

INSPECTION REPORT

St Mary's C of E Primary School

Finchley, London

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101323

Headteacher: Miss G Vendy

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Silcock
21261

Dates of inspection: 31st January – 2nd February 2000

Inspection number: 181596

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Nursery, Infant and Junior school
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 to 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor J K Harvey
Date of previous inspection:	26 th June 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's Church of England Primary School is a large, voluntary aided school in a prosperous residential district of Finchley, North London. In addition to serving its diocese as a denominational school, it also serves the local community, which is diverse ethnically, culturally, linguistically and in terms of faith. The school reflects such diversity. There is some movement of people in and out of the locality because personnel from international companies located in London can afford to move in to the available good quality accommodation. In consequence, the school is affected to a small degree by pupil turnover. St Mary's is a popular and oversubscribed school. Parents support the Christian ethos of the school. They feel this contributes to the high expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve.

There are 494 pupils on roll between 3 and 11 years of age. Of these, 141 are aged under five in the Nursery and Reception classes, with 81 attending Nursery on a part-time basis. Children begin school after their third birthday and transfer to the Reception Year in the Autumn or Spring terms. Most children are four when they transfer. On entry to the Nursery, children's attainment covers the full range of what can be expected at this age but it is usually above average in all areas of learning. Around 40 per cent of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which represents a much higher percentage than commonly found with schools of this kind. Approximately 41 per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language which, again, is a high percentage compared to other primary schools. The school lists five main languages, other than English, being spoken by pupils, although 29 different languages are represented altogether. There are approximately 27 per cent of pupils listed on the Code of Practice register for special educational needs, which represents a higher than average figure for primary schools. Two pupils have Statements of special educational need. Just over 4 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. This is a very low percentage compared to the average in primary schools. There had been no exclusions in the relevant period prior to the inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary's is a friendly, welcoming community where pupils work hard and enjoy their schooling. They achieve high standards in all areas of learning in the Nursery and Reception classes and have established a secure foundation for later learning by the time they transfer to the National Curriculum at the age of 5. Pupils are articulate in explaining what they do and enjoy talking about their work. In the key stages, pupils develop very good skills in reading, writing, mathematics and science. At eleven, they achieve very high standards in National Curriculum tests. Pupils with English as an additional language attain in line with their monolingual peers. Those with special educational needs often attain at least in line with their prior attainment and sometimes better than this. The quality of teaching is most frequently good and is often very good. The headteacher and her deputy, together with senior managers, staff and governors, work in partnership to achieve common goals. The school has a Christian ethos and is committed to equality of opportunity for all. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very high results in statutory tests at 11 as a result of the school's positive ethos and its commitment to high standards. Standards in literacy and numeracy are high throughout the school.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour contribute significantly to standards achieved.
- Provision in classes for children under 5 is very good. Stimulating learning environments give children every opportunity to develop their curiosity and enjoyment of learning.
- The quality of teaching is frequently good or very good across the school. Particular strengths are evident in the Nursery and in Key Stage 1 where young teachers have significantly improved the quality of teaching in the school.
- The headteacher provides an excellent model of leadership. In partnership with the deputy head, she sets a clear direction for the school. Staff and governors work well together in pursuit of shared goals.
- Provision for pupils' personal development and for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- All staff has very good skills in managing pupils. The care shown towards pupils by staff is a strength of the school. A high value is placed on fostering and maintaining very good relationships.

What could be improved

- Provision for information and communication technology.

- The organisation of provision for special educational needs.
- Monitoring teaching and learning practices in the classroom.
- The unsatisfactory teaching seen in a small number of lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The previous inspection in June 1995 found St Mary's to be a very good school, which provided a high quality of education. These judgements still stand. In line with recommendations made in the last report, the school has continued to develop its good ethos. Standards of achievement in national tests at 11 have remained very high, with a rising trend in all subjects. Results in English in 1999 were particularly good. The school pays close attention to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and pupils of all ages achieve high standards in them. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of teaching. Additional non-teaching support in classes is deployed effectively and is of good quality. Pupils have good independent learning skills. Significant improvements have been made to the provision of information and communication technology although the school plans further development.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A*	A*	A*
Mathematics	A	A*	A*	A*
Science	A	A	A*	A

Key

very high A*

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Results in all three subjects are very high, both when compared to all schools and when compared to those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Last year's results (A*) place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally, as do results in English and mathematics in 1998. Over time, there has been a rise in standards broadly in line with national trends, although results in English for 1999 are markedly superior to national trends. The school far exceeds the targets it sets for itself in English and mathematics. Strengths are evident across the school in the standards achieved by pupils in literacy and numeracy. Pupils apply their good skills successfully to other subjects (for example to history and geography). They develop sound scientific knowledge and understanding. Good standards of work were seen in science in both key stages. Very good standards were evident in singing in assemblies for pupils from the Reception Year upwards. Teachers mostly set challenging work and pupils attain standards suitably matched to their different levels of ability. At times, pupils' attainments exceed what might be expected for their age and prior attainment. This is true for subjects across the curriculum, and especially for English and mathematics for pupils in both key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive from Nursery onwards. Confident and purposeful. Frequently express enjoyment in what they do. High levels of personal involvement in activities in and out of classrooms.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Considerate and thoughtful. Develop high degree of understanding about the impact of their actions on others.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships with peers and adults. Very good ability to work co-operatively and to organise activities. Show respect for others.
Attendance	Very high. Pupils arrive for lessons promptly.

