

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BRUSHWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL**

Chesham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110523

Headteacher: Mr R Plimsaul

Reporting inspector: Terry Elston  
20704

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 247012

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Junior
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	7 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Brushwood Road Chesham Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP5 3DW
Telephone number:	01494 788023
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gary Munday
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20704	T. Elston	Registered inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9569	J. Leaning	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18083	J. Howell	Team inspector	Science Geography Religious education Educational inclusion	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
16492	A. Quinnell	Team inspector	English Art and design History Music Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a junior school of average size with 191 pupils on roll on the edge of the small town of Chesham. At the time of the last inspection it was a middle school. Numbers of pupils are falling steadily, and are some way short of the 251 on roll in 1999. There are significantly more boys than girls, and in Year 6 boys outnumber girls by two to one. Just over 10 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is a little below the national average. Over 18 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds (mostly Pakistani) and 16 per cent have English as an additional language (with Punjabi and Urdu the most common languages other than English); these proportions are higher than in most schools. Twelve per cent of pupils are on the special educational needs register, mostly with moderate learning difficulties, and one has a statement. These figures are broadly average. Pupils' attainment on entry is average.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. The quality of teaching is good, and there is a strong commitment by the leadership to high standards. Pupils do well in the national tests and their standards were above average last year in English and science. Their good behaviour and very good attitudes to learning show the benefit of the high quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision. Despite the lack of financial planning to meet the challenge of falling numbers of pupils, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Pupils make good progress; their results in the latest national tests were above average in English and science and standards are now also above average by Year 6 in mathematics.
- The consistently good quality of teaching, and pupils' very good attitudes to learning, are important reasons for their good progress.
- The school has a very good partnership with parents, who speak highly of the quality of education and their children's progress.
- The very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a very positive impact on the way they behave and learn.
- The school is well led; the new headteacher has made a very good start, and has a clear view of what the school needs to do to improve further.

#### **What could be improved**

- There is no financial planning to address falling numbers of pupils.
- Pupils with English as an additional language have too little support and, overall, achieve lower standards than other pupils.
- The total teaching time is an hour below the recommended weekly figure, and pupils miss valuable time for learning.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in 1998, and has addressed the main issues from that report well. The time now devoted to the teaching of religious education is sufficient, and all pupils now attend the daily act of collective worship. All statutory requirements are met. Standards have risen in design and technology, history, music and religious education, but fallen in physical education and art and design. Attendance rates have risen, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision has improved. There are still, however, weaknesses in the long term financial planning, and the total teaching time remains an hour below the recommended minimum. In view of the

significant strengths in the teaching and leadership, the school is well placed to improve further.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	C	B	A
mathematics	D	D	C	C
science	D	C	B	B

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

The table illustrates how standards are rising, and show a very marked improvement in English and science where the school has done much to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Overall, the upward trend is broadly in line with that found nationally. Pupils have made good progress from their results in the national tests taken in Year 2. There is no consistent difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Overall, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language do not do as well in the national tests as other pupils. The school achieved its targets in English in 2002 but missed them in mathematics. The standards attained by the current group of pupils in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science. In mathematics, the improvement since the latest national tests shows the benefit of improvements in the planning of the curriculum and better resources to develop pupils' problem-solving skills. Standards are well above average in music, where pupils enjoy many opportunities to sing and play instruments. Standards are above average in history and design and technology, and average in all other subjects. These standards show that pupils achieve well, and make good progress through the school. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and many make good improvements in reading with the extra support they receive.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good. Pupils enjoy school, and always try to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Nearly all pupils behave well in class and in the playground, and there have been no recent exclusions. Acts of bullying are rare. There is a high degree of racial harmony.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are very mature, and keen to take responsibility. Relationships are very good and make for a happy school.
Attendance	Well above average, and has a good impact on pupils' progress.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good, and meets the needs of pupils well. There is some inspirational teaching, especially in Year 6, that captivates pupils by its pace and excitement. Teachers' planning is good, and ensures that pupils benefit from interesting and demanding lessons; this accounts for their enthusiasm for learning and good progress. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, and this enables pupils to get the most out of lessons. The teaching of English and literacy is good, and pupils develop good basic skills of reading and writing. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy is generally good, but teachers do not always use the mental starter session effectively to develop pupils' speed of calculation. The teaching of science is good, and especially effective at developing pupils' investigational skills. The teaching of music is very good, and develops pupils' singing and playing very well; teachers have very good musical skills and have high expectations of pupils' work. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, and has a positive impact on their standards. There is no dedicated teaching provision for pupils with English as an additional language, and their progress is not as good as that of other pupils.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The well-planned curriculum has a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, while giving pupils a rich variety of other experiences. There is a good range of activities at lunchtime and after school to enrich the curriculum. Good provision for personal, social and health education teaches pupils how to live healthily and value the opinions of others. The total weekly teaching time, however, is one hour below the recommended minimum level.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory, and pupils make sound progress overall. They are supported well by teachers' planning and make good progress when helped by the skilled teaching assistants.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Unsatisfactory. The school does not use the funds allocated to these pupils to provide additional teaching support. Teaching assistants do what they can but there are not enough of them to meet the needs of all of these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Excellent spiritual provision in assemblies, and good opportunities in lessons for pupils to think deeply about issues. Very good provision for social and moral development shows in the way pupils behave and work productively together. Very good provision for multicultural development teaches pupils much about how other cultures live and worship.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school cares for its pupils well, and monitors their development carefully. Good assessment of pupils' progress helps teachers plan the next stages in their learning effectively. The underachievement of pupils with English as an additional language has been identified, but no measures have yet been put in place to raise their standards.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school's very good partnership with parents has a big impact on pupils' progress and their attitudes to school.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The new headteacher already has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and has quickly identified important areas for development. Very good support from the deputy headteacher who led the school well last term. Good support from senior staff, who contribute much to the management of the school. The headteacher, senior staff and governing body have quickly formed a strong team, and their plans for the future show a good understanding of how to bring about improvements, especially in the financial planning. The school is well staffed with appropriately qualified teachers, supported effectively by a few knowledgeable classroom assistants. There are good induction procedures to support staff new to the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	They do this satisfactorily, and are increasingly involved in the monitoring of the school's provision by linking themselves to classes or subjects. In the past, governors had too little to do with the running of the school, but there are many new members who are keen to develop their role. The new Chair of the governing body has a good understanding of the role and a key figure in the spiritual development of pupils.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Some good recent developments in tracking pupils' progress and matching standards against other schools are identifying useful areas for improvement. Good monitoring of teaching shows teachers clearly how they can improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory, and the school has lacked effective procedures for securing the best value from its spending. Weaknesses in financial planning have left pupils with English as an additional language with insufficient support, and the school has made no provision for the steady decline in numbers of pupils. The school has a good supply of learning resources to support pupils' learning. The accommodation is spacious, and provides very good facilities for music and design and technology.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The good quality of teaching</li> <li>• Pupils' good behaviour</li> <li>• The school's high expectations of pupils</li> <li>• The way the headteacher has made such a positive start</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consistency with which homework is set</li> <li>• The links with local infant schools</li> </ul>

The inspection team agrees with parents' very positive views. Of the others, the team agrees that there is some inconsistency in the setting of homework, and links with the infant schools are only just being strengthened.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils' standards in the national assessment tests have risen steadily over the last three years. In the 2000 tests, standards were below the national average in English, mathematics and science, and by 2002 they had risen to average in mathematics and above average in English and science. In 2002, compared with the results of similar schools, this school's results were well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. This improvement has been achieved by rigorous analysis of the test results to see how teachers could more effectively tackle pupils' specific weaknesses. In particular, teachers have focused on improving the quality of pupils' writing, developing better investigational skills in science and providing more problem-solving tasks in mathematics. These measures have had a particularly positive impact on the standards attained by more able pupils; the proportion of pupils who attained the higher Level 5 in 2002 was well above the national average in English, and above average in mathematics and science.

2. Improvements in mathematics have been slower than in English and science; significantly fewer pupils attained Level 5 in mathematics in 2002 than in English and science, and this depressed the average scores. The school picked this up in its analysis, and the extra resources to develop pupils' problem skills are already having a good impact on their use and understanding of mathematics.

