of the National Curriculum in this subject are taught in the juniors.
- Standards of writing, and speaking and listening, are too low throughout the school.
- The total teaching time is significantly below the required minimum number of hours in the juniors.
- Governors spend too little time in school, and leave too much of the management of the school to the headteacher and staff.

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 March 1998, and, since that time, has made satisfactory improvements overall. The management has improved because teachers are now better supported in terms of the monitoring of their work, and the training given to them to develop their expertise. Teaching is significantly better as a result, and is now a strength of the school. Governors, however, are still not sufficiently involved in shaping the school's direction. The curriculum is much better organised, and has a satisfactory focus on pupils' academic and cultural development, but weaknesses still exist in information and communication technology. Communication with parents has improved, and most feel well informed about the school's work. Pupils' work in the current Year 6 is of a lower standard than found by the school's previous OFSTED inspection in English, but standards are higher in mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, music and physical education, and similar in geography and information and communication technology. Standards in history in Key Stage 1 have also improved. Given the strong lead by the headteacher, and the clear focus on raising standards, the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E	A	C	A
Mathematics	E	B	C	B
Science	E	C	E	D

Key	
Very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In these 1999 tests, pupils' attainment in Year 6, compared with national figures, was average in English and mathematics, but well below in science. Compared with similar schools, however, standards were well above in English, above in mathematics and below average in science. This year's, as yet unverified, results show significant improvements in all three subjects, especially science, and a much greater proportion of pupils who exceeded the nationally expected levels across the board. The school has made good progress towards the challenging targets it set for pupils to reach Level 4 and above in English and mathematics. The current Year 6 is performing some way below last year's group. A significant number of them have special educational needs, and this class suffered badly last year because of constant changes in staff. This inspection finds that standards are above average in mathematics, below average in writing, speaking and listening, information and communication technology and geography, and average in reading, history, art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. In the infants, standards are below average in speaking and listening, writing and geography, and average in reading and all other subjects. Children under five achieve average standards in mathematical development and creative development. In communication, language and literacy and in their physical development, the children are working towards some of the early goals. In their knowledge and understanding of the world and their personal, social and emotional

development, children's attainment is above average. Pupils with special educational needs reach good standards relative to their previous attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are keen to learn, and concentrate hard on their work.
Pupils' behaviour, in and out of classrooms	They behave very well in class, and have a good understanding of school rules. Pupils play happily outside, and instances of bullying are rare.
Personal development and relationships	These are good. Pupils are keen to take responsibility, and older pupils take good care of younger ones. Relationships are good throughout the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, but unauthorised absences are above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Forty six lessons seen	Good	Good	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, and most parents agree that these are strengths of the school's provision. Across the school, the quality of teaching was judged as good or better in 63 per cent of lessons, and very good or better in seven per cent. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. This represents a big improvement on the findings of the school's last inspection when teaching was judged as unsatisfactory. At that time, more than one quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory, and half had significant weaknesses. The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good, and gives pupils a sound grasp of the basic skills of reading and number. Not enough, however, is planned to develop pupils' writing to the full, and teachers do not always insist on high enough standards of writing in subjects other than English. Consequently, pupils' writing is weak. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in science, information and communication technology, history and physical education and good in art and music, where teachers' skills are particularly strong and pupils' learning is brisk. The main strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' thorough planning, good control of classes and generally good knowledge of the National Curriculum. These qualities ensure that pupils' learning of skills is generally good. The exception here is in information and communication technology where teachers' knowledge of computers is patchy, and consequently they make too little use of computers to support pupils' learning in other subjects. The teaching in the Reception class is good, and children learn quickly. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good, and they make significant progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
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The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is organised well, and all subjects have clear schemes of work to assist teachers in their planning. Not all elements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology at Key Stage 2 are covered. The total length of teaching time is well over an hour short of the recommended minimum at Key Stage 2.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Targets are clear, and both pupils and teachers are well supported by the special educational needs co-ordinator.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils make good progress in their understanding and use of English, and many do well in the national assessment tests in Year 6.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual development is sound, with some good instances where they are required to consider subjects deeply, and reflect on spiritual issues. The provision for pupils' moral development is good, and the school's expectations of their behaviour form the foundation for this development. The development of pupils' social skills is good, and creates a purposeful and considerate atmosphere. There are some good cultural opportunities for pupils, but too little is planned to develop their understanding of non-Western cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Teachers know their pupils well, and provide a secure place for them to learn. Pupils' personal development is monitored well. Teachers assess their academic progress systematically, and use this information well to move pupils forward.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents are well informed about the school's work, and the progress made by their children. Many parents help in school, and provide valuable assistance to pupils and teachers.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good leadership by the headteacher is raising standards and improving the quality of teaching. The deputy headteacher has too little by way of whole-school responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	This is unsatisfactory. Governors are skilled, but come into school too rarely, and leave too many decisions to the headteacher. Statutory requirements are met, apart from the teaching of information and communication technology in the juniors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is good. Results of national and school assessments give clear direction for the raising of standards. Good systems to track pupils' progress through the school provide clear evidence of the value added by the teaching.
The strategic use of	Good. Resources are satisfactory, and used well. The good new

resources	computer suite is supporting improvement in pupils' and teachers' knowledge of information and communication technology. There are still shortages, however, in computer equipment and programs. The accommodation is sound, but classrooms are small, and accommodation for staff is poor. Outdoor resources for children under five are inadequate. The finance officer keeps a tight rein on the school's funds, and makes good efforts to obtain the best value from spending decisions.
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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 good teaching in all classes. • Pupils' good standards of work and behaviour. • The reports on pupils' progress. • The school's high expectations. • The extent to which children enjoy school. • The way pupils learn to be mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all parents are happy coming to the headteacher with complaints. • Too much, or too little, homework is set. • Not enough information is given about their child's progress. • Not enough extracurricular activities are provided. • The school does not work closely enough with parents.

The inspection team endorses parents' positive comments. A few parents feel uncomfortable coming to make complaints, despite the school's 'open door' policy, and the school does not always work closely enough with parents to resolve this problem. The level of homework is appropriate. The amount and quality of information given to parents have improved recently, and are now good. Extracurricular activities are plentiful in the juniors, but too few for young pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Analysis of the school's national end of Key Stage 2 tests in 1999 shows that, compared with all schools, standards were average in English and mathematics, and well below average in science. These results were similar to the previous OFSTED inspection in English, much better in mathematics, but worse in science. Compared with similar schools, standards in 1999 were well above average in English, above in mathematics, and below average in science.
2. When the averages of the school's end of Key Stage 2 test results for 1999 are compared with those reached by the pupils in 1996, 1997 and 1998, they show improving standards in all subjects which are broadly in line with the national trend. There is no significant difference in standards attained by boys and girls.
3. The school set appropriately challenging targets for 80 per cent of its pupils to reach, or exceed, the expected level in the national end of Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics in 2000. The, as yet unverified, results for this year indicate that standards have risen considerably, and are above the national averages in all subjects. These results show that over 79 per cent of pupils achieved the national standard in English, against the national average of 75 per cent, whilst over 82 per cent did so in mathematics, compared with the national average of 72 per cent. Pupils did particularly well in science this year, improving on last year's poor figure of 77 per cent of pupils who attained the national standard to more than 91 per cent this year. This, again, compares well with the national average of 85 per cent. By far the biggest improvements in the 2000 assessments lie in the proportion of pupils exceeding the national standard compared with the previous year. These proportions have risen from 16 per cent to over 32 per cent in English, ten per cent to over 32 per cent in mathematics and six per cent to over 23 per cent in science. These rises illustrate how well the school's planning for higher achieving pupils has improved their standards.
4. The findings of the inspection are that, compared with the 1999 national assessments, pupils in the current Year 6 are achieving lower standards in English, but higher in mathematics and science. A significant number of them have special educational needs, mostly because of their weak literacy skills, and this class suffered badly last year with several changes in staff. Nevertheless, given pupils' below average standards overall, and poor literacy skills in particular, on entry to the school, these achievements show significant improvements in all areas. Improvements in mathematics and science are due to the school's introduction of good monitoring and planning, which have targeted specific areas of weakness and shown the way forward to raise standards.
5. This inspection finds that, in English, standards of speaking and listening in Year 6 are below average. Although pupils attend well generally, they are not always attuned to listening for specific details, and often miss some of the information given in this way. Pupils are confident when they speak, but their grammar in spoken language is immature.
6. By Year 6, standards in literacy, including reading, are average. Pupils read their books with accuracy and interest, and their technical skills used for working out new words are satisfactorily developed. However, the books read by more able pupils in Year 6 are sometimes insufficiently challenging, and some of the more advanced reading skills of comprehension which demands inference and reasoning are not consistently developed. In writing, pupils' standards by Year 6 are below average. Whilst pupils tackle a good range of writing, including letters, stories, poetry, descriptions, reporting, and instructions, their persuasive writing and note-making are weak. Pupils' spelling and punctuation are generally average, but their handwriting is often poorly formed, and the presentation of

their work is often poor. Teachers pay too little attention, in subjects other than English, to the quality of pupils' written work, and this is why it fails to improve along with pupils' other skills.

7. In mathematics, in Year 6 the pupils attain above average standards in mental calculations and basic numeracy. They use quick mental recall of number facts well to solve complex problems. They use their knowledge of doubling and halving confidently to solve addition and subtraction problems. Higher achieving pupils use inverse operations in order to check their answers. Many of the pupils recognise and use square roots. They have a good understanding of the equivalence of fractions, and calculate percentages of numbers accurately. By the age of 11, in science, pupils' attainment is average. They describe clearly the functions of some of the important plant and human organs, and understand the circulation system well. They classify materials as solids, liquids and gases and use terms such as evaporation and condensation accurately to describe change. The pupils have a sound knowledge of magnetism and use symbols accurately to draw an electric current. Most pupils make sound predictions based on their knowledge and evidence, and show in the way they perform their task a good understanding of the need for a fair test. The presentation of their work, however, is generally unsatisfactory.

8. In information and communication technology by Year 6, pupils' attainment is below average. Their keyboard skills are slow, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 still have to search for the shift and caps lock keys. They have basic word-processing skills, but many are uncertain about how to centre text or change fonts. They operate a floor robot with average skill, but have had little experience with using spreadsheets or databases. The school has no facilities to monitor changes in materials or develop pupils' decision-making skills using simulations or adventure programs.

9. In the other subjects by Year 6, standards are below average in geography, and average in history, art and design, design and technology, music and physical education. In music, pupils are very confident in preparing simple compositions and in performing these to the rest of the class. Their singing is tuneful, with generally good pitch and control of volume. In physical education, pupils have average games skills, and perform with credit in local football, netball and rounders matches. They run well, and achieve good success in competitive meetings. Standards of swimming are average, and nearly all pupils swim competently. In art, pupils draw portraits with a reasonable degree of skill and sense of tone. In geography, pupils provide basic explanations of how events such as cyclones and earthquakes can damage the environment, but their geographical vocabulary is limited, and few have reached the stage where they ask searching questions about their findings. In design and technology, pupils make sound models, complete with batteries and motors, but their designs are weak, and have not progressed greatly from the basic drawings in the infants. In history, pupils have a sound depth of factual knowledge and understanding of Ancient Greece, the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings and Victorian Britain, but few have moved on to study sources independently, question their validity, or write their own version of events that happened.

10. At Key Stage 1, when the school's 1999 national assessment tests are compared with those of all schools, they show that standards were below average in reading and mathematics, and well below average in writing. When the average of this data is compared with similar schools, however, standards are average in reading and mathematics, but still below in writing. In the teachers' assessments for science, pupils' attainment was above average. The findings of the inspection are that, in Year 2, standards in English are below average overall. In speaking and listening and in writing, attainment is below average, but in reading, it is average. In mathematics and science, standards are average. Improvements in reading and mathematics have been achieved through improved planning of lessons, and a better focus on developing pupils' basic skills. Writing has not benefited from these measures.

11. Although most pupils speak confidently and use a reasonably wide vocabulary, the grammatical structure of their speech is immature. Most listen reasonably well, and show by their responses that

they have a sound understanding of what is said to them. Their reading is mostly confident and accurate, and many have soundly developed strategies for working out unfamiliar words. In writing, pupils' attainment is below average, particularly in terms of its content, length and organisation. Their handwriting, however, is developing well since the introduction of joined writing at an early stage.