Pupils' positive attitudes and considerate behaviour have a marked impact on the quality of their learning, contributing also to their frequently good progress in lessons. They enjoy one another's company and that of adults and take delight in celebrating the success of peers. Pupils are very supportive of those needing help, whether with learning tasks in the classroom or in practical ways at break times.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Strengths in teaching are evident across the school and in many subjects, but particularly in classes for children under five in the nursery and reception years. Here, teaching is frequently very good. Overall, 91 per cent of teaching is at least satisfactory, with most of it good (79 per cent) and almost a third very good. In a minority of lessons (9 per cent), teaching is unsatisfactory. Throughout the school, young teachers make a valuable contribution to the strength of teaching. Teachers most frequently demonstrate good subject knowledge and understanding in the teaching of English and mathematics and plan well to meet pupils' different learning needs. They pay close attention to developing necessary skills in pupils in both literacy and numeracy. Teachers commonly set challenging tasks. These are well matched to pupils' varying abilities, including the abilities of those with special educational needs and those still at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, planning does not reflect how different needs are being catered for. In these instances, higher attaining pupils and some of average attainment are insufficiently challenged by teachers' level of questioning and by work set for them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent in all areas of learning for children under five. Good in Key Stages 1 and 2 where it is broad and reasonably balanced, although time for information and communication technology is limited. Strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy and on developing creative writing skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good, overall, but time and staff are not always used efficiently. Very good liaison with outside agencies. Additional funding to 'top up' grant aid reflects governors' commitment to this area.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Teachers provided through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant are deployed effectively. Support through children's first languages in classes for under fives is particularly beneficial to beginner bilingual pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall with many strengths. Spiritual development, understanding right from wrong and forming positive relationships are all strongly promoted. Provision for developing cultural awareness is good, although it is not, yet, consistently integral to teachers' planning.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a very caring, safe, environment for all its pupils. Their welfare and safety is a high priority and seen to be fundamental to effective learning.

Provision for children under five is excellent. Transfer from Nursery to Reception classes is carefully managed, together with planning for National Curriculum requirements at five. In Key Stages 1 and 2, additional time is given to English as a means of developing pupils' skills in extended writing. This policy is effective and older pupils, for example, produce lively stories of creditable length. Science is given good attention, with consequent benefits to pupils' learning and standards attained. There is still too little emphasis on the use of computers in information and communication technology. Very good extra-curricular provision has a marked impact on classroom learning. In music, for example, pupils' instrumental skills are exploited to good effect in the upper Key Stage 2. The time-tabling of such non-core subjects as music, history and art is effective in enabling pupils to practise and apply skills in ways that have meaning for them. This led to good results through pupils' sustained efforts in a Year 2 art lesson, for example. Provision for pupils on the Code of Practice register of special needs is good overall in that pupils attain standards at least in line with their prior attainment. All statutory requirements are met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Excellent direction from the headteacher. Partnership between headteacher and deputy head very productive. Strong senior management team with good representation from all phases. Difficulties are apparent in the organisation of provision for special educational needs.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	To good effect. Well-informed about all aspects of school life. Committed to continuing improvement and support the school. Proud of its achievements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Headteacher, senior managers and governors have a clear understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie through their varied monitoring activities. Teaching and learning in classrooms, however, is not monitored systematically.
The strategic use of resources	Good financial management. Spending matched to priorities. Effective use of grant aid for special educational needs and bilingual pupils. Additional funding ensures pupils on Code of Practice register gain maximum benefit from in-class support and that difficulties found in provision are alleviated.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school and is committed to raising staff expectations in relation to the standards to be achieved in all areas of school life. A belief in the importance of democratic principles informs the headteacher's practice and is demonstrated in her partnership with the deputy head and the strength of the senior management team. Senior managers frequently provide good exemplars in classroom practice to staff. They work hard towards common goals.