3. This inspection finds that standards are still above average in English and science and are now also above average in mathematics, illustrating the success of recent initiatives. Standards in literacy and numeracy are above average, and most pupils have good basic skills of reading, writing and number. In science, the very good skills of the teachers and their high expectations account for the fact that the vast majority of pupils attain at least the national standard by Year 6 and almost half exceed this level. Standards in religious education at the time of the last inspection were below those expected; this inspection finds that they are in line with expectations now that the school allocates sufficient time to the subject. Pupils' standards in music are well above average, and profit from very good teaching and many opportunities to sing and play instruments in concerts and competitions. Standards in history and design and technology are above average, and they are average in art and design, geography and physical education.

4. Overall, pupils achieve good standards given their average attainment on entry to the school. Consistently good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress in many lessons; teachers' interesting lessons and their high expectations of pupils' behaviour accounts for their high levels of enthusiasm and concentration. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in their learning, and some make good gains in their reading and writing with the extra support they receive.

5. Pupils with English as an additional language attain lower standards overall than other pupils, and their scores in last year's national tests were significantly below those of others in the group in English, mathematics and science. The tracking of pupils' progress shows that pupils for whom Punjabi is their mother tongue fare worse than any other group. At present, pupils are grouped by prior attainment for English, mathematics and science, but there is insufficient support for pupils who are at the early stage of learning English, both in these subjects and other areas of the curriculum. These pupils have limited support and that is why they often lack sufficient understanding of what they read, even though most can technically read the text. This affects their standards in many subjects. The new headteacher and the

deputy headteacher are aware of the situation and have it as a priority on the agenda for a training day this term. Although pupils with English as an additional language are represented in each year group, there was no reference to them in the teachers' planning during the inspection.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. Throughout the school, pupil's attitudes, values and relationships are very good, and a strength of the school. Pupils are very mature and have thoughtful and positive attitudes to their work. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations of their work and behaviour, and this enables them to get the most out of lessons. Pupils' develop a high degree of self-esteem, helped by the school's philosophy of *I can do*. The school is a happy place where children's individual progress and development is recognised and valued. Pupils enjoy school, work hard, take a pride in their achievements and concentrate well. They are keen to learn and to answer questions in lessons and assemblies. For example, in a Year 5 dance lesson they worked well in pairs and collaborated very effectively to work out a dance routine. They watched with interest and applauded the efforts of other groups. They are polite, courteous and respectful to each other and to the adults and this makes a significant contribution to their good progress. There is a high degree of racial harmony.

7. Pupils are appreciative of the stickers and merit marks, and enjoy Golden Time when they can choose their activity. In special celebration assemblies, pupils enjoy the recognition of their own good work as well as that of their friends.

8. Behaviour in the school is good and often very good. Nearly all lessons provide a good challenge for pupils, and they settle quickly to work and listen carefully. Occasional lapses from these high standards occur when teaching is less stimulating. Rewards and sanctions are fairly and consistently applied; parents are involved at an early stage if there are behavioural problems and this usually works very well. No bullying or aggressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils know that it is unacceptable and what to do if it occurs. They told inspectors that *bullying is just not allowed!* There have been no exclusions.

9. Pupils' personal development is very good and benefits from the very good provision for spiritual moral, social and cultural development. Relationships in the school are very good; adults are good role models and know the children and their families well. Pupils have well-developed social skills and think carefully about their own learning. They enjoy the many responsibilities they are given, including taking registers, putting out equipment and helping in the library. Pupils in Year 6 look after the school office at lunchtime, and do so very effectively. The head girl and head boy are very proud of their responsibility, and do the school great credit when they show visitors around the school. Pupils respond very enthusiastically to the house system, and compete enthusiastically for house points for work, effort and behaviour. There is a well organised School Council that has a very good impact on pupils' social development and their ability to work together as a team. Pupils have raised substantial funds for charities, both locally and nationally and are keen to help less fortunate people in the world.

10. Pupils develop very well spiritually because of the many opportunities they have to think deeply about issues in lessons and assemblies. Their writing shows a very mature understanding of complex matters, as was illustrated by those who wrote an imaginary account of waking up to find themselves deaf. One pupil wrote with great sensitivity about his mother finding him in a daze: *I wrote down what was wrong. Instantly she turned silent and went pale. I cried and so did she. Talking was now a memory and I knew it.*

11. Pupils' moral development is very good. They have a very clear understanding of the school's rules and know right from wrong. In conversation, pupils said vehemently that without rules, *it would be a bad place and you wouldn't listen, so you wouldn't learn anything*. Pupils gain much from personal, social and health education lessons, and following one session about David and Goliath, a pupil stated that the moral was: *the people who shout the loudest don't always come off best*. In a Year 3 class, pupils were discussing selfishness; they showed a very good idea of the rights and wrongs in the story and explored how to resolve an issue very successfully. These very good standards ensure positive opportunities for pupils to achieve their best.

12. The rate of attendance is well above the national average and there has been no unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons. These have a very good impact on pupils' standards and progress.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

13. The quality of teaching and the quality of learning are good, and parents agree that these are key strengths of the school's provision, with 99 per cent of them indicating in the questionnaire that teaching was either good or very good. Across the school, the quality of teaching was judged as good or better in nearly three quarters of lessons, and very good or better in one quarter. One lesson was unsatisfactory. There is some outstanding teaching in Years 3 and 6, and all lessons in Year 6 were good or better.

14. Teachers generally manage the behaviour very well, and this makes the most of the time in lessons. Where a few lessons have shortcomings, time is wasted in the management of pupils and, as a result, a significant minority of pupils make slow progress.

15. Teachers have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, and this means that pupils work hard, and make good use of their time. Teachers provide interesting lessons that stimulate pupils and help them learn new material well. Teachers begin by sharing the learning intentions with pupils and this is very effective; it helps pupils focus on the material to be learned and enables both pupils and teachers to assess the extent of the new knowledge at the end. Teachers also make effective use of their assessments of pupils' previous work. One lesson began, for example, by the teacher referring back to her marking of pupils' work that showed their weak understanding of a number concept. The teacher took pupils carefully through the work on the board, and assessed their understanding well by careful questioning. Consequently, all pupils understood the work this time, and were able to move on to the next task with confidence.

16. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach, and this gives pupils the confidence to ask questions. Teachers are good at giving pupils the right degree of help without taking over, and this makes pupils think for themselves. In a design and technology lesson, for example, a pupil was struggling with an axle he was fitting to a model car. The teacher asked, *what's the problem here?* And waited while the pupil explained that the movement was too stiff. The teacher asked how it could be made to move more freely and waited patiently while the pupil considered the alternatives. With a smile, the pupil saw that he needed to enlarge the hole and was delighted with his solution of the problem.

17. The pace of teaching and pupils' learning is brisk, which explains why pupils are so interested in the work; they are often swept away with the teacher's enthusiasm. Some of the teaching is inspirational. In these lessons, the teachers make it clear from the start that the work will be challenging. Their high expectations and careful planning ensures that all pupils are working to their limit, and relish the success they achieve. In a science lesson for the most able group in Year 6, for example, the teacher had pupils testing the displacement of

water. The teacher teased out of pupils what they had already learned about the topic, and then challenged them to test their theories. By careful prompting, the teacher ensured they were on the right track and then just left them to it. Pupils worked feverishly to complete their experiment and were justifiably proud of their achievements at the end. No one wanted the lesson to end.

18. With regard to the teaching of different subjects, the quality of teaching is good in literacy and numeracy, and the school has these national strategies well in place. Literacy lessons have a good structure, and focus appropriately on developing pupils' reading and writing skills. Numeracy lessons are generally well organised, so that pupils develop good strategies for mental calculations. Occasionally, however, the mental starter session is too brief, and misses the opportunity to improve pupils' quick recall of number. This is a particularly significant shortcoming in the classes for lower attaining pupils who often struggle to remember number facts.

19. The quality of teaching is very good in music, where teachers' skills are particularly strong and pupils have many opportunities to sing and play instruments at a high level. The quality of teaching is good in science, design and technology and history, and satisfactory in art and design, physical education, religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and geography.

20. The quality of teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The teachers prepare material at suitable levels for these pupils that is well matched to their individual targets. These targets are well constructed, and provide good guidance to pupils, teachers and teaching assistants. These assistants have benefited from good training and they work effectively with groups of pupils, particularly to improve their reading strategies. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs works closely with all staff to ensure pupils are given appropriate support within the limited budget available, and pupils make sound progress.

21. There is no dedicated teaching of pupils with English as an additional language, and this is unsatisfactory. Teaching assistants provide some support for these pupils, but no funds are made available for specialist teaching. Consequently, while pupils with English as an additional language learn basic skills well because of the good quality of teaching, few develop a deep understanding of language. This is an important reason for their underachievement in all subjects in the national tests.