12. In mathematics, in Year 2, pupils have sound strategies in their mental calculations, and have a quick mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to 20 and beyond. They have a sound understanding of place value in three digit numbers, and order numbers up to 100 accurately. Pupils recognise and name common two and three-dimensional shapes with reasonable accuracy, and quickly see lines of symmetry in a figure.

13. By Year 2, in science, pupils sort animals appropriately into groups, using simple features, such as the number of legs, and have a sound understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for good health. They sort materials accurately according to their properties, and conduct good tests on fabrics to discover which ones will withstand water. They provide sound descriptions of ways in which eggs change when cooked and what happens when water is heated. Their knowledge and understanding of electricity are good. In information and communication technology, the pupils show average word processing skills, and use the mouse and keyboard confidently.

14. Pupils' work is average in all other subjects except geography, where it is below average. Here, they gather data systematically to produce a geographical picture of how pupils in the class travel to school, but their use and understanding of maps are weak, as are their research skills. In art and design, pupils make good studies of famous artists and their techniques, as was illustrated by Year 2 pupils' work on Lowry, and their good efforts to recreate his style. In design and technology, pupils' making skills and use of construction skills are average, but their designs often consist of little more than untidy drawings, which are of little value. In history, pupils use appropriate historical vocabulary, indicating an awareness of the passing of time, and have an average knowledge of significant people and events from the past. However, there is insufficient challenge in recording methods for higher achieving pupils, and their written work is too brief. In physical education, pupils' gymnastic skills are average, and they create interesting shapes with their bodies as they move around the hall.

15. When they enter the school, most children aged under five attain standards that are below those expected for their age. From this starting point, the children make good progress and most are on course to achieve the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year in their mathematical development and creative development. Standards in personal, social and emotional development and in their knowledge and understanding of the world are on course to exceed the goals. In communication, language and literacy and in their physical development, the children are working towards the early learning goals. In the school's previous inspection, the children were judged to have reached suitable levels in all the areas of learning by the time that they reached the age of five.

16. Pupils do well at this school, and make significant progress, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils enter the school with below average skills in literacy and numeracy in terms of pupils nationally, and attain at least average standards in the national assessment tests by Year 6. The latest tests indicate even further improvement. The strong focus on the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is successful in giving pupils confidence to read, and to work out complex mathematical problems. In science, teachers' demanding questions encourage pupils to think scientifically, and this helps them to tackle new experimental work with confidence. In English, only in writing do pupils fail to achieve high enough standards, because the curriculum is not geared to improve this area of their work sufficiently, and there is insufficient focus upon the quality, quantity and neatness of their written work in subjects across the curriculum.

17. Pupils with special educational needs attain good standards in relation to their previous attainment. The pupils receive support which is well targeted to their needs, and they make good progress to achieve standards by Year 6 which are close to the national average in all subjects of the national assessment tests. Last year, one Year 6 pupil who had been on the special educational needs register

attained the national standard in English, and above average standards in mathematics and science. Pupils' individual education plans have clear, realistic targets, and the reviews at the end of each term show that they make good progress towards them. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics, where the ability sets in the juniors are particularly effective at providing just the right level of challenge and support.

18. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in their learning. Those who have been educated in the school for several years do well in the end of Key Stage 2 assessments. In the last national end of Key Stage 2 assessments, all pupils at that stage for whom English was an additional language achieved, or exceeded, the standards reached by most pupils thus comparing favourably with all pupils in the school. Analysis of information about the stages of fluency in English achieved by pupils with English as an additional language shows a picture of steadily increasing fluency. In Years 3, 4 and 5, except where pupils with English as an additional language have other special educational needs, more than half are already reaching the target level for their age in English.

19. Higher achieving pupils do well in this school, and a good proportion achieve high standards in the national assessment tests. Most lesson plans address the needs of these pupils well by giving good extension activities, which require pupils to think more deeply about the subject. In this way, pupils are stretched, and attain standards appropriate to their abilities. An exception here is in English, where pupils' reading and writing skills are not sufficiently extended by demanding tasks, and too few pupils attain the high standards of which they are capable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and support teaching and learning well. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, are keen, enthusiastic and eager to come to school. They listen attentively, follow instructions and settle quickly to the task given. Children generally concentrate well, although in one lesson when teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils lost their concentration. They generally work very well at tasks set for them, independently and in differing group situations. For example, in science and information and communication technology lessons, there were examples of good collaboration. Also, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils assisted each other to research and find references on stethoscopes.

21. Pupils of all abilities are interested in the life of the school and behave very well, complying with school and class rules. They know right from wrong and are polite and courteous to teachers, their peers and visitors. Behaviour in the dining hall, during assembly and while pupils move about the school is good.

22. Pupils form good relationships with their peers and with adults. Those involved in the 'Guardian Angel' scheme look after younger pupils very well. Pupils are also caring in their support for those with special educational needs. No examples of any oppressive behaviour, bullying, sexism or racism were seen during the inspection. The great majority of pupils understand the impact of their behaviour on others.

23. Pupils handle resources well. During an information and communication technology lesson, they worked with great care when using their new computers. No examples of damage or graffiti were seen during the inspection.

24. The pupils discuss varied topics readily, and accept that others may have a different view or belief from their own. They have good opportunities to take responsibilities, for example, by being on the school council, helping to clear lunch, showing visitors around school and acting as mentors to new pupils. There are not many opportunities for pupils to display initiative, and there are few examples of this happening. In mathematics and science, pupils work well independently when asked to do so, but teachers provide too few opportunities for them to develop fully this side of their work.

25. In the previous inspection, pupils' attendance was described as unsatisfactory. It is now satisfactory, but whilst the school's attendance figure for 1999 was above the national average, the unauthorised absences were also above. The registration of pupils at the start of sessions is handled efficiently, and pupils settle down to work promptly and with little fuss. This contributes positively to the learning process.

26. Children under five settle very quickly into the school routines. They have a positive approach to their learning activities, grow in confidence and quickly become independent. When working together, they co-operate well and support one another in their learning. The children with English as additional language are keen and highly motivated learners. All children are very friendly and their behaviour is good in and out of the classroom.

27. Pupils with English as an additional language have good attitudes to the school, generally, and to their work. They are interested in all the activities presented to them, and they generally try hard. Their behaviour is good. There is good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others from all its pupils, and relationships are good, which produces an atmosphere of harmony in the school. Pupils with special educational needs are keen to learn, and are delighted to achieve success. They also support each other well when working as a group. In one mathematics lesson, for example, a pupil who had been struggling to understand the work came up with the correct answer, and all the group clapped spontaneously; the pupil beamed with pride.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

28. Overall, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good, and most parents agree that these are strengths of the school's provision. Across the school, the quality of teaching was judged as good or better in nearly two thirds of lessons, and all lessons but one were at least satisfactory. This represents a big improvement on the findings of the school's last inspection when teaching was judged as unsatisfactory at both key stages. At that time, more than one quarter of lessons were unsatisfactory, and half had significant weaknesses. The last report criticised teachers' knowledge of the subjects of the National Curriculum, and their low expectations of pupils. This inspection finds that, with the exception of information and communication technology, teachers mostly have a good knowledge of the subjects of the National Curriculum. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils, many of whom attained above average standards in the latest national assessment tests. Many of the teachers are young, but they make up for their inexperience by their careful planning of lessons, generally good focus on the highest and lowest achieving pupils and considerable enthusiasm. The benefits of this improvement in teaching can be judged by the significant rise in pupils' achievements in the Key Stage 2 national assessment tests since the previous inspection, particularly in English and mathematics.

29. The quality of teaching for children under five is good. The Reception teacher and teaching assistant have established very supportive relationships with the children and already know them well as individuals. The Reception class has firmly organised routines, so that children quickly feel secure, and happily become independent in their activities. Planning is good and is carefully matched to the recommended targets for very young children. Daily activities are well prepared, and the good range of resources available is used effectively to stimulate children's interest and participation. There is a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those initiated by the children. The teacher and teaching assistant work very closely together to plan and teach the curriculum for the children and to ensure that there is a good range of stimulating experiences. They are very skilled at developing warm relationships with both the children and their parents, and manage carefully the transition between home and school. Consequently, the children settle into school happily and quickly develop very good attitudes to learning. There is particularly good teaching in the more formal aspects

of literacy and mathematics, and this helps pupils learn important basic skills to prepare them for Year 1.

30. In the Years 1 and 2 classes, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with more than two-thirds of lessons at least good, and none unsatisfactory. Teachers are skilled at managing pupils' behaviour, and this ensures that pupils' learning is free of interruptions during lessons. Teachers plan and review lessons as a team, and this works well because it utilises the skills of everyone in the year group, and enables experienced teachers to support newcomers. It also creates a consistency in the planning and teaching and allows teachers to assess which lessons worked well, and if not, why not? The team teaching of the Year 2 pupils is effective, because whilst one of them teaches the main part of the lesson, the other records pupils' responses before they split the class into two groups. In this way, the teachers get the maximum benefit from assessments of pupils' understanding, and are then well equipped to address any problems in their learning in the groups. Teachers in the infants focus appropriately on pupils' basic skills, particularly in numeracy, reading, spelling and handwriting, and this leads to significant progress in these areas. There are weaknesses, however, in the lack of planning for developing pupils' speaking skills, and in the limited way teachers focus on improving the quality and quantity of writing across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils' learning is slower in these important areas. The literacy and numeracy lessons work well because teachers have a thorough understanding of the respective strategies, and build well on pupils' learning of the basic skills of reading and number. Teachers use the plenary sessions effectively to assess how well pupils have learned, and judge which topics need more attention. They make notes on their lesson plans to show which topics pupils find difficult, and this system is helpful in deciding upon which to revisit.

31. At Key Stage 2, the quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and helps to explain how pupils enter the school with below average skills, and leave with higher than average scores in the national assessment tests. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and this means that pupils work hard, and make good use of their time. The support and planning for higher achieving pupils are mostly good. Teachers provide demanding work to extend these pupils, and the proportion achieving levels above the national average in the national assessment tests has more than doubled in all subjects this year. A weakness here, however, is in pupils' reading and writing, where teachers expect too little of the highest achieving pupils in the books they read, or in the length and quality of their writing. Teachers provide interesting lessons, which stimulate pupils and help them learn new material well. They plan well, so that all pupils learn at their own level.

32. The teaching in Year 6 is particularly effective, because the teacher has clear and very high expectations of what pupils will achieve, both by the end of the lesson, and by the end of the year. One literacy lesson in Year 6, which illustrated these strengths, was one of a series to teach pupils how to structure a story. The teacher began with a clear and snappy recapitulation of previous work to set the scene, and then explained precisely what each group of pupils would learn. Excellent direct teaching of technical skills concerning how to make an impact with writing was followed by very carefully planned group work which challenged all pupils. The teacher assessed pupils' work skilfully throughout the lesson, and was thus totally prepared to consolidate pupils' learning in the plenary session. By the end, all pupils had come a long way in their understanding of story writing.

33. The quality of teachers' marking varies from class to class. Some teachers provide clear guidance in their comments on pupils' work, whilst others just use ticks, and offer no written help about how pupils could improve. Ticks are sometimes used to indicate that pupils have been given oral assistance. Teachers make sound provision for homework. The school has developed a good homework policy, following useful consultation with parents, and this gives a clear idea of the school's expectations.

34. The quality of teaching is good in literacy and numeracy throughout the school, and teachers have made an effective start with these national initiatives. Literacy lessons have an appropriate structure, and focus appropriately on developing pupils' reading skills. Numeracy lessons are well organised, and

the lively mental mathematics sessions ensure that pupils develop good strategies for mental calculations. Elsewhere, the quality of teaching is satisfactory in science, information and communication technology, history and physical education and good in art in the infants, and music throughout the school, where teachers' skills are particularly strong and pupils' learning is brisk. In information and communication technology, whilst the lessons in the computer suite are satisfactory, teachers make too little use of computers to support pupils' learning in other subjects. Not enough teaching was seen of art in the juniors, or design and technology and geography throughout the school, to make a judgement on its quality.

35. The arrangements made by the school for the support and teaching of pupils for whom English is an additional language are good. Each class in the school has a teaching assistant, and most of these have been trained in how to support and tutor pupils with English as an additional language. The Reception teacher also has a specialist qualification which is relevant, and one of the parents speaks a number of different languages and is always available. As a result of these effective measures, the learning of pupils with English as an additional language is good. In the early stages, independence in working is not so easy for these pupils, but this improves as fluency increases. By the end of the last Year 6 national assessments, all pupils with English as an additional language reached or exceeded the standards reached by most other pupils in English thus showing effective learning.