In its capacity as 'critical friend' and through its good relationships with staff, the governing body gives good support to defining and achieving these goals. Parent governors are particularly active in the practical help they give in classrooms. The school has a good understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Notwithstanding such strengths, governors and the headteacher have not dealt to best effect with the school's provision for special educational needs. In addition, senior managers and others with management responsibilities do not monitor teaching and learning practices in a consistently structured way.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school. They make good progress. Behaviour is excellent. • The school embodies the values, attitudes and behaviour it promotes. • Teaching is good. • School has high expectations. • Leadership and management are good. • Implementation of the homework policy. • Can approach school about problems or concerns, especially class teachers. • Provision in the Nursery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater challenges for higher attaining pupils. • Amount and clarity of homework in some classes and the use of homework diaries. • Information about children's progress during the school year. • More specific information about children's levels of attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels. • Greater clarity of assessment in relation to provision for special educational need. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Overall, parents speak very positively about the school and their comments reflect those of inspectors. Inspection evidence shows that the school's homework policy is working well and is in line with its stated aims. It also shows that, with the exception of a minority of lessons, pupils are suitably challenged in the tasks set for them. Most parents state they can find out about their children's progress through informal meetings with class teachers during the school year. Inspection evidence supports this view. It is also evident that the school makes every reasonable effort to keep parents informed about their children where concerns are shown in relation to possible special educational need. Finally, inspectors found annual reports to parents, whilst informative in important ways, do not provide consistent information about pupils' achievements in relation to National Curriculum level descriptors.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards

1. In the Nursery and Reception classes, children under five achieved standards better than might be expected for their age in the areas of learning observed. These areas were mathematics, language and literacy and knowledge and understanding of the world. This judgement is in line with assessments made by Nursery staff about children's attainment on entry and matches results of baseline assessment tests given in the Reception Year. The youngest children are well supported in their learning in all classes by the provision of a stimulating range of resources matched carefully to teaching and learning objectives and by the support provided by teaching and non-teaching staff. To illustrate: in the Nursery, children are encouraged to count the number of items of food eaten by a caterpillar in a familiar story; they discuss how the caterpillar grows and changes to become a butterfly. They then make links between events in the story and changes observed in seeds they have planted. In the Reception class, children use the vocabulary of 'size' appropriately when comparing two or more objects. They order numbers from zero to 10 confidently and identify numbers bigger than 10 on a computer. A majority of children recognise objects beginning with the 'letter of the week' and match words to pictures. Young pupils achieve creditable results when they copy simple words. Children are well prepared for transfer to Key Stage 1.
2. In Key Stage 1, children attained in line with the national average in reading and above this average in writing and mathematics in the 1999 statutory assessment tests. Pupils' attainment was below that of their peers in similar schools in reading, but in line with these peers' results in writing and mathematics. Levels of attainment at the nationally expected Level 2 are high, overall. At the higher Level 3, pupils' results are close to national averages in reading and writing and above this average in mathematics. A majority of pupils learning English as an additional language attained Level 2 in all tests last year, with a small percentage achieving the higher Level 3 in reading and writing. Pupils with special educational needs attain in line with their prior attainment. Over time, results in statutory tests have varied, with a sharp dip down in all of them in 1998 in line with national trends, followed by a rise back up last year, particularly in mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 achieve good standards in reading and writing and in mathematics. Most attain at least in line with what can be expected for this age. Pupils exhibit very good numeracy skills when, for example, they choose to use either addition or subtraction procedures to manipulate numbers up to 100. Many know that addition and multiplication are reverse operations and can explain this fact confidently. Pupils read the books they study in the literacy hour with assurance. They make good use of an extensive vocabulary when choosing 'describing words' to write about a character in a story. They can put words into categories and know that some words describe what a person looks like while others describe how she might feel. Pupils learning English as an additional language make very good progress. They apply their developing skills in English very well to all aspects of their work. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, most frequently achieving in line with prior levels of attainment.
3. Pupils' results in statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 2 last year are very high at the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5, when compared to national averages. Their results are also much better than those of pupils in similar schools, especially in English and mathematics. There is no difference found between the results of girls and boys, or for pupils learning English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs attain at least in line with their prior attainment and sometimes better than this. Last year's results place the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. The same held true in 1998 for results in English and mathematics. Pupils have achieved very high results over a four-year period, broadly following the pattern of national trends. However, their results in English in 1999 were particularly good and significantly better than the national trend. The school has successfully implemented the National Literacy Strategy. Its careful assessment of this strategy, and consequent adjustment of its own approaches to developing pupils' skills in creative writing, has had a beneficial effect on standards. Pupils consistently achieve better results in tests at 11 than are predicted by the school in the targets it sets for English and mathematics. Inspection findings support this good picture. Pupils plainly make good progress in consolidating earlier learning as they move through the key stage. For example, in

Year 6, pupils demonstrate very good levels of understanding when comparing a video version of a book with the book itself in a literacy lesson. All pupils can express a preference for one 'medium' or the other and give well-reasoned arguments to support their preferences. In mathematics, pupils identify lines of symmetry in geometrical shapes and have a good grasp of rotational symmetry. They can add sequences of decimal numbers in 'mental maths' and are successful in devising quick ways of doing this to explain to their class.