22. A few parents are concerned that homework is not set consistently, and while some pupils have regular tasks set, others rarely bring work home. The inspection team found some variations from class to class but, overall, the arrangements for homework are satisfactory.

## **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?**

23. The quality and range of the curriculum are good. However, as at the time of the previous inspection the total weekly teaching time is still one hour below the recommended minimum level, and this means that pupils have less time for learning than in other schools. Although the amount of teaching time allocated to English is low compared with other schools, good opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their literacy skills in other subjects, such as history, science, geography and religious education. Additional time is also allocated to library skills, vocabulary work and in Year 6, extended writing. Consequently pupils' achieve well in English. An improvement since the previous inspection is the amount of time available for religious education, which is now adequate. As a result, the progress that

pupils make is satisfactory, and their knowledge and understanding of religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.

24. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented effectively and has had a positive impact on the standards achieved in English. The numeracy planning is generally good, but some lessons lack the clear focus on developing pupils' quick recall of number that would raise standards further. From Year 3 to Year 6, pupils are placed in groups according to their ability for literacy and numeracy, and in Year 6 also for science booster classes. This is effective and ensures the needs of the more able pupils and those with special educational needs are fully met. ICT is used well in many subjects, and teachers use the new computer suite effectively to add a further dimension to pupils' work as they research the Internet and produce graphs and spreadsheets.

25. The planning of the curriculum is good, and provides full coverage of all National Curriculum programmes of study. Planning follows the guidance of nationally recommended schemes of work and those designated by the local education authority, which the school has adapted to suit the needs of the pupils. The school's approach to teaching subjects separately is effective, and enhanced with useful cross-curricular links made where possible. The school recently introduced a 'theme week' and teachers make good use of this time to plan challenging cross-curricular activities. A good example of enriching the curriculum for pupils is the link made with Gondar in Ethiopia, which provides them with a talking point beyond the school and their own lives.

26. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. Although much of the programme is taught through religious education lessons it permeates all aspects of the curriculum. Weekly personal, social and health education lessons are timetabled, and provide valuable opportunities for pupils to participate in discussion. The lessons seen show that teachers involve pupils in an active way that helps to develop their self-awareness and to recognise the difference between right and wrong. Sex education and the use and misuse of medicines and drugs are taught well through the school's personal, social and health education programme that helps pupils to become more aware and sensitive to the needs of others. There are also occasions when personal, social and health issues are targeted towards specific groups of pupils with the support of outside expertise. For example, the school nurse teaches the sex education programme to pupils in Year 6. The community police officer also provides valuable lessons to pupils on a range of important issues, such as keeping safe. The school has participated in a wide range of health education events that make a good contribution to pupils' learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 attended 'Hazard Alley' in Milton Keynes where they were involved in a health and safety programme. An annual residential visit for pupils in Year 5 promotes this aspect of school life well as pupils learn to live with other away from the security of home.

27. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is sound. They benefit from good, well-written individual targets to address their specific needs. The requirements of the Code of Practice are met, with all parents made aware of the targets. Teaching assistants provide informed support, so that, in most cases, pupils are able to handle the tasks set for them. These arrangements ensure that pupils with special educational needs are included in all school activities, and are given every chance to succeed. However, the support for pupils with English as an additional language in lessons is unsatisfactory and consequently they do not make enough progress. The school has identified this as a high priority for development. The provision for the more able pupils shows an improvement from the previous inspection, and is now good. School assessments and test results are used to identify the more able pupils and those who have learning difficulties and teachers plan challenging work to boost their levels of attainment further.

28. The school provides good opportunities for pupils identified as having specific talents. For instance, there are many extracurricular activities to develop pupils' sporting and musical skills.

29. Pupils' good behaviour and very positive attitudes to their work are founded on the school's very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is a strength of the school and a good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' spiritual development is enhanced in religious education, where other religions of the world are studied in depth. In very stimulating assemblies, pupils are attentive and fully involved. In a whole school assembly, pupils were left to reflect on how hard it is for a butterfly to break out of the chrysalis and to compare this with their own struggles. There are very good opportunities for reflection, as was illustrated in a Year 5 class where pupils were exploring and reflecting upon the beliefs of Martin Luther King and applying them to their own beliefs.

30. The very good provision for pupils' moral development is founded on the very high expectations that staff have of them. All staff provide good role models for the children, and are consistent in the way that they show respect for both pupils and other adults. This ensures that pupils also show respect for others. The school has a very positive approach to the management of behaviour and this, and the good rewards system, helps the pupils to develop an appropriate idea of what is right and wrong. There are playground and classroom rules and pupils understand and obey them very well. Moral issues are taught very well and pupils are well behaved in and around the school.

31. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and parents agree that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The school is a caring community in which everyone is respected and supported very well. The school council involves all pupils in the decision making process within the school and there is also a house system which encourages fair competition. There are a range of visits and visitors, including a residential visit for pupils in Year 5. Pupils are made aware of the needs of others and the school supports national and international charities.

32. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is very good. The school makes very good efforts to ensure that pupils understand the multi-cultural nature of society in Britain and throughout the world. In religious education, they develop respect for diverse faiths and cultures and have visited places of worship such as the Sikh Temple, which help their understanding of the wide range of activities in different cultures. Pupils have learnt about periods in British history and about Christian festivals, and have good experience of art from different countries. In a very good assembly, to which parents were invited, pupils dressed in traditional Indian costume and explained the significance of the Bhangra dance, which they demonstrated to the delight of the audience. There are also some very good links with a school in Ethiopia where the school has adopted a child to support.

33. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities. Pupils are able to participate in clubs during the lunch hour and after school, where boys and girls can learn to play the recorder, sing in the choir, join the orchestra, use computers, learn French and join a Bible club. Good arrangements are also made for pupils to do their homework in school time if required. Pupils are also able to participate in a suitable range of sporting activities that include football, netball and table tennis. The school takes part in local sporting events and works with outside agencies, such as the Wycombe Wanderers Football Club for Girls.

34. There are sound links with the local community that makes a positive contribution to pupils' experience and learning. Good use is made of the local area to promote pupils' knowledge of geography and older members of the community have contributed and enriched the pupils' experiences in history. There are close links with the work of the local

church and the head boy and head girl presented the harvest produce to a local day centre for the elderly. The school has satisfactory links with the feeder infant schools and the local senior schools. These links help to prepare pupils appropriately for their transfer to their next stage of education.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

35. The school provides good care for its pupils within a firm, consistent atmosphere where all children are valued and respected and can feel happy and secure. The mission statement. Progress with Pride is at the heart of the school's ethos. The staff know children and their families well Pupils are supervised by a sufficient number of adults at play and at lunchtimes. Outside agencies, for example, the education welfare officer and school nurse, give good support to the school. This good care enhances pupils' learning opportunities.

36. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. Pupils' levels of attainment in English, mathematics and science are recorded regularly and this helps teachers set challenging but realistic targets for the future. Pupils' results in the national tests are monitored carefully to see where more work needs to be done. Last year, for example, this identified weaknesses in pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics, and the school made available extra resources to improve these skills. Already, pupils are more confident in seeing which particular operation is required when faced with a written problem.

37. On a day-to-day basis, teachers make effective use of guidance in the curricular documents to see whether pupils are working at the expected levels; this provides a clear picture of how well pupils are progressing and provides teachers with good information on which topics need to be revisited. Detailed assessments made on entry to school enable teachers to identify pupils with special educational needs, and these enable the school to support them without delay. Good records of achievements record pupils' best work, and annual reports provide good opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress.

38. The school has recently started tracking the progress of pupils with English as an additional language. Some of these pupils underachieve, but there are, as yet, no strategies or resources to raise their levels of attainment to match other pupils.

39. The child protection policy is good, with clear guidelines and good examples of what to look out for. It follows the local education authority guidelines. The headteacher is the named person and staff know the procedures well. Good training for newly qualified staff has already taken place.

40. There is a strong sense of the importance of health and safety of pupils. The school has a good health and safety policy, with comprehensive information clearly laid out. There is a governor who takes responsibility for health and safety, and regular risk assessments are made and recorded. Substances are stored safely. This is a large open site with no evidence of litter or graffiti and constant attention is given to pupils' security.