36. The quality and use of assessment for pupils with English as an additional language, including the tracking of individual progress through the school, are good. Periodic assessments, including the charting of progress, are carried out by a visiting specialist teacher from the Local Education Authority. Clear records are kept, including those of pupils' stages of fluency in English, and their levels in the English national curriculum, as they move through the school.

37. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is good. The teaching by the co-ordinator when supporting pupils in classes is well-focused on pupils' needs as identified in their individual targets, and this ensures that pupils keep up with the rest of the class. Class teachers plan well for pupils with special educational needs, and ensure that appropriate resources and support enable them to be included in all activities. Teaching assistants provide good support in lessons, in small group work and work with individual pupils. A strength of their role lies in their assessment of pupils during whole-class lessons. They watch pupils carefully, and make detailed notes on, for example, which pupils contribute to class discussions and which shy away from answering questions. This helps learning as teachers are able to direct specific questions at these pupils next time.

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

38. The school provides a good curriculum for children in the Reception class. Pupils in the rest of the school receive a broad curriculum, although less time is devoted to history, geography, art, design and technology, music and information and communication technology than in most primary schools. Indeed, provision for information and communication technology does not fully meet statutory requirements and this reflects the findings of the previous inspection. There is no provision for the monitoring of changes in materials or for the use of simulations. The school does not meet its statutory requirements for mathematics and science, which was a key issue of the previous inspection. The range of learning opportunities for the pupils in Key Stage 2 is, therefore, too limited. In addition, total weekly teaching time for these pupils is well below the nationally recommended minimum. The school meets statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of English and mathematics. The school is implementing the National Literacy Strategy well overall, but writing is not being taught systematically. The teaching of the National Numeracy Strategy is effective, and this is leading to rising standards in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 2.

39. The previous inspection found that planning of the curriculum was weak, and insufficient guidance was given to the teachers. Although there are still weaknesses in the planning for speaking, listening and extended writing, planning overall is now sound. The teachers use guidance from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to plan carefully for the work which the pupils will do each term and each week. Clear policies for all subjects of the National Curriculum are in place. This planning is proving successful in promoting standards which are largely average or better.

40. In the Reception class, the curriculum provided takes full account of the six areas of learning as set out in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidance for the Foundation Stage. Planning is thorough and detailed for each area of learning and makes clear links with subjects of the National Curriculum to ensure a smooth transition from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. A strong emphasis is placed on providing first-hand experiences of quality. There is very good provision for personal and social development. This is a strength of the Reception class, which prepares children well for full-time education. More focused teaching, linked to literacy and numeracy, is carefully planned for and introduced appropriately to the children.

41. The quality and range of learning opportunities for pupils with English as an additional language are sound. All follow the National Curriculum with the work adapted as necessary to individual needs, and with support to help them to progress as much as possible. Where pupils arrive in the later stages of the primary school, with very little understanding of English, it is sometimes necessary to arrange for them not to be included in the end of key stage assessments, and this has recently happened in one case. The strategies for the teaching of literacy and numeracy are good, and there is good teamwork between assistants and class teachers in planning, implementing and evaluating the work.

42. The school's equal opportunities policy is clear and it supports the school's mission statement well. All the pupils have equality of access and opportunity to the full curriculum, which reflects the findings of the previous inspection. Overall, the teachers plan work well in order to meet the varying needs of the pupils and this is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection.

43. A significant minority of parents feel that the school does not provide a sufficient range of activities outside lessons. The findings of the inspection do not support this view. There is a satisfactory range of after school clubs and of school visits, which enhances the learning and the personal development of the pupils. However, provision for netball, rounders and gymnastics is largely for the juniors. Football and recorders are for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and short tennis is for infants only. School sports teams play matches against other schools and enter competitions for football, netball, rounders, cross country and athletics with some success.

44. The school's relationships with partner institutions are good, and they help significantly in the transfer of the pupils from one stage of education to another. There is good liaison with pre-school playgroups, which helps to prepare the children for entry to the Reception class, and with the secondary schools to which pupils transfer. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 spend a day at these schools, in preparation for their transfer to Year 7, and secondary school staff have visited St Helen's in order to observe classroom practice there. These arrangements work well, and are valued by pupils and parents.

45. The teachers make sound use of the local community, in order to enrich the curriculum. They use the knowledge and expertise of a wide range of visitors, including police, the school nurse, the school crossing patrol and the road safety officer. Pupils aged six and over can pay to receive extra football coaching from the staff of Southend United Football Club. In subjects such as history and geography, the teachers make use of the immediate environment to enhance the pupils' learning. During the inspection, Year 6 pupils undertook some worthwhile historical research in the adjacent burial ground.

46. The headteacher is responsible for co-ordinating the personal, social and health education of the pupils. A policy for this area of the curriculum is in place. It recognises the role of parents and the

family in teaching children about human growth and sexual development. Relevant issues, such as celebration, commitment and respect, are discussed as they arise within subject areas or in sessions specifically included on the timetable. The teachers draw the pupils' attention appropriately to the dangers of misusing medicines, drugs and alcohol. Issues concerning human growth are dealt with effectively in science. The teachers answer questions as they arise openly and honestly, with due regard to the pupils' ages. More formal sex education is provided for the pupils in Years 5 and 6.

47. In the previous inspection, the provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development was satisfactory, but that for pupils' social and cultural development was unsatisfactory. The overall picture has improved, and the provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is now satisfactory, and for their moral and social development, it is good.

48. The main focus of development in the spiritual dimension is through prayer and acts of collective worship. Class prayers take place at the beginning and end of each session, in a reverent atmosphere, and there is a special worship area where pupils may display their own original prayers, as well as some classroom displays of prayer writing. In lessons, instances of spirituality are often to be found, such as written work by older pupils on the topic of riches in life, where pupils had described their own valued aspects as family and friendship rather than money and goods. In Year 5, the idea of friendship was valuably extended to include the use of our own talents to help others. Poems about friendship described pupils' feelings about their own relationships. The encouragement of pupils' own reflection on aspects of their own lives and those of others in other subjects is less in evidence, although some sound examples were seen. In science, for instance, pupils in Year 2 showed surprise and delight when the bulbs wired up in a simple circuit became alight, whilst in another lesson about light in Year 3, pupils showed awe and wonder at the shadow images that could be made using electric torches. A visiting religious group, who conduct workshops with the pupils, also provide a rich spiritual dimension with their songs, music and worship opportunities. There is, however, no structured programme for the development of pupils' spiritual awareness.

49. The good provision for pupils' moral development stems from the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Every class displays rules formulated through discussion, which are referred to and which are familiar to pupils. Moral issues are well taught and discussed. Everyday incidents promote such discussion at levels appropriate to the stage of development of pupils, and examples are talked about in personal, social and health education sessions. For instance, in a lesson with a health focus in Year 4, pupils were asked to think about the role of drugs and their positive use medicinally as well as their abuse, including warnings about never taking other people's medicines. Pupils showed a good grasp of the issues involved here and were able to comment and to describe some medicinal uses known to them and used within an appropriate and safe context. In addition, moral issues are exemplified in the stories and poems presented as literature. Pupils are given a clear understanding of right and wrong, at levels appropriate to their ages, and understand that there is a need to respect the rights and property of others.

50. The good provision for pupils' social development is a considerable improvement since the last inspection. Relationships in and out of the classroom are good, and staff provide an open and friendly atmosphere to encourage the development of pupils' social skills. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively in lessons such as science, history, literacy and information and communication technology. In some lessons, however, the work is such that it does not allow pupils to use their own initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils are given good opportunities to take responsibility for tasks appropriate to their age and development, both within the classroom and the wider school community. For instance, older pupils are given the job of looking after the very young children when they start school, sitting with them at lunch times and ensuring they have a friend to play with. To increase pupils' responsibilities, a school council has been formed, with representatives from Year 2 to Year 6. During the year, pupils are made well aware of the needs of others when they are involved in supporting the work of charities such as, 'Little Haven's Children's

Hospice', Brentwood Catholic Children's Society and the Great Ormond Street Hospital. Further emphasis on social development is included in the programme for pupils' personal and social education, and through the religious education syllabus followed by the school.

51. Whilst the provision for cultural development is satisfactory, there is limited provision for pupils' awareness of the rich cultural diversity of Britain. Nevertheless, the school has improved provision since the last inspection, which judged the cultural development of pupils to be weak. Western culture is promoted appropriately through subjects such as literacy, history, art and music. Painting in the style of great artists such as Monet and Lowry features in the curriculum, but there is little evidence of the work of Asian or West Indian artists. Pupils are given good opportunities to study other religions, including Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, and are made aware of the culture of other traditions, such as the Chinese New Year. The school also provides support for a school in South Africa. The school library, however, contains only a limited selection of books with themes from other cultures. Visits to the Southend Museum, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, Watt Tyler's Park and to the National Portrait Gallery contribute well to the pupils' cultural development. Further opportunities are provided by a diverse range of visitors invited into the school, including the Southend Music Service, a Line Dancing Group, authors and a Circus Group.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. The school continues to provide a safe and caring environment for its pupils as reported in the last inspection. Members of staff know pupils well, and this enables them to provide good and appropriate care and support. The quality of information kept on each pupil is detailed and comprehensive. Medical and personal needs are clearly identified and dealt with. External agencies including the educational welfare service, health professionals and social services support this aspect of the school well.

53. The school identifies and deals very effectively with any hazards found on the site, and health and safety checks, risk assessments and inspections are regularly undertaken. The school has a detailed health and safety policy in place, and health and safety is good. Members of the staff are trained to administer first aid and the school's provision for first aid and welfare support are very good. The school's policy and procedures follow the guidelines of the local committee for the protection of children. The headteacher is the designated person responsible for child protection arrangements, and other members of staff understand well the school's arrangements and procedures.

54. The school monitors attendance rigorously, and has made great progress in its arrangements since the last inspection in the way it follows up absences and lateness. The school complies fully with the statutory requirements for registration and the coding and recording of attendance. Its arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. There are few sanctions or rewards in the school, but the behaviour policy and teachers' consistent promotion of the school and class rules give pupils and parents a clear understanding of the school's expectations. The staff and parents confirm that there are few cases of poor behaviour, bullying or racial tension in the school.

55. The school has developed good procedures for monitoring and supporting the pupils' personal development. A card index system in each class records pupils' personal development well, and targets for pupils and this information is passed on to the pupils' next teacher to ensure that pupils gain the best value from assessment.

56. The school's procedures for assessing the pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory, which is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. That inspection found that there was no overall assessment policy and that assessment did not provide the teachers with enough information about what the pupils had done before. A draft policy for planning and assessment is now in place. It includes a clear timetable of formal assessments throughout the year for all subjects. Arrangements

for the end of key stage national tests meet statutory requirements. The teachers include good opportunities for assessment in their planning.

57. The teachers are now making good use of information from assessment to plan subsequent work for the pupils. They know which National Curriculum levels of attainment groups of pupils should be aiming for and they keep regular notes of those pupils who are achieving above or below these levels. The school's 'target setting team' has begun to analyse national test results and other assessment data, in order to place pupils' needs in priority and to help in the setting of individual academic targets. These are helping to raise standards, and include targets such as "discuss what he thinks will happen in experiments", "read more non-fiction", or "use formulae for calculating the area of two-dimensional shapes". Regular assessment during lessons by teachers or classroom assistants is generally used well to inform teaching and planning for subsequent work. The Year 6 teacher, for example, used assessment effectively to enhance the learning of electric circuit symbols for the following lesson, and in mathematics she assessed that further work was necessary on dividing more complex numbers by ten. The Year 1 teacher recorded "Children would benefit from using more practical techniques to begin with; better to start with a partly drawn worksheet".

58. The school's marking policy is clear. It aims to raise pupils' self-esteem, encourage pride in their work and raise standards through constructive marking. In practice, however, the quality of marking varies greatly. Some marking is not particularly helpful in telling the pupils how they might improve. Some untidy work is left unchecked, although good work is praised appropriately. Some marking for older pupils is very helpful. For example, one comment in a Year 6 pupil's English book said "I do feel that your ending could have been more imaginative. Try planning your ending before beginning". In most lessons, the teachers use plenary sessions well to assess what learning has taken place and what needs further attention.

59. For pupils with English as an additional language, the monitoring of their academic performance and personal development, including levels of fluency in English, is good. It is careful, regular and thorough. The procedures used for assessing attainment and progress are sound, and systematic and careful tracking of the progress made by individual pupils has just been established as an improvement to record keeping arrangements. There is special attention to the assessment of fluency in spoken English.

60. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the school's provision. They are quickly identified on entry to the school, and are set clear targets to help them improve. Teachers plan well to meet pupils' special educational needs, and support assistants play a key role, both in the teaching of pupils, and in the assessment of their progress. The one pupil with a statement of special educational needs is well supported, and arrangements for reviewing this support, and the pupil's progress, are good.

61. Assessment and record keeping procedures for children aged under five are good. Regular observations of the children at work and play, within each area of learning are well established and documented. Consequently, the teacher has an overview of the curriculum and recognises the purpose and potential for each activity. Children are assessed on entry to the school and again at half-termly intervals to monitor their progress. The information provided is used appropriately to plan work that will meet the needs of individuals and to decide which literacy and numeracy groups children will work in.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Parents have mixed views of the school. Whilst most feel that the school is good, and promotes their children's development well, others in their comments in their questionnaire were very critical, particularly concerning the shortage of extracurricular activities and the information that the school provides for them. The inspection team found that extracurricular activities were satisfactory overall, but were better for older pupils than for the infants. In the previous inspection, the information provided by the school was described as 'reasonable but not very effective'. The inspection team

found that the information provided for parents is now good. Nearly all parents appreciate the new format of the annual reports, which are detailed, and accurately describe their children. These list pupils' achievements; they are detailed and informative, and include useful information on how pupils can make further progress. The school's documentation for parents is informative, but the governors' Annual Report to parents does not include sufficient detail on the school's provision for special educational needs, and the prospectus does not include the school's attendance percentages.

63. The impact of the parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. The Parent Teacher Association raises large sums of money to purchase materials and resources for the school. Parents organise social events, and attend assemblies, performances, social and curricular events, briefing meetings and parents' evenings. Many parents help in school, and provide valuable assistance to pupils in classes and after school in the extracurricular activities.

64. The contribution of parents to children's learning at home is good. The school asked parents to complete questionnaires on the provision of homework, and reacted positively to parents' extensive comments.

65. Induction procedures for children aged under five are sound. Parents are invited to meet the Reception teacher, headteacher, parish priest, Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Parent Teacher Association, where they have the opportunity to hear about the learning that their child will experience and to receive appropriate documentation. There is no booklet specific to the provision for children aged under five in school apart from guidelines on how to listen to their child read at home that are outdated. A visit is arranged for the parents and children to spend a half-day in the Reception class before starting school. There is constant daily communication between the Reception staff and parents. Parents receive a very detailed written report of their child's progress and achievement at the end of their year in the Reception class.

66. The school liaises effectively with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Parents are seen regularly, and form a good partnership with the school when addressing pupils' specific difficulties. A very few parents feel that their child's special educational needs are not met adequately by the school, but the inspection finds no evidence to support these concerns.

67. The school makes good links with the parents of pupils with English as an additional language. Liaison between the school and home is generally carried out by the class teacher, although often the headteacher has an important role to play too. Where parents are not able to discuss their children's needs or their progress in English, the school is able to provide interpreters, either from amongst the parents or from a directory provided by the Local Education Authority. The school often becomes a source of help, information or support for parents with language difficulties when there are particular circumstances to be overcome.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The quality of the school's leadership and management is sound overall, and has improved significantly on the unsatisfactory standard reported in the previous inspection. The headteacher gives a clear direction to the school's future development. She has a good idea of the school's strengths and responds positively to its weaknesses. The headteacher has created a very strong team spirit within the school, and this encourages all staff to work closely together towards a common purpose. She has worked with some success with the Local Education Authority to overcome the problem of recruitment of teachers in this area, and the effectiveness of these dealings can be measured by the good quality of teaching throughout the school.

69. The leadership's response to the main issues arising from the last report has been satisfactory. Weaknesses in the quality of management have been addressed successfully. There is now a good, structured system for the headteacher to observe teachers teaching, and co-ordinators are given specific time away from the class to monitor the standards in their subject. Monitoring takes place with a clear focus, and teachers find subsequent feedback helpful. The quality of teaching has

improved significantly since these measures were introduced. The guidance given to staff with management responsibilities is good. All now have clear job descriptions, and, overall, they have appropriate responsibilities. The exception is the deputy headteacher, who has too little by way of whole-school responsibilities to make the most of her experience. Attendance is now monitored carefully, and is much improved.

70. The good improvements in the quality of teaching have been achieved primarily by ensuring that permanent staff are well chosen and appropriately qualified. Through regular monitoring, the headteacher and co-ordinators have then identified any areas of weakness in teachers' knowledge, and arranged suitable courses for them to attend. The school has used information from assessments, including national assessment tests, rigorously to show which areas of pupils' work are weakest, and how better teaching can improve standards. Teachers have benefited from good opportunities to observe good practice, in this school and others, particularly concerning the teaching of numeracy. This has worked well, and has given all staff useful guidance on the best methods and resources to use.

71. Improvements in the school's induction procedures have helped the many new staff settle quickly into school routines. Experienced mentors give regular support, and sometimes give demonstration lessons. The headteacher's appraisal of staff is sharply focused on teachers' needs, and training for the new requirements for performance management are well under way.

72. Good developments in assessment mean that teachers now have a clear idea of pupils' progress, and procedures for identifying and teaching high achieving pupils and those with special educational needs are good. The role of the co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs has been developed well. She now provides good management of the school's provision, and has recently taken on the responsibility for supporting the most able pupils, with significant success.

73. Weaknesses in the curriculum have largely been addressed. Co-ordinators have ensured that schemes of work are firmly in place, and teachers appreciate the guidance that these provide. The school has resolved some of the problems in information and communication technology by providing pupils with a computer suite, which is very well equipped with up-to-date machines. However, teachers' knowledge is still patchy, and the school still lacks important equipment necessary to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Improvements in the school's cultural provision mean that this is now satisfactory, but there is still a shortage of non-western art and music.

74. The development of governors' roles has been slow. Whilst they have good skills, and save the school a good deal of money by the way, for example, they negotiate with outside contractors, few visit school often enough to provide any direction. They leave decisions largely to the headteacher. The school development plan has good targets, appropriately focused on raising standards, but this is *presented* to governors, who have too little say in what the priorities should be.

75. A strength of the school's leadership is the way that standards have been raised by looking at particular groups of pupils who are underachieving. The headteacher set up an 'Achievement Group' of experienced teachers whose job it was to identify which pupils were under-performing, and devise strategies to improve their work. This works very well, and makes effective use of the initial assessments of pupils when they enter the Reception and the regular assessments up to Year 6. Weaknesses in the development of numeracy skills in the juniors, for example, were identified, and ability sets created to meet the needs of both high and low achieving pupils. A specialist mathematics teacher was then appointed to teach the most able pupils, and the co-ordinator for special educational needs was given responsibility for the lowest achieving group. These arrangements are very effective, and are driving up the standards of all pupils with special educational needs to approaching national standards by Year 6, while stretching the most able. The proportion of pupils exceeding national standards in the latest national tests subsequently increased from ten per cent in 1999 to over 32 per cent this year.

76. The support for pupils with English as an additional language is co-ordinated effectively by the headteacher with assistance from the special educational needs co-ordinator. The work of the team of teaching assistants for pupils with English as an additional language is supervised by the headteacher, although the day to day aspects of this work are managed by the class teachers who work closely with their teaching assistants. Work is skilfully integrated within that of mainstream classes, and where necessary, individual programmes of work are planned and implemented.

77. The school's funds are in good shape, and much better organised than in the previous inspection. Spending decisions are made wisely, with a good focus on achieving the best value for spending. There is a good long term view of the school's priorities, and records are maintained to a high standard by the school's finance officer. The specific grants provided for the support of pupils with English as an additional language are put to good purpose. The priority is the flexible use of resources to match needs as they arise, to ensure the maximum support possible from the funding provided. The fairly large carry forward in the budget has been accumulated appropriately in order to extend the school to cope with an increased number of pupils in Key Stage 2 classes.

78. The school's resources are satisfactory overall, and they are good in science and geography. In information and communication technology, the computers in the new suite are starting to have a positive impact on pupils' learning, but computers are used too rarely in classrooms, and the school lacks all the necessary equipment to teach fully the National Curriculum. There are shortages in historical resources in the infants, and too few multicultural resources in music. Storage is a problem in the school, and the lack of sufficient cupboards makes it difficult for teachers to locate the materials that they need. Otherwise, the accommodation is satisfactory. There is a good music room, which is used well, and a library, which is adequate. Classrooms are bright, but small for the bigger classes. Accommodation for staff is poor. The staffroom is too small, and the office inadequate to house three staff.

79. The indoor accommodation for the Reception class is spacious, bright and attractive. However, the outdoor accommodation is unsatisfactory and does not allow opportunities for the children to have regular and frequent physical activity in a safe and secure environment. Learning resources are good to support the children's learning indoors but insufficient for outdoor activities.

80. The school's teaching staff is a good mix of youth and experience who work well together as a team, supporting one another well. Teachers are well deployed as classroom teachers, and co-ordinators have a keen interest and appropriate expertise in the subject they manage. All staff have detailed job descriptions which clarify roles and responsibilities. Learning support assistants work assiduously in the interests of those pupils who have special educational needs, and others who do not use English as their first language.

81. WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to maintain the improving trend in standards, and meet all statutory requirements, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

(1) raise standards in information and communication technology in the juniors by:

- a. ensuring that the school has appropriate computer equipment and programs to teach the full National Curriculum;
- b. providing training to improve teachers' knowledge of computers and the information and communication technology curriculum, and
- c. making more use of computers to enrich learning in other subjects.*

(Paragraphs 8,34,38,150,153,154)

(2) Improve pupils' writing, speaking and listening skills by

- a. including, in the planning of the English curriculum, the systematic development of pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills from Year 1 to Year 6;
- b. having higher expectations of pupils' presentation of their work, and
- c. teachers having more regard for the quality and quantity of pupils' writing in all subjects.*

(Paragraphs 5,6,10,30,31,99,101,104,110)

(3) Increase the amount of teaching time in the juniors to at least the recommended minimum of 23.5 hours, and bring time devoted to all subjects,

and particularly geography, closer to that found in schools nationally.
(Paragraph 38)

- (4) **Ensure that governors take a greater share in the direction of the school, by visiting more, and becoming increasingly involved in the decisions about targets in the school development planning.*** (Paragraph 74)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

1. Bringing the quality of the marking of pupils' work up to the standard of the best examples, so that pupils see clearly how they can improve. (Paragraphs 33,58)
2. Developing the facilities for outside play for children under five.* (Paragraphs 79)
3. Rectifying omissions in the school prospectus and governors' Annual Report to parents. (Paragraph 62)

* These issues are already targets identified by the school in its development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	4	57	35	2	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	223
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40
Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	50
English as an additional language	
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	32
Pupil mobility in the last school year	
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	11	19	30

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	7	10
	Girls	18	17	16
	Total	27	24	26
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 (83)	80(63)	87(79)
	National	82 [80]	83 [81]	87 [84]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	8	11	10
	Girls	18	19	19
	Total	26	30	29
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87(85)	100(89)	97(83)
	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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	10	21	31

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	8	8
	Girls	17	17	16
	Total	23	25	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74(86)	81(62)	77(66)
	National	70 [65]	69 [59]	78 [69]

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	8	8
	Girls	18	18	16
	Total	24	26	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77(65)	84(72)	77(62)
	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	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	235
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR– Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.6
Average class size	27.8

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	168

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	497292
Total expenditure	478274
Expenditure per pupil	2002
Balance brought forward from previous year	42208
Balance carried forward to next year	61226

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	238
Number of questionnaires returned	102

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	44	0	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	51	8	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	57	4	1	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	47	22	4	0
The teaching is good.	38	51	6	4	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	43	15	11	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	43	8	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	43	6	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	32	37	18	13	1
The school is well led and managed.	34	51	8	4	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	53	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	38	23	8	1

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

84. The school has maintained the good provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. The Reception teacher, together with the teaching assistant, provides an attractive and safe environment and creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere which enables children to learn effectively. The good teaching is having a positive impact on children's learning.

85. Children enter the Reception class with low level skills in writing, mathematics and personal and social development. This is confirmed by the initial assessments conducted with these children. By the time they are ready to start in Year 1, most children achieve well, and attain the early learning goals in mathematical development and creative development. In communication, language and literacy and in their physical development, the children are working towards some of the early goals. In their knowledge and understanding of the world and their personal, social and emotional development, the quality of teaching is very good and almost all children are on course to exceed the goals.