4. Good work was seen in science at the end of both key stages, with pupils attaining at least in line with what can be expected for their ages. For example, seven-year-olds have a sound understanding of a fair test and can explain why cars will travel further on a smooth than on a rough surface. Eleven-year-olds can make sensible predictions when working on electric circuits and understand the need to record observations during their experiments. Across the school, pupils are seen to transfer their good skills in literacy and numeracy to other subjects. For example, pupils in a Year 1 history lesson write sentences about Guy Fawkes following an interesting discussion. In Year 2, they present their findings in science in tabular form. Pupils of all ages are articulate and can explain what they are doing and the purposes of their work very clearly. They are developing satisfactory computer skills but opportunities for them to deploy these skills are not always taken, as when machines remain unused, although they are switched on in lessons with relevant programs available. Across the school, pupils very largely work to their capacity and are suitably challenged by tasks set. Exceptions to this are seen in the very small number of lessons where teaching is judged unsatisfactory, where tasks are not sufficiently well defined to meet different levels of learning need.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour

5. Pupils' positive attitudes to school and their good behaviour make significant contributions to standards achieved. Levels of attendance are very good. From the Nursery onwards, pupils are enthusiastic learners. They frequently express enjoyment in what they do and are able to absorb high levels of information during learning tasks. Pupils form productive relationships with one another and work amicably together. Even children under five can be seen engaged in co-operative tasks for appreciable periods of time, as when they build a complex structure using blocks of different mathematical shapes in a Reception class. Pupils of all ages demonstrate good independent learning skills and can organise equipment and resources purposefully for their work. This was seen to good effect in a Year 2 art lesson when pupils needed to get clean water or more paint and showed a high regard for respecting others' space in a busy classroom. Pupils are courteous to adults and, with rare exceptions, prompt at following instructions. They like working with adults in small groups and appreciate the support given. Pupils care for one another and support those needing help. They have a very good capacity to listen to one another's views when sharing work and ideas.
6. Such good attitudes and behaviour are evident outside the classroom, too. Pupils move around a building quietly during lesson times, knowing that others may be working and should not be disturbed. In assembly, they sit and listen to music until everyone has gathered. The quality of their listening shows a good level of awareness about the special nature of the event and the high expectations adults have. At break times, pupils can be boisterous as they get their coats to go outside, but they remain considerate of others' space. They appreciate opportunities to be with a wider range of friends from different classes and enjoy their play. Pupils are respectful of one another.

Provision for children under five

7. Provision in all classes for children under five is very good. In the Nursery, it is well founded on the desirable outcomes for children's learning (pending changes soon to be implemented in relation to the Early Learning Goals). These also inform teachers' planning in the Reception classes, particularly in the Autumn term when it is seen to be important to ease children's transfer to full-time schooling. Over the year, planning in these classes takes good account of National Curriculum requirements as children approach 5 years of age. At times, however, short-term planning lacks clarity so that it is not always evident how pupils' different needs are to be met. In all classes for the under fives, teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn and the way in which this early learning relates to later development. Members of the teaching and non-teaching staff have very high expectations of children's attitudes to work and of their behaviour. High levels of teaching expertise in the Nursery provide very good foundations for these.

8. Teachers place a high value on developing children's personal skills. They provide good opportunities for children to take responsibility for themselves and for the resources they use. Through their careful choice of stimulating activities, teachers place suitable emphases on ensuring children develop sound literacy and numeracy skills. Initially, these activities are frequently well organised through the school's excellent provision for structured play. So, for example, the Nursery is bright and colourful with many opportunities for children to learn how to sort and match objects and develop their spatial awareness through climbing on apparatus in their outside playground. As children's knowledge and understanding grows, a greater emphasis is given to formal approaches; teaching in the Reception Year in the Spring term, for example, focuses more sharply on developing children's understanding of the reading process and how sounds associated with letters can help readers to work out what is written. Members of staff interact very positively with children and know how to push children's thinking forward through questioning. Very good use is made of parent helpers. Good liaison between the Nursery and Reception classes ensures provision is continually reviewed and assessed, and children's progress is carefully monitored. Assessment procedures, for identifying special educational needs in the Nursery, are very good. They are wide-ranging (for example, looking closely at behavioural matters) and the resulting record provides staff with a clear picture of where concerns lie. Nursery Nurses give good quality support across classes. Teaching support for pupils at the very early stages of learning English is also of good quality, although support is limited by the amount of time available. Beginner-bilingual pupils clearly benefit from being encouraged to use their first language in acquiring English. Teaching and support staff work consistently in close partnership, to the obvious benefit of children and standards achieved. Children are well prepared for transfer to Key Stage 1.