41. The school promotes good behaviour well through a shared and successfully implemented behaviour policy, which contains a clear set of aims. There are many rewards, which include praise, stickers and merits. The celebration assembly each week does much to reward pupils' good behaviour and outside achievements. Sanctions are appropriate and parents are involved if necessary. The school has very good and effective procedures to prevent bullying, and the school places great emphasis on respect and tolerance to others, their beliefs and cultures.

42. Two members of staff are qualified in first aid and there is ample first aid equipment around the school. There is a welfare assistant and a medical room but there is nowhere to lie down. An accident book is maintained regularly, and parents are always notified in case of head injury.

43. The policy for attendance is very good; it is clear and parents understand the expectations, which are also outlined in the school prospectus. Registers are kept according to requirements and are monitored regularly. Pupils receive a certificate for a term and for a year's full attendance, which they value highly. Consequently, there are few problems with attendance.

44. Links with the local infant schools are satisfactory, but parents feel that some of the information they provide, particularly about the pupils' levels of attainment, is not always heeded by this school. This is, in fact, the case and the headteacher has already met with the headteacher of one of these feeder schools to improve this communication. There are satisfactory links with the four local secondary schools; the schools arrange useful visits and ensure that records of pupils' attainments are passed on.

45. Parents feel strongly that pupils are well cared for and happy, and that it is a good school. The team agrees with these positive comments

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

46. The school's partnership with parents is very good; it is a strength of the school. There is a strong belief that this partnership is the key to pupils fulfilling their potential. The school works hard to ensure that parents feel welcome in school and are actively involved in their children's learning and this has a significant effect on the standards which they achieve. The school has maintained the very good links reported at the time of the previous inspection.

47. A few parents work in school on a regular basis. They are a valuable asset to teachers and pupils in lessons because they are clearly told what their tasks will be and provide good help where needed. Many more parents support the very successful parent teacher association. The group raises substantial funds, which make a valuable contribution to the opportunities for activities. The parents have decided to focus current fund raising on improving the provision of library books, following comments at the parents' meeting.

48. There is good information in the school's prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents, which meet statutory requirements and are a big improvement on those found at the last inspection. The school has developed a good home school agreement, which shows clearly how parents, pupils and the school should work together to achieve high standards of work and behaviour. Parents who are governors are well informed, and have a good understanding of their role; they support the work of the school well.

49. Parents benefit from good levels of information about the topics their child will cover over the next term, and see teachers formally at two parents' meetings each year. New parents can stay with their child to ensure a smooth transition, and this arrangement works very well for both parents and children. Each half term there are informative newsletters, and the headteacher intends to increase the frequency of these so that communication is more regular. Most parents agree that teachers set appropriate levels of homework, and they support their children well at home to ensure that these tasks are completed on time. There is some inconsistency here, though, and not all classes benefit from the consistent setting of homework.

50. Annual reports on pupils' progress at the end of the year, are detailed and of very high quality. They show clearly how even the most able pupils can improve, and parents are appreciative of the helpful comments on their child's development. There is an opportunity for parents to respond, and parents generally make good use of this to pass on helpful comments. These reports represent a good improvement from the previous inspection when they were criticised for being incomplete.

51. The school operates an effective open door policy, and parents are confident that they will always be welcome. They are invited into class assemblies and appreciate this. Parents of children whose first language is not English are less involved. The headteacher is doing much to meet as many parents as possible, even in the driving rain at the end of the day. One of the headteacher's immediate priorities is to arrange a meeting to enable parents to air their views on the school's provision.

52. There is little difference from the previous report when partnership with parents was also very good. Nearly all parents in discussion and at the meeting before the inspection were very satisfied with the school's efforts. They are delighted that their children love coming to school.

### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

53. The headteacher had been at the school for only three weeks at the time of the inspection, but has quickly made an impact. By meeting parents at the gate every day he has gained a good awareness of their feelings about the school, and he has soon developed very good relationships with pupils and staff. There is a great feeling of optimism in the school.

54. The headteacher has a very clear vision of what sort of school this should be, and is bristling with good ideas for its future development. His immediate priorities, to do with the finances, the promotion of the school's image and the provision for pupils with English as an additional language are crucial to the school's success.

55. Importantly, the headteacher has taken the lead in the spiritual development of pupils. His assemblies generate an excellent atmosphere where pupils and staff join together in worship and thoroughly enjoy the experience.

56. There is a well-established culture of self-evaluation here, and this is an important way that all aspects of the school's work are improved. Good monitoring of pupils' performance in the national tests has helped the school to raise standards in writing and mathematics, and overall standards are improving year by year. The issue of pupils with English as an additional language underachieving, however, has only recently been identified. The senior staff monitor teaching effectively. Teachers are observed regularly, and given useful feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. Teachers value this process because it is done constructively, and it helps them teach better. There is a good link between the evaluation of teachers' teaching, their targets in their performance management process and the school's well-constructed plan for future improvement.

57. Over the past four years, the school's leadership has used these principles of self-evaluation well to address the main issues from the previous inspection. The time now devoted to the teaching of religious education is sufficient, all pupils now attend the daily act of collective worship and the cultural experiences offered to pupils are among the strengths of the school. All statutory requirements are met.

58. The headteacher is very well supported by senior staff. The deputy headteacher shares the headteacher's high expectations of the school, and they share a common vision

for the school's development. Importantly, the deputy headteacher sets a very good example by his own, often inspirational, teaching and this gives him credibility when advising staff. The deputy headteacher led the school effectively last year before the new headteacher arrived, and parents and staff speak highly of his leadership at that testing time. Other senior staff make a good contribution to the school's leadership and management. As members of the Standards Team they analyse trends and standards and use the data well to set the school's future priorities.

59. A weakness in the school's management lies in the financial planning. In recent years, numbers of pupils have fallen significantly, and the shortfall this caused in the funds allocated was met by a large amount of money in reserve. This was a short-term solution to a long-term problem, and the staffing costs alone for the next financial year are greater than the anticipated total budget. While there are still significant funds in reserve, there is no plan to meet these costs beyond next year. In addition, the funds included in the school's budget last year for pupils with English as an additional language were not used to support their learning.

60. The school has limited measures to ensure the best value is gained from its spending. Only very recently has the school made comparisons with the spending patterns of other schools and found, for example, that its funds in reserve and staffing costs are unusually high. The school's secretary does much to secure good value from basic purchases, and uses local suppliers prudently to save money on paper materials. There have been no attempts, however, to make a systematic analysis of how recent spending on ICT equipment and resources for mathematics have raised pupils' standards.

61. The governors, many of whom have been very recently appointed, are led well by the knowledgeable chairperson. He is often in school, taking assemblies and meeting with staff and pupils, and has a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In his first year, he has worked hard to build a governing body that is knowledgeable and keen to move the school forward. A newly appointed governor to monitor and support the provision for pupils with special educational needs is well informed, and works closely with the special educational needs co-ordinator. Aware of the funding problems, the governing body recently appointed a financial expert to plan for the school's future, and a marketing committee to promote the school's image and attract more pupils. For the first time, governors have been allocated to either a curriculum subject or a teacher so that they can monitor the school's provision. This is working well, and is providing governors with a good understanding of the school. These are positive measures that give the school a governing body with the expertise and determination to develop the provision further.

62. The school is well staffed with a good supply of well-qualified teachers. They are supported well by a small number of skilled teaching assistants. The school uses the specialist skills of teachers well to raise standards of teaching and learning, particularly in music and design and technology. Teachers new to the school benefit from good induction procedures, including valuable support from experienced mentors. The good standard of accommodation supports all areas of teaching and learning well, and the specialist rooms for music and design and technology provide very good facilities that have a positive impact on pupils' standards.