86. Children start school part-time in the Reception class when they are four, and move to full-time schooling throughout the year, according to when they become five. At the time of the inspection, all children in the Reception class attended on a part-time basis, either morning or afternoon.

Personal, social and emotional development.

87. Many of the children enter the Reception class with immature skills in personal and social development. Children are on course to reach higher standards than those found in most schools at the end of this stage of their education. This shows very good achievement and reflects the skilful teaching, where children are constantly encouraged to feel confident about what they can achieve. The inspection took place very early in the autumn term when new children had only recently been admitted. These young children settled in very well. They explore the variety of activities on offer and share and take turns. In groups, children play and work together well. They show consideration towards each other and are helped to know how to apologise effectively if they hurt one another by their actions. Already, the children settle quickly to the more structured activities, such as literacy and numeracy, and show ability to concentrate for appropriate periods of time. The children are enthusiastic about their learning. For example, when working with the computers in the information and communications suite, they show great pleasure and joy when they produce a 'drawing' on the screen.

88. Personal and social development is strongly promoted in all areas of learning and the planning is comprehensive for this element. The well-established routines and caring nature of the provision allow all children to feel secure and to grow in confidence. The adults provide very good role models for the children and always treat each other and the children with courtesy and respect. This leads to trusting relationships and helps the children to develop an awareness of others. During the time of the inspection, a role-play area was converted into a church which allowed children the opportunity to make connections between religious beliefs and their personal and social behaviour. The adults also promote children's personal independence effectively. For instance, the equipment and resources that children use are easily accessible to them, and they are encouraged to change their own shoes at home time and put them in their shoe bags. During discussion times, the teacher draws out children's

responses and encourages them to put up their hands when they want to speak and to listen when it is not their turn to speak.

Communication, language and literacy.

89. On entry to the Reception class, the attainment of children in communication, language and literacy is well below the national average. They make good progress, and are on course to be approaching the recommended standards by the time they enter Year 1. The quality of teaching in this area is good. All adults use talk to good effect and are good and active listeners. Throughout all the areas of learning, both the Reception teacher and nursery nurse talk to the children individually and in groups to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to communicate effectively. They show children that they value their efforts at communicating. Most children are learning to listen attentively and participate in discussions. They enjoy listening to stories, and share books with each other and with adults readily. They experiment with sounds, words and texts. For example, when listening to the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears, children join in with the teacher and give a different voice to each bear. They begin to hear and say the initial sound in some words, such as their own name, and know which letter represents the sound. The children are fascinated by the illustrations in books, such as 'Flappy, Waggly and Wriggly' and know that the print tells them what the story is about. Books are well displayed and the shared partnership with parents for reading has a positive impact on the child's development and learning.

90. Elements of the national literacy framework are introduced gradually, and are used effectively by the teacher to meet the needs of the children. For instance, in their first week at school, the shared reading element is introduced to the children to familiarise them with the routine and format. This good introduction to reading motivates the children and encourages them to join in and 'read' simple repetitive phrases with the teacher. Children are provided with good opportunities to take part in role-play situations and develop an increasing awareness of writing for a purpose whatever their stage of development. For example, on starting school, they make marks on paper to take a telephone call in the 'Pet Shop' and by the end of Reception, many children attempt to write a shopping list with support. Although the more able children make a phonetically plausible attempt at writing a sentence, such as, 'ws upon a timr tr wz a byby', (once upon a time there was a baby) the majority of children are at the early stages of learning in this element.

Mathematical development.

91. This area of learning is well taught and most children are on course to reach the recommended standard by the end of the Reception year. They are provided with a wide range of practical experiences, such as weighing 'pet food', catching numbered 'fish' with a rod and fitting together geometric shapes. The more formal activities for mathematics are introduced effectively to the children through the framework for teaching numeracy. Most count to ten confidently by the end of the Reception year, and some count beyond to 20. The higher achieving children can relate addition to combining two groups of objects and subtraction to 'taking away' within ten, and use mathematical language appropriately such as 'more' or 'less' to compare two numbers. Many children name the simple shapes of triangle, circle, square and rectangle accurately, and begin to use mathematical names for 'solid' three-dimensional shapes. They use language such as 'longer' and 'shorter' reasonably well when comparing the length of pencils, and recreate repeating patterns of two colours. The work is well planned and children are encouraged to see mathematics all around them, and to develop their mathematical ideas through play situations, as in the 'Pet Shop' when handling money or playing with differently sized containers in the water.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

92. Children enter Reception with a basic general knowledge. They build on this knowledge well, make good progress and are on course to exceed the expected standards. Taking themes such as 'Animals' and 'Where I live', activities are well planned to enable children to explore aspects of the

environment and to relate the work to their own experiences. Discussion forms an important part of the work, and children are encouraged to be observant and describe what they see. For example, they examine the objects on the 'interest table' and notice that the magnets 'pick up' the paper clips. They plant sunflower seeds, sort objects into groups as hard/soft or shiny/not shiny and draw and label what they see. The teaching in this area is very good, and pupils benefit from a rich and interesting curriculum. The staff make very good use of the local environment to provide the children with a variety of experiences, such as visiting a local supermarket as part of their food technology. Children are given a good awareness of where they live. They identify features they observe on their way from home to school, and draw the route they take skilfully. They look at the changes that occur in the seasons, and make their own simple weather card, that involves attaching an arrow with a split pin that can be moved to point towards a picture of the day's weather.

93. A wide range of construction toys and materials is provided for the children to explore and use their skills to make models. They have a good understanding of change and time when, for instance, drawing pictures of what they did yesterday and today and what they will do to-morrow. They have a sound knowledge of vehicles of long ago, such as steam trains and trams and draw pictures of them. The children quickly learn to use the computer, as demonstrated on only their second visit to the computer suite where they received well-focused teaching of information and communication technology. They become familiar with the keyboard by entering their own names, using a name card to follow, and learn to control the mouse to click on the icons to cause different things to happen on a paint program. The children are introduced to a suitable range of cultures and religions. For example, they use resources in role-play that reflect a variety of cultures, such as dressing up clothes and dolls, and gain a good awareness of their own beliefs and those of others by celebrating festivals such as Christmas, the Chinese New Year and Diwali. During the time of the inspection, a role-play area was converted into a church which allowed children to learn and make connections with their own religious traditions.

Physical development.

94. Children in the Reception class do not have their own appropriate outdoor play area, and only have a limited range of toys and equipment. Consequently, the provision for appropriate and frequent free physical play with push and pull toys, wheeled toys and climbing apparatus is inadequate. Children's progress in this area, therefore, is slow, and their control and refinement of larger scale movements, as well as muscular development, are below the standards normally found. They run, jump, walk and use the equipment provided enthusiastically, but lack refined control, and often find it difficult to stop their movements immediately. Although teaching of physical activities is satisfactory, and staff do ensure that there is regular access for short periods of outdoor play, children have to use the school's playground, or the adventure play area. Physical education in the school hall is timetabled for these children twice a week. Indoors, children use a range of small equipment and tools with reasonable control. They are provided with a wide range of malleable materials and demonstrate increasing skill and control in the use of paint brushes, construction sets and puzzles. Children are also taught skills such as cutting, and this helps them gain safe control of these finer movements.

Creative development.

95. This area of learning is well taught, and by the end of the Reception year, most children are on course to reach similar standards to those found in most schools. Children start from a fairly basic level of skill when they enter the Reception class, and make good progress through a wide range of experiences in art, music, story making and imaginative play. The 'Pet Shop' role-play area is very popular and gives very good opportunities for imaginative play. For example, children pretend to use money to buy pets and food, discuss prices and carry out a 'conversation' on the phone. They weigh out the food and 'feed' it to the pets in the shop. They play co-operatively well as part of a group and enjoy acting out stories in the home corner, based on themselves and people they know. They engage with delight in using dough, playing with the 'small world' toys and creating their own situation in the

sand or water, such as having tea-party. Children are encouraged to mix their own colours when painting and find out that red and white makes pink. They print with their hands and with string, and know how to weave with paper. Good examples of observational drawings and pastel pictures were produced when children studied plants and flowers. Although no music was observed during the inspection, the children know a variety of nursery rhymes and action songs, which they sing tunefully from memory.

ENGLISH

96. Standards in Year 6 are lower than those found in most schools. In the end of Key Stage 2 national test in 1999 standards were average, and in 1998, they were above the national average. In the school's last OFSTED inspection, attainment was found to be at appropriate levels for the age of the pupils. In the provisional 2000 end of Key Stage 2 national test results in English standards are similar to those found in most schools. The difference in the findings of the inspection is explained because the current Year 6 has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years, and, in addition, this group experienced considerable changes of teachers due to staff illness. Appropriate targets have been set in the past, and those set for the end of Key Stage 2 assessments for 2000 have been exceeded.

97. Standards of speaking and listening in Year 6 are below average. Although pupils attend well generally, they do not always listen for specific details, and often miss some of the information given in this way. In the best lessons, skilled questioning tests pupils' understanding and, if misconceptions are discovered, they are corrected. However, in the upper classes of the school, this tends to waste time. Pupils are confident when they speak, and use a generally sound range of vocabulary, but their grammar and sentence formation in spoken language are immature.

98. In Year 6, standards in literacy in general, and reading in particular, are average. Pupils read their books with accuracy and interest, and their technical skills used for working out new words are satisfactorily developed. However, the books read by more able pupils in Year 6 are sometimes insufficiently challenging, and some of the more advanced reading skills of comprehension which demand reasoning are not consistently developed. Whilst indexing skills are well taught to all pupils, library skills are not always thoroughly learned by Year 6, and their research skills, although practised, are below average.

99. In writing, pupils' standards in Year 6 are below average. Although pupils tackle a good range of writing, including letters, stories, poetry, descriptions, report and instructions, their persuasive writing and note-making are weak. Pupils' spelling and punctuation are generally average, but their handwriting is often poorly formed, and the presentation of their work is not consistently careful.

100. In Year 2, standards in English are below average. In speaking and listening, and in writing, attainment is below average, but in reading it is average. The findings of the current inspection are an improvement upon the standards found in the last published results of the end of Key Stage 1 national assessments in 1999, and are similar to those indicated by the provisional results of the tests in 2000. In the last inspection, standards at the end of Year 2 were stated as being average.

101. Although most pupils speak confidently in Year 2, and use a reasonably wide vocabulary, the grammatical structure of their speech tends to be immature. Most listen reasonably well, and show by their responses sound understanding of what is said to them. Their reading is mostly confident and accurate, and many have soundly developed strategies for working out unfamiliar words. They talk with reasonable confidence about books they have read, and a few are starting to express preferences about their reading material. In writing, pupils achieve generally lower levels for their age than pupils in most schools, particularly in terms of the content, length and organisation of their work. Their handwriting, however, is developing well since the introduction of joined writing at an early stage, and the special attention devoted to this by teachers is producing much better and neater handwriting. Their spelling is average, and pupils learn thoroughly the spelling rules presented to them.

102. Given their low starting point on entry to the Reception, pupils achieve sound standards in English overall, and make satisfactory progress through the school. The current Year 6 pupils' results in the end of Key Stage 1 national assessments in 1997 were below the national average for that year. While current achievement is still below the national average in writing standards show some improvement compared with the Key Stage 1 test results due to the generally good quality of both learning and teaching found in this inspection. Pupils with special educational needs do well in English. They master the basic skills of reading and writing systematically, and achieve good standards relative to their previous attainment by Year 6, with many approaching national standards in the end of key stage tests. Pupils with English as an additional language make similarly good progress, and soon gain confidence in their use and understanding of English. The highest achieving pupils are not sufficiently challenged in some English work, and too few read difficult texts, or progress to the more advanced work involving research and skimming text for information by Year 6.

103. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 is generally good. This is an improvement from the satisfactory teaching of the last report. In the literacy aspects of English, planning is generally good. There is careful attention to detail, activities are well-matched to pupils' previous learning and their capabilities, and weekly plans build well on previous learning. A weakness in the planning lies in the shortage of tasks to help pupils learn to plan an extended piece of writing and redraft the work until it is right. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of literacy are good, and the National Literacy Strategy is effectively established and maintained. A good range of interesting texts is introduced to pupils through the text studies of the literacy hours. This was seen to good effect in a Year 6 lesson, when the teacher's use of a story about a haunted house grasped the pupils' attention so much they could not wait to try their own versions of parts of the tale. Vocabulary is carefully taught to extend pupils' use of words, synonyms, similes and metaphors. This clear structure aids pupils' learning of vocabulary well. Teaching assistants are well deployed, and contribute well to the learning of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. Everyday assessment is used well by means of the skilled use of open-ended questions, and also by the monitoring of group work and activities.

104. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is generally good. This is an improvement from the quality of teaching reported in the last inspection. Teachers ensure an ordered sequence of learning with plenty of consolidation, and use regular, everyday assessment well to plan pupils' next steps in their phonic work. A good example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson, where several "spellings" were introduced and practised in a shared writing context. This was followed by a later "secret" writing of each word on individual white-boards, showing them to the teacher, and then ticking or self-correcting when the word was finally revealed. As pupils corrected their work, they saw where they went wrong, and quickly learned the correct spelling.

105. Teaching methods and strategies are effective, and particularly careful teaching is taking place in handwriting, spelling and reading, which is bringing about some improvements in standards reached by pupils. Care is taken to match work to the capabilities of pupils and their previous learning, and to use regular assessment to inform the planning of teaching. Teachers use questioning well to promote thinking and to check on pupils' understanding of information. In reading, teachers ensure that texts match pupils' levels of capability and developing skills, thus promoting good development in reading skill and a sense of success for the pupils. Phonic skills are carefully taught in an appropriate order and pupils use these skills spontaneously in their reading to tackle unrecognised words. In the text study sessions of the literacy hour lessons, books and excerpts are chosen well to interest pupils, and to promote learning. In speaking and listening, there is little in the way of curricular planning, and no provision at present for focused speaking and listening activities to promote development of pupils' use of language. This means that pupils have too few opportunities to develop these skills in a systematic way that will improve both their speaking and writing. Teachers use plenary sessions well, particularly in the way they use questions to include all pupils, but here speaking and listening are supporting aims other than language development itself.

106. The school has already identified writing as a priority for development, following a report by Her Majesty's Inspector's in 1998, which identified this area as one for development. Some initiatives, such as starting joined handwriting at an early stage, and giving more careful attention to the development of spelling, have already been started. While these show evidence of improvement in Key Stage 1, and pupils have imaginative ideas and use the vocabularies they have well, the sequencing of writing skills is not well ordered through the school to produce the most effective and continuing progress. There is also a lack of consistency in approaches to writing across the curriculum.

107. Assessment in the subject is generally good. There has been a considerable improvement in the assessment and recording of reading progress since the last inspection report, and there is a good, clear and thorough system of assessment assignments in each strand of the subject throughout the year. The quality of marking, however, is inconsistent across the school. Whilst that of some teachers is very good, other teachers mark solely with ticks, with nothing to help pupils improve their work. Planning has improved considerably since the last inspection, and the planning for literacy hours is good. There is, however, insufficient planning for speaking and listening and planning for extended writing lacks detail. These factors help to explain why standards in pupils' writing, speaking and listening are too low. The end of key stage national assessments are carefully analysed and evaluated.

108. The subject co-ordinator has only just been given this responsibility, and so has not yet had a chance to make an impact on a subject which has lacked consistent co-ordination during the last year, due to staff illness and absences. She has very good subject knowledge and understanding, and has quickly grasped the priorities for development in the subject. Her enthusiasm and high expectations infuse her teaching and enable her to help and advise colleagues effectively. Although some observation of lessons in English was carried out during the last year, a programme of systematic monitoring of lessons, with subsequent feed-back, is lacking. Sampling of work takes place through the regular assignments in writing, but again, systematic reviewing of planning and outcomes in all aspects of the subjects is currently in abeyance, as is whole staff evaluation of work samples. Documentation of the subject is not fully comprehensive; although the framework of the National Literacy Strategy is adopted as the basic scheme, it has not been supplemented by clear schemes for speaking and listening, drama and extended writing.

109. Enrichment in the subject includes the holding of book weeks, book or author or poetry days, and theatre visits. Years 5 and 6 are soon to visit a theatre to see a performance of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Pupils visit the local public library and make use of it for borrowing fiction regularly. Less use is made of the school library; although some research is done, it is not prominent in the literacy programme, and the library itself is not organised well for such use. The quantity of non-fiction in the library is adequate, but the stock of books altogether, taking fiction into consideration, is only barely adequate.

110. There is too little focus on developing pupils' English skills across the curriculum. Whilst teachers have high expectations of pupils' reading and writing in literacy lessons, they often fail to drive home their message in other subjects. Therefore, written work in science, history and geography is often brief and untidy, and pupils are given too few opportunities to research texts to develop their skimming and scanning skills. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

MATHEMATICS

111. In Year 6, pupils' standards are above average, which is a big improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 national tests, standards were in line with the national average and above average compared with similar schools. Up until 1997, standards in the National Assessment Tests had been below average, but in the past two years, they have improved steadily. Boys have outperformed girls, in line with the national trend, but no significant difference was seen in their standards in this inspection. Early indications from the most recent national tests suggest continuing improvement. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5 has trebled this year, and has far exceeded the school's target. The successful introduction of the

National Numeracy Strategy, and specialist teaching of high achieving pupils, have had a significant effect on standards. The school has set a realistic target for 2001, in order to maintain these higher standards.

112. It is clear that the pupils are achieving well by the end of Year 6. When these pupils sat the end of Key Stage 1 national tests in 1997, standards were well below the national average. They have, therefore, made very good progress over time. Higher achieving pupils, in particular, are attaining well. Those pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language are also making good progress in their learning.

113. In Year 6, the pupils attain above average standards in mental calculations and basic numeracy. They use quick mental recall of number facts well to solve complex problems. They use their knowledge of doubling and halving confidently to solve addition and subtraction problems. In written work, the pupils use brackets appropriately in order to solve number problems, including long multiplication. Higher achieving pupils know how to use inverse operations in order to check their answers. They also use calculators confidently. Many of the pupils recognise and use square roots. They have a good understanding of the equivalence of fractions, and calculate percentages of numbers accurately. Pupils understand the language of angles well, and measure and draw angles accurately. They interpret line graphs and pie charts with good skill, and have a clear understanding of the concept of mean, mode, median and range. Most have positive attitudes to work in mathematics. Nevertheless, the presentation of much of their work is a weakness. The pupils apply their mathematical skills well in other subjects. For example, in science, Year 4 pupils read force-meters accurately in work on friction, and Year 3 pupils classify animals by using Venn diagrams, measure shadows at different times of the day and use stop watches to time the melting rates of ice.

114. In Year 2, standards are average, which is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 1 national tests, standards were below the national average, but average compared with similar schools. The findings of the inspection findings differ from these results as a result of the teachers' successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and its emphasis on the development of mental mathematics skills. Early indications from the most recent national tests suggest continuing improvement at the expected National Curriculum Level 2, but only a very modest improvement at the higher Level 3.

115. In Year 2, most of the pupils attain average standards in mental calculations and basic numeracy. They use quick mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to 20 and beyond. They have a sound understanding of place value in three digit numbers, and order numbers up to 100 accurately. A few pupils extend this to 1000. Most have an average understanding of the concepts of halves and quarters, and of odd and even numbers. They use coins well overall to make up sums of money, although some tend to use non-existent coins. Pupils recognise and name common two and three-dimensional shapes with reasonable accuracy, and quickly see lines of symmetry in a figure. They look for right angles in classroom objects, and mostly do so accurately. There is less evidence that the pupils are confident at handling data, and some bar charts produced in science lessons were untidy and not very accurate.

116. The creation of ability sets in the juniors has worked well, and has raised the attainment of the highest and lowest achieving pupils. Pupils work hard at tasks well matched to their abilities, and appreciate the success this system gives them. Higher achieving pupils in Key Stage 1, however, are not attaining as well as they could, because too little is planned for the few pupils capable of gaining a deeper understanding of number. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language are achieving well throughout the school, particularly where they benefit from additional classroom support

117. The quality of teaching and learning in the infants and juniors is generally good. The previous inspection was critical of teaching, particularly the failure of the teachers to prepare activities well and to match them to the differing needs of the pupils. This is much better now. They begin lessons with

brisk mental mathematics sessions, where quick fire questions help the pupils to develop fast mental recall of addition and subtraction. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher asked “Is there another way we can count in twos?” and this made the pupils think carefully about adding up to 20 with odd numbers, as against even numbers. He also made good use of assessment saying, “We still need to practise our odd numbers”. Teachers make good use of interesting resources, encouraging pupils, for example, to use digit cards, which they hold up excitedly to answer questions. As a result, most pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics lessons and work hard. The concentration of a few pupils is limited, but teachers work hard to ensure that they listen attentively. The teachers monitor progress carefully and this encourages groups of pupils to develop some independence in their learning. In one lesson, the teacher was aware of the rising noise level, but said nothing when she realised that the pupils were talking excitedly about their work. This kept the pace and momentum of the lesson going, with the result that the pupils made good progress.

118. In the juniors, teachers place a strong emphasis on mental calculations and this is having a positive impact on the learning of number facts. Statements by the Year 6 teacher, such as “Being wrong is not a problem” and “It’s important to use whatever method makes things easier”, help to give pupils confidence in tackling mathematical problems, and make them realise that there is often more than one strategy to solve a problem. The teachers make effective use of practical apparatus to help some pupils learn. However, there is too little use of information and communication technology to enhance learning, especially as pupils get older.

119. Teaching assistants are well briefed about what is expected of them. They work particularly well with lower achieving pupils, who, as a result, make good progress in their learning. Everyday assessment of the pupils’ progress is good. In a Year 6 lesson with the ‘top group’, the teacher referred one pupil to his target to work neatly and this had positive results. Throughout the school, teachers end lessons with effective plenary sessions, where learning is consolidated well. One teacher began this session by asking “Who found it difficult?” and this helped to reinforce concepts. Teachers set regular mathematics homework in order to extend and reinforce learning.

120. The previous inspection found that management of the subject was underdeveloped, but improving. The findings of the inspection are that management is good, and accounts for the steadily rising standards. A clear policy ensures that the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, which was a key issue of the previous inspection report. Planning is soundly based on guidance in the National Numeracy Strategy. The co-ordinator has monitored teaching of mathematics effectively in all classes, with a view to improving expertise and raising standards, something which the previous inspection found was underdeveloped. He has led training for colleagues and has taken mathematics workshops for parents. Good use is made of regular assessment data to plan future work for the pupils. There is a lack of information and communication technology resources to enhance learning; otherwise, resources are adequate, although storage is a problem. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the pupils’ social development. The teachers actively encourage the pupils to work collaboratively whenever necessary in practical problem solving situations and in checking others’ work.

SCIENCE

121. The findings of the inspection indicate that, in Year 6, standards are at the expected level. This represents an improvement since the school’s last OFSTED inspection, when it was judged that pupils’ attainment was below average. It also shows an improvement in the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 national tests, when compared with all schools standards were well below average in science. Trends in performance from 1996 to 1999 indicate a steady improvement in standards that is broadly in line with the national trend. The results of the 2000 national tests indicate that the pupils’ performance in science has risen significantly. This improvement is due to the commitment by the school to raise standards, careful planning with clear learning objectives and activities that provide challenge for the full range of pupils. However, the present Year 6 class suffered a number of disruptions in their

education during the previous year and has a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In view of these difficulties, pupils achieve well in science.

122. By the age of 11, the pupils describe clearly the functions of some of the important plant and human organs, and understand the circulation system well. They classify materials as solids, liquids and gases and use terms such as evaporation and condensation accurately to describe change. The pupils have a sound knowledge of magnetism and they use symbols accurately to draw an electric current. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of friction as a force that slows down moving objects. They conduct good investigations into which surfaces enable objects to slide most easily, and use a forcemeter appropriately to make a series of measurements. Most pupils make sound predictions based on their knowledge and evidence, and show in the way they perform their task a good understanding of the need for a fair test. When recording their observations, they use appropriate scientific vocabulary such as condense, evaporate, water vapour and solution. The previous inspection found that the standard of work in pupils' books did not match the standard of attainment seen in lessons. This is still the case. The presentation of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory and insufficient use is made of graphs and computer programs to present their observations.

123. In the juniors, pupils with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language receive well-targeted support and achieve satisfactory standards, relative to their previous attainment. Good opportunities exist for the development of skills of the higher achieving pupils in most science lessons as teachers provide an appropriate match of extension activities to meet their needs. The high number of pupils achieving above average levels in the latest national assessment tests show how well this group of pupils are achieving.