Teaching

9. The quality of teaching is frequently good (79 per cent). It is very good in almost a third of lessons and is at least satisfactory in 91 per cent of lessons overall. Particular strengths are evident in classes for the under fives where teaching is very good in two thirds of lessons; in these classes, it is never less than good. Strengths are also to be seen in Key Stage 1 where most teaching is not less than good (85 per cent) and just over 30 per cent of that observed is better than this. In a very small number of lessons (representing 15 per cent), teaching is unsatisfactory (see paragraph 25). In Key Stage 2, a high percentage of good teaching is also seen (71 per cent) with a quarter judged very good. In total, 92 per cent of teaching in the key stage is at least satisfactory. Again, in a small minority of lessons (representing 8 per cent), unsatisfactory teaching was seen (see paragraph 25).
10. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding in classes for under fives, and their planning, is very good (see paragraphs 7 and 8). In Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers mostly have secure knowledge and understanding of all curricular areas. Their confidence, and the consequent pleasure in their subject they frequently show, has a good impact on standards achieved, particularly in English, mathematics and science but also more generally in other subjects where lessons were observed. To illustrate: in a Year 6 history lesson, very good teaching expertise was seen both to inspire pupils' interest and enthusiasm and to further their understanding about difficult issues relating to the abdication of King Edward VIII. In Year 1, pupils maintained high levels of concentration when learning about data handling on the computer because of a teacher's very good knowledge, allied to an effective use of well prepared charts and other materials. Teachers frequently employ their knowledge of pupils to good effect in question-and-answer sessions. They pitch questions well and so include all pupils successfully in interaction. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, a teacher drew expertly on pupils' knowledge of plumb lines and spirit levels to extend their understanding of the concepts of 'vertical' and 'horizontal'.
11. Teachers pay close attention to developing pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy and make good links with previous learning. They also ensure pupils understand the importance of deploying these skills in subjects other than English and mathematics, as when they write out experiments in science. Teachers' planning for different levels of need is generally satisfactory for literacy and numeracy purposes. Where teaching is very good, planning is better than this and shows plainly how pupils' different learning needs are to be met. At times, however, this aspect of planning is not evident enough, a fact which hampers the pace of some lessons as well as the quality of learning. Short-term planning for non-core subjects is very brief and is seldom informative about how lesson objectives are to be met in relation to catering for different needs, although teachers commonly display appropriate understanding of such matters when asked. Teachers make good, ongoing, assessments of pupils' learning. They frequently make good judgements about when to intervene and give helpful feedback

to pupils about their work during lessons. In almost all cases, teachers working in parallel classes plan closely together each week and have close daily contact. This type of co-operation is effective in ensuring pupils of the same age receive the same curriculum and that future planning is based on what pupils have actually learned. Such co-operative practice is also valuable for teachers new to the school. It ensures pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding continue to be built on productively. Teaching and non-teaching staff work effectively together and support staff have a positive impact overall on the quality of classroom learning. At times, however, support is not well targeted and such staff sits rather passively in the introductory part of lessons and are not fully engaged. Homework is used to very good effect by teachers, both to support as well as to extend pupils' classroom learning. Very good examples of this were seen during the inspection.

12. Support teaching for pupils with special educational needs is of good quality. Good judgements are made about whether support should be given in class (which is most usual) or whether it is appropriate to take children away from the classroom for brief periods of intensive teaching. Class teachers and support staff – teaching and non-teaching – work closely together to make sure pupils' individual education plans are met appropriately. The quality of these plans is, however, variable. Mostly, it is at least satisfactory and the quality of some is good, with teaching and learning objectives well matched to identified needs. The co-ordinator for special educational needs monitors individual education plans regularly and has organised training (yet to be undertaken) to improve teachers' understanding of how to formulate these. Pupil-reviews are organised by the co-ordinator, with proper regard given to the requirements of the Code of Practice for special educational need. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress for review purposes and are suitably involved. Support teaching for pupils learning English as an additional language is effective. Support teaching members of staff, provided through the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, are used to good effect. Although limited in extent, the support is deployed appropriately across the key stages to give maximum benefit to pupils in relation to their identified needs. Class teachers work closely with the support teacher to ensure that pupils have good access to a lesson's content. Good account is taken of pupils who enter school late, and are at the very early stages of acquiring English (as in the case of two pupils in Year 6).