63. The supply of learning resources is good, and supports pupils' learning well. The resources for music are very good, especially the range of instrument for pupils to play. Resources are good in science, ICT, geography and design and technology and satisfactory in other subjects except for the reading books; many are in poor condition and there are too few of them.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

64. In order to maintain the school's improvement, raise standards further and put the finances in order, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- (1) maintain better control of the school's funds by:
  - producing a clear, long term policy to address the shortfall in funding caused by falling rolls;
  - developing effective strategies for attracting more pupils to the school;
  - ensuring that funds allocated to specific groups of pupils are used for that purpose; and
  - putting in place rigorous measures to ensure the best value is gained from the school's spending.(Paragraphs: 59-60)
  
- (2) raise the standards attained by pupils with English as an additional language by:
  - using data from assessments to identify which of these pupils are underachieving; and
  - providing more specialist support to develop their language skills.(Paragraphs 5, 21, 27, 38, 59, 66)
  
- (3) ensure that the length of the school day is at least in line with the 23.5 hours recommended for pupils of this age.  
(Paragraph: 23)

Other issues that the school may want to include in its future planning:

- Improve the range and quality of reading books for English.  
(Paragraphs 47, 63, 73)
- Develop a more consistent approach to the setting of homework.  
(Paragraph 22)
- Make more effective use of the mental starter session to improve pupils' quick recall of number.  
(Paragraphs: 75, 77)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	63

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	11	23	13	1	0	0
Percentage	6	22	45	25	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	191
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	20

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y3 – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	22

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	32

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	23	23	46

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	17	20
	Girls	18	17	20
	Total	34	34	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (76)	74 (61)	87 (90)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	15	15	18
	Girls	20	19	19
	Total	35	34	37
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (80)	74 (80)	80 (76)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils****Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	151	0	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	30	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.2
Average class size	24

#### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y6**

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

#### **Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	481 013
Total expenditure	474 418
Expenditure per pupil	2 162
Balance brought forward from previous year	47 791
Balance carried forward to next year	54 386

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	101
Number of questionnaires returned	82

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	52	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	54	0	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	57	0	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	49	17	1	0
The teaching is good.	39	60	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	46	10	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	54	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	54	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	37	54	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	35	54	4	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	49	9	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	44	15	0	2

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

### **ENGLISH**

65. In the latest national tests, pupils' results in English were above average. This shows that the school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection. These results show a good rise in standards in the last four years because the school has worked hard to improve the quality of writing by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, and providing pupils with a good range of high quality literature. This has been effective in helping to make pupils' writing more interesting and helps to explain the significant rise in the proportion of pupils who attained the higher Level 5 in the 2002 tests compared with the previous years; this is now well above average. Pupils' attainment was well above average compared with similar schools in terms of both the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5.

66. Pupils achieve well in English. More able pupils achieve very well, and produce work of high quality. Pupils who have special educational needs make sound progress and nearly all get close to national standards by Year 6. However, pupils with English as an additional language underachieve and perform significantly worse than others in the national tests. These pupils have limited support, and while they are able to master the technical skills of reading, few develop a deep understanding of the texts they have read.

67. This inspection finds that standards attained by most of the current Year 6 are above average in English. Throughout the school, the majority of pupils achieve above average standards in speaking, and in most classes pupils listen attentively to their teachers and each other. However, a significant number of pupils in Year 4 have difficulty listening. Although the teacher works hard to help these pupils to listen and sustain concentration, their immature behaviour restricts their learning. The majority of pupils in the school settle quickly in class; they listen attentively to the teacher and each other, and make suitable responses. They show increasing vocabulary and developing confidence. This is built on well as they progress through the school and, by the age of 11, pupils listen and concentrate well in discussions. In a good Year 6 lesson, the teacher enabled pupils to achieve well in their understanding of how alliteration and metaphors help to extend the meaning in a piece of writing. From their earlier reading of *The Dark is Rising* and *The Drowners Show* they were able to compare these well with two short pieces of the teacher's own writing. The good discussion enhanced pupils' learning well of the differences between autobiographical and descriptive writing.

68. By Year 6, pupils' standards in reading are above average. They read confidently, and show good skills in understanding what they are reading. The proportion of more able pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is well above that found nationally. Pupils with special educational needs receive sound support, which increases their ability to read and to access other areas of the curriculum. However, there is insufficient support for those pupils who are at the earlier stages of learning English as a second language. This limits their ability to read with sufficient understanding for them to achieve well. Pupils build steadily on their reading as they continue through the school and, by Year 6; they are mature in their choice of books. Many read regularly at home, use the public library for research as well as a source for more fiction, and are confident in using library classification systems. Most pupils show a good understanding of what they read. They tackle difficult text, such as books by Charles Dickens and C. S. Lewis, with growing ease and confidence. Many pupils are able to 'read between the lines' to see the hidden meanings. Pupils are able to choose their own reading material from a satisfactory range of books.

69. By Year 6, a high proportion of pupils attain above average writing skills. They are able to write in various styles and show empathy with others. When writing in the role of a

Victorian social activist, their persuasive letters convey their understanding of the plight of poor children of that era. Throughout the school, teachers provide challenging writing tasks to which pupils positively respond. For example, Year 3 pupils used good descriptive language in their history writing *on meeting Hercules* and Year 6 pupils achieved well in their music lesson when composing in the style of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance*, such as:

*I am the very model of a modern Brushwood Junior,  
I've information all about the life of a petunia;  
I know my nine times table  
And I quote it categorical,  
From one times nine to twelve times nine you know I'm mathematical.*

70. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers provide pupils with rich, stimulating, high quality literature, such as works by Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and Robert Louis Stevenson. This helps to widen the range of pupils' vocabulary, which they use for their own good written work. Work is well presented, and written mainly in pen. Teachers use a consistent form of marking, which enables pupils to understand how they can improve their work and achieve high standards. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils to which they respond positively and produce work of a high standard.

71. The school has made a sustained effort since the previous inspection to ensure that pupils achieve high standards in English, which is having a good impact on all teaching. Teachers use effective links with other areas of the curriculum very well to extend pupils' learning.

72. The English co-ordinator provides good leadership, and supports teachers well by evaluating their planning and teaching. The school has developed good assessment procedures that show pupils' progress clearly, and uses the data well to show the next steps that will move pupils on to the next levels. Targets are set for each pupil, which enable them to know what they need to do to achieve well. The school analyses the data from assessments well, but has not analysed the data by ethnicity until very recently.

73. The library is appropriately used to find fiction and non-fiction books and research for topics. However, many of the books are in poor condition and are too few in quantity. Parents expressed some concerns about the lack of the quality and range of the books in the library, which this inspection feels is justified. The school is aware of this deficiency. Members of the Parent Teacher Association realise that this is a priority for the school and plan to provide money to replenish some of the books. ICT is used more now than at the previous inspection, and now provides good support for the teaching and learning of English across the school. Pupils use a range of word processing tools to enhance their written work, such as changing the fonts to represent Old English style of writing for their *Letters to Lord Ashley* for their history work on the Victorians. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

74. Pupils' attainment by Year 6 in mathematics is above average, and the school has maintained the standards reported in the previous inspection. Standards have fluctuated in the national tests over recent years, but are now rising. They were average in the 2002 national tests, and the higher standards of the current Year 6 pupils show the benefits arising from improvements in the planning of the curriculum, more rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching, better resources to develop their problem-solving skills and more challenging work provided for more able pupils.

75. Overall, pupils achieve well, given their average attainment on entry. They soon respond well to teachers' high expectations in Year 3 and, by Year 4, many are working at higher levels than those expected of pupils that age. Pupils with special educational needs are included in all mathematical activities and make sound progress towards their targets. Their quick recall of number, however, is their stumbling block, and many still struggle to work sums out in their head by Year 6. Pupils with English as an additional language make sound progress, but without much support in class they sometimes become confused with the language of mathematical problems.

76. By Year 6, pupils have a good range of strategies to solve problems, and their investigations of nets of cubes showed good investigational skills. Pupils work with number with confidence, and set out their sums neatly to avoid unnecessary errors. Most know their multiplication tables well, and have a quick recall, for example, of all multiples of seven. They have a good understanding of perimeter, and recognise the properties of common shapes. Pupils represent data very well using graphs, and their line graphs about the daily takings from a café were of a high standard.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and the organisation of pupils into groups by prior attainment ensures that they have work that matches their level of skills. Teachers are well organised with resources ready for use and support staff are aware of what they are required to do. The lessons are planned with a good balance between the teacher talking, pupils working in groups and time at the end of the lesson to review what has been learned. Teachers use this summing-up session well to iron out any misconceptions and decide whether any aspects of the lesson need to be revisited. This has a good impact on pupils' learning as it fills the gaps in their knowledge. A weakness in some lessons is the lack of work in the mental starter sessions to speed up pupils' quick recall of number. This particularly affects the learning of pupils with special educational needs who need lots of practice in this area. A strength of the teaching lies in teachers' use of praise; this rewards pupils who attempt difficult work and gives them the confidence to take risks with a speculative answer.