124. The standards attained by the pupils in Year 2 are generally similar to those found in other schools. This represents an improvement since the previous OFSTED inspection when it was judged that pupils' attainment was below the national average. The inspection's findings agree with the school's results in the 1999 end of key stage assessments made by teachers in science when standards were above average at Level 2 and above but below average at Level 3 and above. Indications are that standards in 2000 are similar. However, the evidence gained in lessons and in the scrutiny of work suggests that while the pupils' oral skills in communicating their knowledge, and their understanding of scientific concepts are good, their written work is not of the same standard.

125. By the age of seven, pupils sort animals appropriately into groups, using simple features, such as the number of legs, and have a sound understanding of the importance of diet and exercise for good health. They sort materials accurately according to their properties, and conduct good tests on fabrics to discover which ones will withstand water. They provide sound descriptions of ways in which eggs change when cooked and what happens when water is heated. Their knowledge and understanding of electricity are good. Pupils describe clearly the dangers associated with electricity, and make good working circuits using a battery, wires and bulbs or buzzers. Higher achieving pupils investigate how to make two bulbs light in a circuit and make drawings to show their working circuits. Their investigative skills are generally average. They respond well to suggestions of how to find things out, and describe their observations clearly. Although they record some of their findings through drawings, writing and in tabular form, the output is frequently limited by the low level of their written work.

126. In the infants, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make sound progress, and with well-focused support achieve satisfactory standards for their capabilities. The higher achieving pupils however, are not always attaining the standards of which they are capable, especially in the recording of their work.

127. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning, including that for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils with English as an additional language, are satisfactory at both key stages. The teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. This is an improvement in the findings of the previous inspection when the quality of teaching was judged to be generally unsatisfactory. In the best

lessons, the management of pupils is good, the content is pitched at an appropriately challenging level and teachers become closely involved in group work to impart knowledge and teach the appropriate scientific skills. In these lessons, pupils learn the basic scientific skills well, and have the guidance to move on to experimental work of their own.

128. Strengths of the teaching of science and its impact on learning were well illustrated in a Year 2 lesson in which pupils were presented with a collection of batteries, wires, bulbs and buzzers and challenged to make the bulb light and the buzzer sound. The teacher captured the pupils' interest from the beginning of the lesson by saying "Today you are going to be scientists" and retained their interest throughout by allowing the pupils to explore and take responsibility for their own learning. The teacher intervened only when necessary, asking questions which made the pupils think for themselves, such as "What makes the torch light up?" and "How is the electricity going from the battery to the bulb?". The teachers' clear explanations and good level of challenge motivated the pupils and made learning rapid, relevant and enjoyable. A good discussion at the end of the lesson reinforced the pupils' learning and corrected any misconceptions.

129. Lesson planning, overall, is good and the activities provided indicate that pupils' learning is, in general, well organised. Most staff show confidence when teaching science and at best, provide a good range of opportunities for the pupils to become actively involved in their own learning. In these lessons, the teaching style is such that pupils are encouraged to ask questions to clarify their ideas and, as a result, they know the reason for learning and achieve well. Resources are carefully prepared and used, including classroom assistants, to provide all pupils with good opportunities to participate in the practical activities and consolidate their learning. Where teaching has shortcomings, not enough thought goes into the different ability levels in the class, and the most able are not stretched whilst those with reading difficulties struggle to understand the work given to them. Occasionally, the whole class introduction to activities is too long, and this leads to pupils losing interest in their work. Throughout the school, teachers pay insufficient attention to encouraging pupils to take a pride in the presentation of their work. Insufficient use is made of computers in science, both for researching information and recording results.

130. Assessment procedures are carefully undertaken by teachers and classroom assistants, and most teachers use this information well to guide their planning. The science curriculum is broad and balanced and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school is, at present` evaluating the scheme of work for science in light of the introduction of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines. The format for assessment is now associated with these guidelines. The management of the subject is satisfactory. Monitoring has focused on teachers' planning and pupils' books but there has been no time given to direct classroom observation. Although resources in science are good, they are not organised effectively and consequently make access difficult for teachers. The outside area has been successfully developed since the last inspection and enhances resources. Visits to places of interest such as the Watt Tyler Park and visitors invited into school such as the Science Theatre Group enrich the pupils' learning. The inspection confirms that the issues identified in the last report relating to science have now been addressed.

ART AND DESIGN

131. No lessons were seen in Key Stage 2, due to time-tabling factors, but displays of work, pupils' folders of work and sketchbooks from Key Stage 2 classes' work last term were scrutinised, and the content of planning was also reviewed. From this evidence, indications are that standards in art and design in Year 6 are similar to those found in most schools. Standards seen in Year 2 are also average. This is an improvement in the standards of achievement by pupils since the last inspection report when standards were found to be below those expected at both key stages. Progress is good in Years 1 and 2, and is at least satisfactory in the older classes. Pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language do well in art in Years 1 and 2, and achieve

satisfactorily in the other classes. The most able artists' work is of a high standard, particularly their observational drawing.

132. Teaching and learning are both good in Years 1 and 2, where lessons were observed as well as work scrutinised. In the older classes, indications from the scrutiny of work are that both teaching and learning are satisfactory. This is an improvement in teaching in the infants since the previous inspection. Sketchbooks are in use for older classes, although entries were sparse. The range of work represented only two-dimensional compositions and productions, and there was no record of any three-dimensional work, although it is clearly present in the programme planned. Pupils have been introduced to painting, colour mixing, drawing in pencil and charcoal, printing and collage techniques, with one or two elements of textile work such as weaving. Techniques have obviously been directly taught, with care and attention to detail, and pupils have generally learned the techniques well. Compositional features have also been looked at, and a good range of different subjects for painting and drawing have been provided to stimulate pupils' interests.

133. In both Year 1 and Year 2, there were good examples of teachers integrating the study of some work of famous artists with practical drawing and painting. In Year 1, the teacher taught the basic skills of colour mixing and brush techniques well, and pupils learned quickly. Pupils then studied reproductions of Monet's paintings of the water-lily pond, and were excited at the different shades they were able to produce from mixing blues and greens to make similar watery shades to those in the pictures. In Year 2, the work of Lowry provided an interesting focus, and with very good guidance from teachers, pupils were able to select appropriate features for their compositions, and to notice important aspects of style in Lowry's work. Their concentration was good because all were interested in the work in this lesson, and pupils of all abilities produced good work. Work on display in the older classes at this early stage of the term was mainly portrait faces. Whilst displays in Years 1 and 2 were well mounted and visually interesting, those from the older classes, although satisfactory, were relatively limited and unexciting.

134. In the last inspection report, the management of the subject was judged to be unsatisfactory, whilst guidance for the subject was inadequate. Although the subject has been a priority on the school's development plan, and remains so, management has not, up to the beginning of this year, improved very much, due to changes of staff responsibilities. The current co-ordinator was appointed to her role at the start of this term, and has not, in a few days, been able to remedy the situation. Nevertheless, she has very good subject knowledge and a good grasp of the priorities for moving the subject forward. At the time of the last inspection, there were no schemes of work to guide teachers, but, since then, a sound scheme of work for both key stages has been put in place. There is a good assessment system to show the development of skills, but it is not consistently in use at present; however, this represents some improvement since the last inspection when assessment was poor. There has been no observation of lessons on a systematic basis across the school. There are still unsatisfactory areas in art, particularly in the management of the subject, which are recognised by the school as priorities for future development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

135. In Year 6, standards are similar to those found in most schools, which is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. This judgement is based on an analysis of pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils. No design and technology was being taught during the inspection; nor was it during the previous inspection.

136. Pupils achieve reasonable standards overall, given their average skills in this area on entry to the school. Higher achieving pupils are attaining soundly in their ability to make a variety of structures and products. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language are similarly making satisfactory progress in their construction skills. Insufficient evidence was available to make a judgement on how well Key Stage 2 pupils are achieving in refining their designing skills. The little evidence seen of designing in Key Stage 1 indicates that attainment of both higher and

lower achieving pupils in this aspect of the subject is unsatisfactory. The previous inspection came to a similar judgement that the design process was under-emphasised.

137. The pupils have made products on a variety of themes, using different techniques and materials. Year 6 pupils have made sound models of 'Thriller World', a fairground, complete with big wheels, carousels and log flumes, some of them powered by batteries and motors. Year 5 pupils have used motors and pulleys to generate movement in axles, wheels, wishing wells and cable cars. In this work, pupils show average making skills, joining materials together well, and measuring with reasonable accuracy. In work linked to a scientific topic on sound, Year 4 pupils have made satisfactory models of musical instruments. Last term, pupils in Year 2 used construction kits and wood to make sound 'go-karts' with moving wheels, which they raced during a design and technology 'activity week'. They have designed and made satisfactory robots and rockets, complete with moving parts. Throughout the school, pupils' designs are weak. Sketches are not clearly labelled, and there is no evidence as pupils get older that they list resources, or produce step-by-step sequences of actions. In food technology, younger pupils have designed a healthy meal and have made some fruit kebabs; this work was linked to a visit to a local supermarket.

138. Teachers' planning is satisfactory, but the development of pupils' skills of designing is under-emphasised. A clear subject policy includes useful strategies for teaching relevant skills and emphasises safety in design and technology. This policy has not been reviewed for four years, however. The co-ordinator accepts that the subject has been squeezed out of the curriculum. There has been no monitoring of classroom practice to ensure consistency of teaching and assessment. There is an adequate range of tools and equipment for learning, although storage is difficult.

GEOGRAPHY

139. The standard of pupils' work in geography in Year 6 is below that found in most other schools. Judgements are based on a very limited opportunity to see the subject taught and the limited work available for inspection. Because of the way in which the timetable is organised, it was only possible to see a single lesson being taught at Key Stage 1. However, evidence from the scrutiny of work, that on display, conversations with teachers and pupils and an analysis of teachers' planning indicates that pupils at both key stages have had a narrow range of opportunities for geography over the past year. At the previous inspection, standards of attainment were below those expected nationally at the end of both key stages, and this is still the case. The school has, however, recognised the need to develop the subject, and this term has introduced the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines to ensure adequate coverage of the curriculum, and formulated detailed medium-term plans to support teachers.

140. In Year 6, pupils provide basic explanations of how events such as cyclones and earthquakes can damage the environment, but their geographical vocabulary is limited, and few have reached the stage where they ask searching questions about their findings. They give sound reasons for the evolution of features of different landscapes, including glaciers in the Swiss Alps, Niagara Falls and Cheddar Caves, in terms of physical conditions and historical development. In their study of localities, pupils show an appropriate knowledge of places in Europe and mark the main countries, cities and rivers on a map. They have a sound awareness of the varied climatic regions, and make good comparisons of the weather conditions in the United Kingdom with those of the Mediterranean countries and Asia at different times of the year. They study and contrast the weather during the summer months and winter months in Whitby. Pupils know that rivers have sources, mouth and tributaries, and that rivers erode to produce landscape features such as valleys.

141. In Year 2, pupils show average geographical skills by drawing a plan of the school and of a room in their own home from a bird's eye viewpoint. They draw a basic sketch of their route to school, and mark features such as a river and whirlpool on a map of a Treasure Island, using their own symbols. Pupils in Year 1 are aware of their home address, and use language such as 'nearest' and 'a little bit further' appropriately to describe where they live in relation to the school. They gather data systematically to produce a geographical picture of how pupils in the class travel to school, and predict

that the 'walking' graph will consist of pupils living closest to the school. However, throughout the school, map work is at a simple level and research skills are underdeveloped. Pupils use information and communication technology rarely in their geographic work.

142. Few pupils achieve satisfactory standards in geography, because not enough is taught. Pupils with special educational needs do well enough, gaining a basic understanding of localities and different countries, but potentially high achieving pupils rarely delve sufficiently deeply into the subject to make the best of their abilities.

143. There was insufficient evidence for a judgement to be made about the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. Teaching in the single lesson observed was satisfactory. The lesson was well prepared and gave pupils a clear idea of the location of their own homes in relation to the school and of how a map works. Evidence from the sample of pupils' work indicated that the knowledge, skills and understanding of geography had not been taught in sufficient depth. However, teachers' planning is now much improved, and provides a good range of learning opportunities for all pupils. There is a distinct geography focus that alternates half-yearly with history.

144. The co-ordinator for geography is enthusiastic and has worked hard to develop detailed guidelines for teachers to ensure the progression of the subject. She has had no opportunities for monitoring the subject but indicates that the useful discussions held with colleagues helped to give an overview of the subject. Resources for the subject are generally good to support teaching and learning. However, the school has only a limited range of information and communication technology software to support the learning of older pupils. Apart from the Year 6 residential visit to Bradwell there are few opportunities for pupils to visit places of interest in relation to their geographical studies.