Leadership and management

13. The headteacher has a clear vision for the direction of the school. She has very high expectations of all members of the school community. A prime leadership concern is to promote high standards in adults' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, as well as in what pupils strive to achieve for themselves. In pursuit of this, the headteacher works in close partnership with the deputy head - a partnership which, in itself, constitutes a decided strength in the management of the school. The senior management team is strong overall. It incorporates good representation from across the school, a fact which also adds considerably to the school's effectiveness. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is signalled by the inclusion of the co-ordinator for special educational need on the senior management team, as well as by the responsibility the Early Year's co-ordinator takes as a senior manager for equality issues. A belief in the importance of democratic principles informs the headteacher's practice. Her belief is demonstrated in the way she organises her partnership with the deputy head and effectively underwrites the strength of the senior management team. Senior managers, together with staff and governors, work hard to achieve those common goals embodied in the school's mission statement. These goals are centred on Christian principles, such as fostering care and respect for others, valuing the contribution individuals bring to the life of the school and enabling all members of the school community to achieve to their full potential.
14. Through the various monitoring activities they undertake in analysing test results, looking at teachers' planning and sampling pupils' work, senior managers have a good understanding of important aspects of classroom teaching and learning practices throughout the school. The school is beginning to make effective use of better quality data for purposes of analysis. It also places a good emphasis on strategies for further improving the quality of teaching and learning, in order to raise pupils' levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy; for example, the mathematics co-ordinator analysed results in statutory tests at the end of both key stages last year and identified strengths and weaknesses in pupils' answers. This helped senior managers to make informed decisions about how to improve the focus of teachers' planning and where to provide additional classroom support for the teaching of mathematics. It is evident the school makes appropriate use of relevant information in Year 4 to predict pupils' likely performance in English and mathematics tests at eleven. Nevertheless, over the past four years, pupils have achieved considerably better than these predictions. Some senior

managers gain useful insights into teachers and pupils at work in their capacity as support teachers in classrooms and through their commitment to class teaching for specific purposes (as in the case of the headteacher and deputy head). By means of such commitments, they provide good exemplars in classroom practice to staff. The deputy head monitors the teaching of newly qualified members of staff purposefully. She provides good quality mentoring for these teachers about their work, as well as being a mentor to other teachers new to the school. The headteacher has a good overview of provision for special educational needs and is closely involved in those aspects of the work having to do with reviewing pupils' needs. Subject co-ordinators have good levels of responsibility for their subject areas. In common with senior managers, they monitor teachers' planning to ensure their subject is being taught in line with long-term planning objectives and to check that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are built on over time. They also sample pupils' work. When their subject is a focus for priority in school development planning, co-ordinators take the lead in making sure that agreed targets are met. They undertake regular subject audits and make budgetary decisions about the purchase of resources based prudently on information they gather. However, neither senior managers nor co-ordinators visit classrooms for the purpose of monitoring teaching and learning in a structured way (see paragraph 24).

15. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. It has a strong commitment to continuing school improvement. Governors see themselves primarily as 'critical friends' and have a good understanding of what this means in practice. Parent governors, particularly, make an active contribution to the daily life of the school through their support to teachers in classrooms and in their capacity as governors for literacy and numeracy. Recent, substantial changes to the governing body have meant that a number of governors are still 'finding their feet', but this has not had a material impact on the efficiency with which the school is run. Governors are concerned to see that their accountability is well based on good quality information and a secure knowledge of all aspects of school life. They exert firm financial management. The most recent Audit found this to be efficient. Governors, together with senior managers, take care to give clear priorities to school development planning, setting these priorities out carefully in terms of cost, responsibility and success criteria. Government initiatives – such as the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies – are given due prominence in such planning, together with priorities highlighted, for example, in the previous inspection. Good progress has been made in addressing all of these, although the school sees a continuing need to improve provision for information and communications technology (see paragraph 20). Specific grants are properly targeted. Governors' commitment to assuring good levels of provision for special educational needs is evident in their 'topping up' of monies designated for this purpose. There are, however, concerns about some aspects of this provision (see paragraph 21). The school is strongly committed to principles of best value. In view of its low income, the very high standards achieved and the good improvements made to the quality of teaching and learning, the school gives very good value for money.

Provision for pupils' personal development

16. Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Parents express the view that the school embodies the principles made explicit in the school's mission statement, which they fully support. These principles (related to developing pupils' good self-esteem and confidence, together with a good understanding of personal responsibility as a member of the school community) are thought to be of critical importance to pupils' intellectual development. Inspection evidence supports parents' views. Following recommendations in the previous report, good strides have been made in providing opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility and participate more fully in school life. Most noticeably, there is an active School Council, with (at the time of the inspection) 12 members from across the key stages. Pupils feel they are making a meaningful contribution to school life through their roles as representatives for their class, and cite many examples of major successes in improving the quality of school life. For example, pupils are pleased at improvements to school meals (such as the providing of a menu and changes to the content of meals) and the provision of a cycle rack. During lessons, pupils are consistently seen to take responsibility for getting out equipment and resources and putting these away. They are confident in moving around the school independently, such as when pupils in Year 1 take registers to the school office. Older pupils enjoy escorting visitors round a building and informing them about various activities being undertaken, as when they show parents around during parent-teacher consultation evenings. Pupils then show themselves to be very knowledgeable about school matters!