78. There is some inspirational teaching that provides a high degree of challenge to pupils, yet is planned so carefully to give them a good chance of success. In one outstanding lesson for the lower attaining pupils in Year 6, the teacher began by warning them that speed of calculation was of the essence. Their eyes shone as they relished the task ahead, and could barely wait to start. The teacher pitched his questions about equivalent fractions and percentages very carefully so that pupils had a good chance of providing the correct answer, yet had to think hard to do so. In the group work, seeing that pupils had mastered the difficult concept, the teacher extended them further by asking them to explain their working. He then introduced alternative methods, such as using calculators, and pupils quickly moved on to the next stage in their learning. The end of the lesson focused on an innovative noughts and crosses game that proved to be an excellent way of reinforcing the concepts that pupils had just learned. By the end, all pupils had made great gains in their understanding of equivalence, and had enjoyed the process immensely.

79. Teachers make sound use of mathematics across the curriculum, and link work well with ICT when they create good databases, create line graphs in science and measure accurately in design and technology.

80. The subject co-ordinator provides good support to teachers, and demonstrates a clear understanding of how to raise standards. Following concerns about dipping standards last year the co-ordinator monitored the quality of teaching and made a good analysis of pupils' results in the national tests. These measures provided good information about how to raise standards, and led to teachers placing a greater focus on developing pupils' skills in solving problems. As a result, these skills have improved and pupils' standards are significantly higher than last year. The school has good systems for assessing pupils' progress, and teachers make good use of the data to plan further work. The school has a good supply of resources for mathematics, and uses ICT well to enhance pupils' learning of shape, angles and data handling. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **SCIENCE**

81. Standards in science are above average by Year 6, and similar to those in the previous inspection. The results of the national tests 2002 show a similar standard. The school's continued success is in many ways due to very good use of the secondary school subject expertise of teachers, who challenge the pupils to attain high standards in Year 6.

82. Pupils make good progress in science; nearly all are achieving in line with national standards by Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs do well and their scientific understanding is often in line with that expected for their age. However, there is a lack of support for pupils with English as additional language and although they make steady progress, they struggle with the language of science; as a result the standards they achieve are below those of other pupils. More able groups of pupils achieve in line with their abilities and in the 2002 national tests nearly half the Year 6 pupils attained the higher Level 5.

83. By Year 6, pupils use the resources that they are given for experimental work with good skill, and many have the confidence and skills to devise their own experiments. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the requirements for a fair test and are quick to suggest ideas that can be investigated scientifically, as for example, when investigating the effect of water on the weight of objects. Their experimental work on dissolving shows clearly that pupils recognise that there is a limit to how much sugar or salt will dissolve in a particular volume of water. They show a good understanding of the need to repeat measurements to get a more accurate result, and achieve very well when presenting their results in a line graph. Pupils describe the functions of important human organs with reasonable skill and have a good understanding of how the movement of humans depends on both skeleton and muscles. Their work on materials is of a good standard, particularly those on reversible and irreversible changes. They have a good knowledge of electricity, draw circuit diagrams using conventional symbols and understand that brightness of a bulb in a circuit can be changed. Most pupils use a wide range of scientific language well to explain their observations, and speak with confidence about their findings. However, pupils with English as an additional language often find it difficult to communicate their findings clearly and scientifically.

84. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school with some exceptional teaching in Year 6 with the above average pupils. The teacher's very secure subject knowledge and high expectations ensure that these pupils are challenged well and encouraged to think scientifically. All pupils are inspired by his enthusiasm and with the clear explanations and very good use of time they quickly learn to work as scientists. Teachers have a good scientific knowledge and ensure that pupils have extensive experience of experimenting. This develops pupils' scientific skills well. Teachers make very good use of the time at the beginning of lessons to make pupils think by using challenging questions that expect pupils to recall previous learning. This is very effective practice, and enables teachers to check pupils' understanding and build progressively on the learning that has already taken

place. All teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan a variety of group tasks appropriate for all groups of ability. This is an improvement on the last inspection when it was noted that there was only limited extension of tasks for higher attaining pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, the more able pupils were given the opportunity to design and carry out their own experiment to compare the volume of air in different soils. Other pupils were provided with the necessary support to plan a fair test to measure the amount of air trapped within the 'gaps' between the particles of different soils.

85. In Year 6, pupils are placed in groups according to their ability for science booster classes. This ensures the needs of pupils, including the more able and those who find learning more difficult are met, and that they achieve the highest possible levels.

86. Science is well supported by the nationally recommended guidelines, which have been adapted well by the school to meet the pupils' needs. Assessment procedures are good and include useful assessments at the end of each unit to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The subject is capably managed by a knowledgeable co-ordinator, but as she has only held the position for a term, she has yet to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. However, this is identified as an area for action in the very near future. Good links with literacy, numeracy and ICT were evident during the inspection. Learning resources for science are good and teachers make good use of the grounds and pond to study animals and their habitats. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through the opportunity to work on investigations in groups and to explore and experience the excitement of finding out what may or may not happen when undertaking an investigation. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

87. By Year 6, pupils achieve average standards in art and design, and make satisfactory progress. The lower standards compared with the previous inspection are due to the school's decision to reduce the time devoted to art and design and give more time to raise standards in English, mathematics and science. This has slowed the rate of improvement. Pupils who have special educational needs and those who have English as a second language make similar progress to their classmates, as they enjoy the practical aspects of the lessons.

88. Pupils in Year 3 work with a satisfactory range of media in two dimensions. They mix other materials, such as sand, glue and pencil shavings, with paints to create interesting textures for their artwork. They use sketchbooks well to develop their ideas and to evaluate their own work. This work is built on well as they progress through the school. Pupils use sketchbooks effectively to plan work and experiment with media, such as pencils of differing softness and pastels to create shades of colours; in this way they learn which is most appropriate to their needs. Most show satisfactory skills when drawing with close observational detail and using shades of colours to create features for portraits of their friends. Throughout the school, pupils observe objects carefully, and represent accurately what they see in their own pictures. Year 6 pupils improve on initial ideas well and create good observational drawings of their own shoes. Their artwork shows how much this is influenced by their good understanding of the work of famous artists such as Escher, Georgia O'Keefe, Picasso and Salvador Dali. A few pupils produce work of a high standard, particularly on the topic of *seascapes and sunsets*.

89. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A few teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they share confidently with pupils. This leads to some significant instances of very good teaching, very good learning and high quality of work. Teachers

provide many good opportunities for pupils to use different techniques and media and make decisions about their own work. Teachers encourage them to experiment and evaluate their success and this helps pupils develop their social skills. In the observed lessons, most pupils listened well to the teacher's explanation and instructions and worked sensibly. On occasions, however, a few pupils quickly lost concentration and the pace of the lesson slowed as the teacher had to constantly remind them to focus on the task. Pupils take pride in their work, and teachers display their pictures attractively, which shows pupils how much their efforts are valued. This provides a good model for other pupils, enhances their self-esteem and contributes well to pupils' personal development. Teachers create good, relevant links with other areas of the curriculum, and pupils' learning in both history and art and design is enhanced when they use pastels for the Year 5 Tudor portraits and clay for the Year 4 Celt oil lamps.

90. The subject co-ordinator is new to the role. She gives useful advice to staff, but there is no formal system of checking the quality of teaching and learning, and this limits her awareness of overall provision and standards. The school uses the nationally recommended guidelines for the scheme of work, and adapts these to the needs of the school; this works well and provides a good basis for the planning of lessons. The school has a sound system for assessing pupils' work, which teachers use effectively to plan further work. The school has done much to respond to the criticism in the previous inspection report that there were too few opportunities for pupils to explore art from different cultures; pupils now study Islamic and Indian art, as well as Western art.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

91. Pupils' work in design and technology is above average for their ages; this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, due to more effective teaching that uses nationally recommended guidelines on which to base the planning of lessons. By Year 6, pupils work well to gather information about a project, and generate a good number of ideas. Their rafts, made from plastic bottles and wood, demonstrate a good attention to detail, and a clear link to the purpose of their project. Pupils' thoughtful evaluations of their models and rigorous testing enabled them to make alterations to the designs to enable them to carry more weight. Their carefully annotated designs are good, and their step-by-step diagrams show how they have experimented with different ideas before starting a model. Pupils show good progression in their skills as they fit electric motors to their models. They make good use of their literacy and numeracy skills as they write about their projects and produce useful graphs of the results of their tests.

92. These standards represent good achievement for all groups of pupils. They make a good start in Year 3 by improving their basic cutting and joining techniques as they make interesting picture frames. By Year 4, pupils use 'brainstorming' techniques very well to exchange ideas about how to make a storybook with moving parts. Year 5 pupils build well on earlier work, and their musical instruments and clay pencil pots demonstrate how much they have learned about joining different materials and applying decorative finishing touches. Pupils with special educational needs do well in design and technology and produce work of good quality, even when they struggle to control the movement of their hands.

93. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Teachers' planning is comprehensive, and gives appropriate attention to the development of pupils' skills. Teachers have a good knowledge of what is required to plan and make working models; this ensures that pupils learn to use tools effectively and safely, and their structures stand a good chance of success. By careful prompting, teachers develop pupils' basic sawing and drilling skills while allowing pupils to experiment and learn from their mistakes. Teachers prepare

resources well, and make full use of the time available. They make sound assessments of pupils' progress, and this helps ensure a good progression of skills through the school.

94. A good policy and scheme of work provide effective guidance to teachers. The subject is led well by an experienced and knowledgeable co-ordinator, who provides good support to teachers on individual projects. There is a good range of tools and materials to interest and challenge pupils, and teachers make good use of the excellent design and technology room to give pupils the space and equipment to make the most of their skills.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

95. During the inspection, because of the organisation of the curriculum, it was only possible to observe lessons in Year 4. Judgements are based on evidence of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and pupils and on the school's planning. The indications are that pupils make satisfactory progress both in gaining knowledge in the subject as well as improving their geographical skills. As a result by Year 6, standards in geography are average. The previous inspection found that pupils' attainment was in line with national expectations and the current findings reflect this.

96. The analysis of pupils' work, and discussion with pupils in Year 6, show that they have an average understanding of the subject, and are developing sound geographical skills. Pupils talk knowledgeably about the features that make up their own local area, and how they affect the lives and activities of people living there. They discuss with good knowledge the changes that have been made, both good and bad, and express their own views of how the area has been improved, as for example by the pedestrianisation of the town's shopping area. Pupils use an atlas confidently to locate places on maps by using a four-figure grid reference and have a sound understanding of scale. Their work shows a sound grasp of how rivers erode and deposit materials to produce particular landscape features, such as lakes and waterfalls. They describe accurately the route of the River Usk from its source, through the Black Mountains to the town of Abergavenny. Their understanding of geographical vocabulary is good, but they rarely question the validity of different sources of evidence, or pose questions to deepen their knowledge. In Year 5, pupils develop a sound knowledge and understanding of water and its uses. They understand clearly the importance of clean water and carry out good experiments to find out how water may be cleaned by filtering. In undertaking a study of Pakistan, pupils in Year 4 develop a good idea of conditions in that country, and locate the main cities, rivers, and mountains. This work also provides valuable opportunities for the pupils whose first language is not English to share their own cultures with others. In the lessons observed, the pupils showed a developing knowledge of different settlements and were able to explain why early settlements grew up in a particular location. Pupils in Year 3 conducted a detailed geographical enquiry into the area in and around Chesham and displayed good map skills. This work also makes a good contribution to their understanding of environmental issues as they have the opportunity to carry out a survey on how the land in Chesham is used now and compare it with how it was used in the past

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The teachers in Years 5 and 6 ensure that pupils build on the knowledge and skills they acquired in Years 3 and 4. In most cases, teachers provide well-planned opportunities for pupils to develop skills in using maps, observing, recording and communicating their ideas. In general, they make suitable use of maps, atlases, photographs and books to support pupils' learning. However, in some cases there is too great an emphasis on recording information about places and themes, and too few opportunities to develop skills of geographical enquiry. Teachers make effective use of the local area to extend pupils' knowledge, and the resulting work shows that this has a good impact on their geographical skills. Discussions with Year 6 pupils showed that the teachers pay due attention to developing pupils' understanding of appropriate geographical vocabulary.

In each year group, pupils' learning is enhanced by fieldwork, and teachers create effective links with pupils' work in history, science, mathematics and ICT.

98. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they become aware of environmental issues and look at other countries and cultures. The link established between pupils in Year 3 and a primary school in Ethiopia provides good opportunities for pupils to exchange information through drawings, writing and e-mails and enriches the pupils' geographical understanding of life in other parts of the world. The co-ordinator for geography is at present in a temporary position until such time as a permanent subject leader is appointed. However, in the short time she has been in post, she has produced a good geography policy and linked the geography themes covered in the school to the nationally recommended guidelines. Resources for the subject are good. The curriculum is greatly enhanced by opportunities for pupils to visit Chesham town centre, Batchworth Lock Canal Centre and the River Chess. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in the provision since the last inspection.

## **HISTORY**

99. Pupils achieve above average standards in Year 6. This is a good improvement from the judgement of the previous inspection. This is due to the improvement in the quality of teaching (which was previously judged to be sound and is now good), the implementation of a good scheme of work, good medium term planning and more effective use of assessment to move pupils on to the next stage in their learning.

100. By Year 6, pupils have progressed from recalling facts to making judgements, such as comparing the lives of the rich and poor in Victorian times with their own lives. Pupils in Year 3 are achieving above average standards in their understanding of the Ancient Greeks. This was evident when they conducted a very mature presentation comparing life in Athens and Sparta. Year 5 pupils' work, on the Tudors is presented well; much of the historical investigation is of good quality, and pupils make effective use of their literacy skills. By Year 6, pupils develop this further, making very good use of research skills to extend their knowledge of Victorian life, and to bring out the main themes in their work. Teachers use the Internet well to further pupils' knowledge; this works very well, developing their independence, and teaching them how different sources yield contrasting pictures.

101. Most pupils achieve well in history. Pupils with special educational needs develop a sound historical knowledge, but sometimes their written work is limited. More able pupils achieve very well, and benefit from the good opportunities teachers provide to conduct their own research on computers and in books. Some of the pupils who have English as a second language underachieve, as they have limited support and often lack sufficient understanding of what they read.

102. The quality of teaching and of pupils' learning in history is good. This is a good improvement from the previous inspection, when teaching and learning were sound. Throughout the school, teachers show confidence in teaching the subject, use appropriate vocabulary, focus well on historical skills and have high expectations of all groups of pupils. These qualities give pupils a thorough knowledge of history, and challenge all of them to produce their best work. Strengths in the teaching of history and its effect on learning were evident in a very good Year 6 lesson about the Victorians. The teacher was well prepared, and pupils were quickly discussing the evils of child labour. The teacher's effective questioning enabled pupils to realise the implications of child labour on families and society as a whole. By the end, all pupils had enjoyed the lesson, and all had made good progress in their understanding of the Victorians. Teachers mark pupils' work well, adding helpful comments to develop pupils' skills further.

103. A good policy supports the teaching of the subject, and the school makes good use of the units of work in the nationally recommended curriculum guidelines and associated assessment procedures. The co-ordinator monitors standards effectively, and ensures that all aspects of the curriculum are covered. Curricular provision is enriched by visits to museums to give pupils interesting experiences of 'real' historical sources, and visitors to give first-hand accounts of life in the past.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

104. By Year 6, standards in ICT are in line with national expectations. While this overall judgement is similar to that made at the time of the school's previous inspection, the school has improved pupils' skills by introducing the use of control and monitoring into the curriculum, which was missing previously. The systematic use of the computer suite ensures that pupils have regular opportunities to learn new skills, practise them immediately and save the finished work in their own folder. In this way, they build up a sound store of techniques and knowledge as they move through the school. These standards represent sound achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactory standards, and enjoy the success that the use of computers provides them with their written work. Those with English as an additional language make sound progress because they often work in pairs, and benefit from good levels of support from the teacher and their partner in the ICT suite.

105. By Year 6, pupils use ICT competently to organise, reorganise and edit text to ensure their writing is clear and well presented. They use their word-processing skills well to edit their writing that they completed in literacy lessons, correcting punctuation and inserting paragraphs. Pupils use CD-ROMs confidently as research tools to extract information to support their work in science and history. Their work combining text in columns and graphics to produce a school magazine was of a particularly high standard. Pupils use the Internet competently; they read the information to check its relevance and modify their search strategies to, for example, find out about child labour in Victorian times.

106. Pupils develop their ICT skills well in other subjects, and subject co-ordinators work hard to include opportunities for pupils to use computers and digital photography whenever possible. Pupils in Year 6, for example, explored geometric shapes in mathematics, and showed good control of the mouse and keys as they drew and measured angles. Year 5 pupils used sensors to very good effect in science as they conducted experiments to plot the melting of ice cubes and printed different graphs of their results. Pupils in Year 3 made effective use of the digital camera to show how eggs changed in appearance when placed in different substances, and used a music-based program well to compose happy and sad tunes.

107. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Most teachers are confident using computers, and have the necessary skills to pass on to pupils. They make the most of their time in the computer suite, often starting work in the classroom and then moving on to the computers in the suite. This works well, making the best use of the space in classroom to introduce new concepts, and then the well-equipped suite to put theory into practice. Teachers make very effective use of the large computer screen, and this enables all pupils to see how to perform tasks as the teacher demonstrates. Teachers are good at giving pupils the freedom to experiment while keeping a close watch to ensure that they focus on the task. This makes the most of pupils' enthusiasm, and makes their learning more effective as they discover for themselves the power of computers. Where some teaching has shortcomings, the teacher talks for too long in the computer suite, and pupils start to fidget and lose concentration.

108. The school has adopted the nationally recommended scheme of work and this is used well to support the teaching of the subject. The school has a good system of assessing pupils' progress, and teachers use the information well to plan new work. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and has been closely involved in the development of ICT in the school. He has led and organised many useful training sessions for teachers and these have done much to improve their skills. The school makes effective use of government funding, ensuring that there are sufficient resources in the computer suite and in the classrooms. The school has rigorous systems to control pupils' access to the Internet. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement in the provision since the last inspection.

## **MUSIC**

109. By Year 6, pupils' standards in music are well above average, and all groups of pupils achieve very well. This represents an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection, and shows the benefits of better teaching, tighter curricular planning and more opportunities to study the music of different cultures. As at the time of the previous inspection, pupils sing very tunefully, and the choir, recorder players and the orchestra do much to enhance music throughout the school.

110. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy singing, and their attainment is well above average for their age. By Year 6, pupils sing songs tunefully from the comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance* well, with very good attention to rhythm. They appraise the works of Gilbert and Sullivan with very good insight, and achieve high standards when composing their own words for an updated version of *Major General Stanley's patter song*. The use of a video recording of a professional production of the comic opera enhances pupils' understanding very well. Older pupils are able to build well upon the good music teaching in Year 3 to 6. Year 5 pupils are skilled at reading and composing musical scores, and select from a very good range of percussion and tuned musical instruments. They have a good knowledge of famous composers, such as Beethoven, and have a clear understanding of how these composers structured their music to create effect. They particularly enjoy working within a group, experimenting with sounds and creating excellent pieces of music for their own *Pavane*. Year 4 pupils use ICT well to compose their own music, showing a good understanding of how to create happy and sad pieces.

111. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The music teacher for pupils in Years 4 to 6 is a specialist musician, and pupils gain much from her expertise. All lessons are planned very well, with clear learning targets. The best lessons are well balanced with a very good range of activities, proceed at a brisk pace and maintain pupils' interest very well. There are very good opportunities for all pupils to learn to play tuned instruments, such as recorders, guitar, flute, violins or cellos, which enrich the curriculum and allow those with musical talent to make good progress.

112. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development when pupils practise together and study music from around the world. The school now provides pupils with a good range of opportunities to listen to and play music from different cultures, which is a good improvement from the previous inspection. The separate music room houses a very good range of musical instruments, which ensures that pupils have good opportunities to make good progress. Assessment, linked to the scheme of work, provides a good basis for the monitoring of pupils' progress.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

113. By Year 6, pupils' work in physical education is average, and of a lower standard compared with the last inspection. The quality of teaching, while satisfactory, is not as good as during the last inspection and the subject had no co-ordinator for much of last year. Nevertheless, pupils' achievements in all aspects of physical education are satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, and teachers ensure that they take a full part in all activities.

114. By Year 6, pupils use apparatus with reasonable skill, and jump, roll and land confidently. Pupils' dance skills are average; most show reasonable control, and many develop interesting sequences of moves, as was seen when they created a dance in the style of that performed in Tudor times. Boys' dance skills, however, lag behind those of girls because they easily become embarrassed and this affects their creativity. In games, pupils compete enthusiastically, and a few show good hockey and football skills. They make careful observations of others and improve their own performance well as a result. This was seen to good effect in a games session when pupils in Year 6 observed the passing skills of some very able pupils, and saw how they held and threw the ball. They quickly imitated these techniques and showed great pride in their new skills. Pupils' swimming skills are average, and most swim to the expected standard by Year 5.

115. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers warm pupils up carefully, and ensure that they are fully prepared for vigorous exercise. Most teachers demonstrate skills well so that pupils learn the correct techniques at the start. Occasionally, however, teachers are inappropriately dressed for exercise, and such demonstrations are not possible; here, pupils' progress is slower and they continue to make the same mistakes. Teachers' planning has a sound focus on the systematic development of basic skills, and this ensures, for example, that pupils learn the correct way to jump and land. Teachers' management of pupils is good, and their consistent expectations of their behaviour ensure that pupils make the best of the time available.

116. The temporary physical education co-ordinator provides sound support to teachers and has helped adapt the nationally recommended curriculum guidelines to meet the needs of this school. There is a good supply of resources, a good hall and a large field for games. Assessment procedures are basic, and an area that the co-ordinator is tackling. There is a good range of extracurricular activities to develop pupils' games skills further.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

117. By Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is a significant improvement in standards compared with the findings of the previous inspection when pupils' attainment was below the expected standard. The extra time dedicated to the teaching of religious education has made the difference. The school has a caring and supportive atmosphere, which encourages pupils to respect the ideas and beliefs of others. Religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, and the opportunities for spiritual development are good. Pupils achieve satisfactorily, and make sound progress as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are included fully in all activities and make satisfactory progress.

118. By Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of differing forms of communication, which they explore as an aspect of relating to others. For example, they consider the value of using signs to communicate non-verbal messages to people who cannot hear, and learn how communicating is so important to us in our lives. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the traditions, festivals, practices and symbols of the Hindu, Muslim and Jewish religions. They understand the ways in which religion can affect people's lives and offer thoughtful ideas

about things that are valued by themselves and others. Most pupils show sensitivity for others in discussion and listen to their replies with respect. Most have a sound knowledge of the Old Testament story of Moses, which leads them to consider and begin to recognise the reasons behind the Exodus. The pupils' well-developed literacy skills enable them to articulate their knowledge effectively. For example, pupils researched and wrote about the life of Martin Luther King and related what they had learnt from his famous speech, 'I have a dream' to their own experiences. They openly conveyed thoughts such as, *I have a dream that people will not be judged by their religion; that girls and boys will be treated equally*. Pupils in Year 4 wrote with a good level of understanding about the Hindu Sacred Thread Ceremony and the symbolism of the three strands, and related this to their own lives. They achieved well when they created their own sacred strands – *to love my parents, to try my hardest and to respect my friends*. They understand that there are special things in life, which leads them to talk about the Bible as a special book for Christians. Younger pupils in Year 3 have secure knowledge of God's creation as told in the Bible, and extend this by comparing it with a Hindu creation story. They study features of the Jewish religion and show a sound understanding of the festival of Sukkot.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons well, and the units in the curriculum are carefully chosen to reflect the agreed syllabus and the needs of the pupils. They include a good range of Biblical stories and references. This is a significant improvement since the school's last inspection when it was said that planning had insufficient regard for the agreed syllabus. There is some good teaching about other world religions, and teachers offer many opportunities for discussion so that pupils can extend their knowledge. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject, and are good at challenging pupils to think things through for themselves before coming to a conclusion. In the best lessons, the teacher use carefully worded questions that require pupils to show the extent of their knowledge and understanding. In Year 5, there is a sharing of teachers' expertise; this works well, making effective use of teachers' specialist knowledge, and leads to good learning. Where teaching has shortcomings, time is wasted in the management of pupils and, as a result, a significant minority of pupils make slow progress. Religious education and collective worship is well supported by the chair of governors, who as a lay preacher provides a wealth of knowledge and an exuberant approach to the subject, which inspires the pupils.

120. The curriculum is based on that produced by the local authority, and the units covered ensure the progressive development of the pupils' knowledge and understanding. All issues in the previous report have been effectively tackled, and the subject now fully meets statutory requirements. The deputy headteacher has the temporary position as co-ordinator for the subject at present. He shows a strong commitment to the development of religious education and provides good leadership and management. Daily assemblies play an important part in the life of the school and provide strong support to the religious experience of the pupils. The subject benefits from a good range of books, videos and religious objects. Good links are maintained with local church, and there have been some informative visits to places of worship representing a range of different faiths. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, through the range of religious beliefs studied and the opportunity to develop a sense of self.