HISTORY

145. Overall, standards in history are similar to those found in most schools. In the school's previous inspection, attainment of the pupils in Year 2 was below the national expectation, but by the end of Year 6 it was in line with the national expectation. Overall, pupils achieve suitable standards, given their average starting point. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve satisfactory standards, relative to their previous attainment. However, the higher achieving pupils do not always attain as well as they should by Year 6, mostly because not enough thought is given to extending their research skills. In this inspection, classroom observations were supplemented by an analysis of pupils' previous work, displays, teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils.

146. By the time they leave the school, pupils have a sound depth of factual knowledge and understanding of Ancient Greece, the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Tudor times and Victorian Britain. They have gained sound insight into the way that people lived at different periods, and the important events that shaped their lives. In their study of Victorian Britain, pupils have an average knowledge of the lives of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and the impact that people such as George Stephenson had on travel. They make effective use of a wide range of sources to discover about the past. These sources include the local burial ground where the pupils obtain a great deal of knowledge and understanding about the lives of ordinary people from the epitaphs on the headstones. They show an appropriate understanding of the world in Tudor times, and know about the Battle of Bosworth and the origins of the Tudor rose. They have an average understanding of chronology, and construct simple time-lines from their knowledge. However, their independent study skills are weak, and very few pupils move on to write their own version of events that happened, or question the validity of evidence.

147. In the infant classes, pupils use appropriate historical vocabulary indicating an awareness of the passing of time, and draw pictures which clearly categorise objects such as radios into 'old' and 'new'. They have an average knowledge of significant people and events from the past, such as Grace Darling, and explain clearly, for example, how she saved the shipwrecked crew of the

Forfarshire. However, there is insufficient challenge in recording methods for higher achieving pupils, and their written work is too brief.

148. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning in history is satisfactory throughout the school. The previous inspection judged teaching to be good at Key Stage 2 but unsatisfactory at Key Stage 1. Teachers plan lessons carefully, and confidently introduce appropriate vocabulary concerned with the relevant period or area of study. They introduce enquiry skills appropriately, and make pupils consider evidence carefully by asking questions such as "What does this diagram tell us?" when looking at the House of Tudor family tree. Strengths in the teaching of history and its effect on learning were evident in the Year 6 visit to the burial ground. The teacher skilfully allowed the pupils sufficient freedom to find out information for themselves, while at the same time encouraging them to be historians, by looking for evidence that would tell them about the welfare of ordinary people. On return to the classroom, the teacher introduced the idea of comparing features of the past with those of today by asking questions such as, "What facilities do we have now compared with those of the Victorians?" This stimulated replies such as – "... warm homes and clothes as lots of people seemed to have died in the winter then". One group of pupils had found a burial site where a whole family had been killed, and deduced that as the mother had been a nurse they must have all died from a contagious disease. By the end of the lesson, pupils were beginning to consider the impact of social change on the health and living conditions of people since Victorian times. Where teaching has shortcomings, lessons move at a slow pace, and pupils become restless, and occasionally, teachers give out undemanding worksheets that are not adapted to suit every pupil's needs.

149. There is a policy for the subject and, this term, the school has introduced the units of work in the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines for the pupils in Key Stage 1. The older pupils continue to follow the National Curriculum units of study. Although this represents an improvement since the last inspection when there was no scheme of work, it has yet to be evaluated to ensure the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is made clear. The co-ordinator has only been in post this term, and has not had insufficient time to develop her role. Resources for the subject are generally satisfactory for the older pupils, with an appropriate variety of books and videos which link well with the study units. There are, however, too few historical objects and resources to support the teaching and learning of the younger pupils. Curricular provision is enriched by visits including the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, the Lifeboat Station, Colchester Castle and Southchurch Hall, a Tudor house with 'hands-on' experience of costume and musical instruments.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

150. In Year 6, whilst pupils' attainment in information and communication technology is below average, it is marginally better than the poor standards at the time of the previous inspection. Their keyboard skills are slow, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 still have to search for the shift and caps lock keys. They have basic word-processing skills, and change the size and appearance of text with reasonable confidence when writing up their poems from literacy lessons. They create borders to decorate their work, but many are uncertain about how to centre text or change fonts. Pupils operate a floor robot with average skill, but have had little experience with using spreadsheets or databases. The school has no facilities to monitor changes in materials or develop pupils' decision-making skills using simulations or adventure programs. Pupils are starting to use the Internet for research, but do this rarely.

151. Pupils make a sound start in the infants and quickly gain an average understanding of how to turn on the computer, locate their program and input their text. They use the space bar confidently, and change the case of their letters with average skill.

152. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology, but as they move into the juniors few pupils achieve standards appropriate to their abilities. Potentially higher achieving pupils, including those with English as an additional language, fare particularly badly, because they have to wait for others to catch up, and spend too much time

performing basic tasks which fail to extend them. Pupils with special educational needs develop sound basic skills, and appreciate the power of computers to transform their work into neat, well-formed script.

153. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the computer suite for all age groups, but teachers use computers too rarely in the classroom to make the best of pupils' enthusiasm and skills. The extent of teachers' knowledge of computers varies a great deal, which shows in the breadth and depth of the work in pupils' folders in different classes. This is particularly the case in the junior classes, where teachers' uncertainty with computers, and the requirements of the Key Stage 2 curriculum, slow down pupils' progress. Lessons in the computer suite are planned well, and give pupils a good mix of direct teaching of specific skills and opportunities to put their new learning into practice. Lessons are reasonably demanding, but the pace of pupils' learning sometimes suffers when the teacher has to revisit work that pupils should already know. For example, the Year 6 teacher planned for pupils to create a border, and insert text into the box. This was a straight-forward task, but it turned out that half the class had particularly weak skills, and had never created a border in their previous class. At this point, the teacher had to take a step backwards, and return to teaching basic skills to the weaker pupils. This worked well enough for the low achieving pupils who quickly mastered the basic skills, but it slowed down the pace of the lesson, and limited the progress of the relatively competent group. In the infants, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, and pupils are soon gaining a grasp of the concept of loading computer programs and directing the cursor. Again, however, opportunities are lost to use computers to support the learning in other subjects, and pupils never learn that information and communication technology is an important part of everyday life.

154. The school is aware of the problems with information and communication technology, and has the development of the subject as a priority in its development plan. In an effort to improve teachers' knowledge, governors authorised funds to equip all teachers with a laptop computer. This is starting to have a positive effect as teachers gain familiarity and confidence with computers, and feel happier teaching the subject. A major development recently has been the provision of a computer suite, equipped with over 30 machines. This is a big step forward, and enables all pupils to benefit from individual and group teaching every week. The temporary co-ordinator is helping to introduce a new scheme of work which covers all the required elements of the National Curriculum. The assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory, and gives teachers a clear idea of pupils' skills. The co-ordinator has monitored some teaching in the computer suite, and has as a priority the transfer of the sound practice there into the classroom. In view of the restrictions placed by the lack of monitoring equipment, and the shortage of appropriate software to develop pupils' modelling skills, the subject does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

MUSIC

155. Pupils in Year 6 achieve standards similar to those found in most schools in music, and this is a good improvement since the last inspection, when attainment was well below that expected. Progress in the subject made by pupils is satisfactory, and this is so for pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. The previous report stated that pupils in the older classes had composing skills below expected levels and lacked confidence to perform. This has certainly changed, and pupils are very confident in preparing simple compositions or making their preparations for them, and in displaying these to the rest of the class. In a recent music lesson in Year 6, pupils tackled the making of lyrics with a particular set rhythm of beats in the bar, ready to prepare simple melodies for blues jazz songs. They did this with enthusiasm, a good deal of accuracy, and suitably quickly, working in pairs and small groups. They performed their lyrics as "raps", and these were enjoyed by performers and audience alike. Singing is tuneful, with generally good pitch and control of volume.

156. Pupils in Year 2 achieve average standards, and this is an improvement in standards since the last inspection. In a Year 2 lesson, there was a very good introduction to graphic notation, linking

sounds in terms of beats from instruments with different timbres to a series of informal symbols on a chart. Pupils were interested and enthusiastic, and working in groups, practised the representations they had learned, then performed their sequences to the rest of the class.

157. All groups of pupils achieve satisfactory standards of work in music. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language take a prominent part in all lessons, and sing, play and compose at an average level. More able musicians do well, and profit from the expertise of the musical specialist who is able to stretch them.

158. The quality of teaching and learning in music is good throughout the school. This represents an improvement since the last inspection where teaching varied considerably in quality. Nearly all of the teaching is now undertaken by a music specialist, and those teachers who take their own music lessons have adequate skills. This system works well, and provides consistently well-informed teaching. All music lessons seen showed good quality teaching. Separate from the music lessons, two sessions of singing, hymn practice and choir practice were seen, and these were taught satisfactorily. The good teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, clear planning, and the understanding of how to put over the necessary content from the Programmes of Study in an effective way to all pupils. Invariably, the teaching engages pupils' interest and enthusiasm with well chosen musical themes and topics, from the blues work in Year 6, to the use of domestic utensils as musical instruments to accompany a song about the "metal man" with Year 1. The relevant musical elements are incorporated effectively, and the work is always matched well to pupils' capabilities and previous learning. Assessment is good in the subject, because when music lessons are taken by the music specialist, class teachers are present, and sometimes also teaching assistants, who then track individual pupils to compile a profile of their progress.

159. The management of the subject was found to be unsatisfactory in the last inspection, although the guidance from documentation was satisfactory. A new co-ordinator has now taken over responsibility for this subject, and some improvements have taken place already. She sees the planning for music lessons, whether taken by the music specialist or by other teachers. The co-ordinator has observed some lessons in the subject, but there is not consistent systematic monitoring throughout the school, with feedback provided. Composing and performing are a strong part of the music syllabus now, and there is evidence of a good start to the use of graphic notation. Visiting musicians, such as a band, or drummers, play to pupils and sometimes music workshops are conducted. There is a large school choir which sings at school events and takes part in a local music festival. There is also a small recorder group. Resources in terms of instruments are generally satisfactory, although there are few to represent music of different cultures. Tapes and CDs are mainly of music in the Western classical tradition, with little or nothing to represent the music of different peoples of the world. Pupils may receive instrumental tuition at school for payment, in guitar, violin and piano, although there is a scheme afoot to provide some trial lessons which will be free.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

160. In Year 6, pupils' work in physical education is similar to that found in most other schools, and shows an improvement on the below average standards reported in the school's previous OFSTED inspection. By Year 6, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, have average games skills. They have sound ball skills, and perform with credit in local football, netball and rounders matches. They run well, and achieve good success in competitive meetings. It was not possible to observe gymnastics or dance lessons during the inspection for junior age pupils. Standards of swimming are average, with nearly all pupils swimming competently by Year 5. In the infants, pupils have average skills, as was found in the previous OFSTED inspection. By Year 2, they combine running, jumping and twisting movements into suitable sequences with appropriate levels of co-ordination. They show good creativity as they find different ways to travel around the floor, and work hard to improve their performance. Pupils respond well to instructions, and are aware of the effects of exercise on their heart and lungs.

161. No judgement on the overall quality of teaching can be made, because there were very few lessons taking place during the time of the inspection. In the one lesson seen, the teacher provided appropriate activities to warm up pupils' muscles, and placed good emphasis on the need for pupils to be creative, and experiment with different moves. The lesson was challenging, and pupils made sound gains in their understanding of how to use different parts of their body. The one weakness was the lack of opportunities provided for the best pupils to demonstrate their skills, and this prevented others learning how to improve their work.

162. Physical education makes a good contribution to the social and moral development of the pupils as they learn to understand the benefits of teamwork. The subject is overseen capably by the headteacher, who has focussed appropriately on developing teachers' confidence by using local training courses. These proved effective, and a recent course on gymnastics encouraged the Year 6 teacher to join with a parent to provide a gymnastics club after school. The school has a good scheme of work, which provides clear guidance to teachers about which tasks to plan and how to assess pupils' progress. A sound range of extra-curricular sports sessions helps to boost standards, especially by the most able pupils. A recent visit by the Essex cricket team helped improved pupils' skills. The school provides appropriate opportunities for adventurous activities at a nearby outdoor centre for Year 6, and an 'Adventure Weekend' for Year 5.