17. There is a strong spiritual ethos evident in school assemblies. This ethos is discernible not only in the content of what is being experienced but also, as importantly, in the quality of atmosphere generated by the school's coming together as a community. Even the youngest children in the Reception classes respond to the ethos created by teachers, respecting the special nature of the occasion. Children in the Nursery express joy at the knowledge that caterpillars turn into beautiful butterflies when they look at pictures in a favourite story-book. Older pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 respond sensitively to a story when exploring how the main character might feel; they gain good insights into their own feelings through a teacher's careful questioning. Teaching about how to tell 'right from wrong' is consistent across the school. Staff members are equally consistent in drawing pupils' attention to the impact their actions can have on others. They achieve this focusing of attention both through classroom work (as when Year 6 pupils think about the feelings engendered by relevant events in a story) and during break times when pupils play together: pupils are shown how to play together, thoughtfully, in the available playground space.
18. Adults provide good role models for developing pupils' understanding of the importance of forming and maintaining good relationships. The headteacher sets the tone, here, in her consistently courteous dealings with others and in the attention she pays when listening to what pupils have to say. Pupils' own high levels of courtesy in their social interactions speak similarly of the school's high expectations in this regard. The school is concerned to ensure that differences found within its own community, and in the wider society, are valued, and given due recognition. To this end, it makes good efforts to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultural traditions through its curricular and extra-curricular activities. For example: different scripts and languages are incorporated in displays around the building; different musical traditions illustrate music lessons; and special events are mounted to celebrate aspects of cultural identity (as when Japanese life and culture formed the basis for a workshop evening for parents, children and staff). Generally, however, the impact of the school overall is predominantly monocultural, in that experiences provided to broaden pupils' outlook cannot be seen as entirely integral to the school's work.

The care and welfare of pupils

19. All members of staff have very good skills in managing pupils. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils and their peers, are very good. They are almost always harmonious. Such harmony results from the respect for others engendered by the school's ethos and as a direct result of the headteacher's high expectations of how adults will treat the pupils in their care. The welfare, health and safety of pupils is a high priority, and seen as a necessary precursor to successful learning. This prioritising shows itself, for example, in the way Welfare Assistants take a lead in making sure pupils feel secure and safe when support is needed (for example, in dealing with minor accidents). Clear procedures are in place for all aspects of pupils' welfare, including those aimed at promoting good attendance and at ensuring consistently high levels of good behaviour. These procedures are understood by everyone and followed meticulously. No instances of bullying were seen during the inspection. On the rare occasions when bullying does occur, incidents are recorded and good attention is paid to involving all those concerned, including parents. The school's arrangements for assessing the attainment and progress of pupils are effective and have continued to improve since the last inspection.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Information and communication technology

20. Sound improvements have been made to provision for information and communication technology since the last inspection but further development is needed. The school has plans for such development well in hand. To date, and most notably, teachers' skills have been increased (through In-service training given by the subject co-ordinator), with a consequent rise in their confidence about planning for and delivering National Curriculum requirements. In turn, this improvement in skill has helped raise the profile of teachers' own use of computers. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work has recently been adopted and this scheme is proving a useful tool in furthering developments. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the process of being connected to the Internet as part of planned improvements resulting from becoming part of the National Grid for Learning. The school is included in the last tranche of schools to receive grant aid for this initiative. As a consequence, improvements to provision have been delayed. Through the aid received, a computer suite is being furnished so groups of pupils can be taught skills more effectively than is presently possible. More machines will also be put into classrooms to extend pupils' use of computer software in the course of lessons. A good range of such software is available across the curriculum and good attention has been paid to ensuring that effective cross-curricular links can be made through its use. Currently, available machines are frequently switched on in lessons but they are not consistently used. The teaching of skills is variable and, on occasion, teachers are seen to mis-judge pupils' own levels of knowledge and understanding about these (as when Year 3 pupils are clearly already adept at using the 'mouse' for clicking on items and dragging them across the screen). The co-ordinator has a secure grasp of what the school needs to do in order to capitalise on the extended availability of machines.

The organisation of provision for special educational needs

21. As stated (see paragraph 12), provision for special educational needs is good in terms of the general impact it has on pupils' levels of attainment and on the care the pupils receive. This provision is to the credit of everyone involved. However, in terms of a division of responsibilities, provision can be seen to be inefficient in the demands it makes on the use of time and staff. No one person has an overview of provision in its entirety and difficulties are apparent in communication between personnel involved. The co-ordinator for special educational needs is assiduous in ensuring records are kept updated and reviews for pupils on the Code of Practice register of special need take place on time. She monitors pupils' individual education plans appropriately, following the local authority's recommended practice by ensuring class teachers draw up their own plans in line with identified needs. Where weaknesses are identified in such plans, the co-ordinator has taken appropriate action to remedy such weaknesses by arranging for outside expertise to come in to school for staff training purposes (yet to be implemented). She does not have sufficient expertise to provide such training for colleagues and recognises this as a weakness. Senior management has not yet been able to resolve this issue.

22. The co-ordinator maintains good links with some parents. She audits resources on a yearly basis effectively. However, her role is limited and does not extend, for example, to giving teaching support to pupils with special needs in their classrooms or to assessing their progress through monitoring classroom practices. When opportunities were presented some time ago to enlarge the role in this way, the co-ordinator chose to keep the post at an administrative level (as originally conceived) in order not to lessen her class teaching responsibilities. In consequence, a number of staff (mainly but not entirely senior managers) takes on this aspect of special needs work. Because of teaching commitments, the co-ordinator does not attend all meetings involving reviews of pupils' individual education plans. In effect, the co-ordinator gathers information from a variety of sources as a means of keeping track of each pupil on the Code of Practice register. Meetings with teachers for this purpose are informal, during the course of break times. The co-ordinator does not meet with all personnel involved in the teaching of pupils (for example, some support staff), which adds to the complication of how information is passed on. Information is kept in a variety of files, the purpose and function of which are not always clear. Important information is not clearly collated, so that it is not possible, for example, to see 'at a glance' the situation with regard to pupils on the register of special need. Governors and the headteacher are aware of the weaknesses inherent in the organisation of provision for special needs, but have failed to act effectively to remedy these, although they have

made sure that, as far as practicable, pupils' identified learning needs are met.

23. A separate difficulty relates to the way in which the consistency of support for some pupils is affected at times through staff absence. This happens because the main responsibility of the support teacher concerned is to act as supply cover in this event. Some pupils receiving support are on the earliest stages of the Code of Practice register and others are not but are deemed to benefit from additional teaching input. Although everyone is aware that support provision may not be readily available, its occasional lack of availability clearly causes problems. When extended periods of time are involved, the school looks to alleviate these problems by re-allocating support provision as far as is feasible. The effect of this situation on planned programmes of work does not help pupils build smoothly on previous learning.

Monitoring teaching and learning in classrooms

24. With the exception of newly qualified teaching staff, senior managers do not generally monitor teaching and learning in classrooms formally; that is, there is no criteria in place to which they can relate any observations made of strengths and weaknesses in the quality of education provided by the school. Their knowledge of teachers and pupils at work is based on informal visits to classrooms during the course of the school day, or on observations made during work in a support teaching capacity. Whilst such information is valuable, it lacks a clear purpose and is not sufficiently rigorous as a means of informing important decisions about how to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Subject co-ordinators do not have opportunities to observe colleagues at work, and so are similarly not well briefed about the strengths and weaknesses of classroom practice in relation to their subject responsibilities.

Unsatisfactory teaching

25. In a very small number of lessons in the lower Key Stage 1 and the lower Key Stage 2, teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory (representing 9 per cent overall). In a Year 1 class, this judgement was made when short-term planning was insufficiently detailed about the purpose of lessons and how pupils' different learning needs were to be met. A science lesson, for example, had unclear teaching objectives. In this lesson, teaching was initially purposeful and pupils enjoyed experimenting and making different sounds (and the range of resources for this was good); but learning opportunities were lost because of the undemanding nature of the tasks set to consolidate oral work. Higher attaining pupils quickly finished their worksheets and spent too much time colouring in pictures because no suitable alternative was offered to them. In a Year 3 literacy lesson, unsatisfactory teaching was seen when a support teacher coming in to the room interrupted the lesson. The class teacher failed to regain pupils' attention for some time and resorted to speaking over their chatter. This loss of pace recurred when the lesson-focus changed to writing activities and pupils concerned themselves with sharpening pencils and chatting before settling to their work. The situation was exacerbated by imprecise planning, which did not define the way pupils' needs were to be met: the teacher had, in the end, to explain yet again to pupils what they were to do and further time was lost in going over different points with different pupils.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

26. The governors, in partnership with the headteacher and staff should:

- a) implement plans for further improving provision for information and communication technology as a matter of urgency (paragraphs 4, 20);
- b) improve provision for special educational needs so that:
 - it is coherently organised, with one person having a firm grip on all aspects of work with pupils (paragraphs 15, 21, 22);
 - support teaching arrangements are further reviewed in relation to those occasions when support is withdrawn from pupils and planning for their identified needs is consequently affected (paragraph 23);
- c) improve monitoring procedures so that:
 - staff with senior management responsibilities formally monitor teaching and learning in classrooms using agreed criteria, in order to grasp, better, underlying processes and the development needs of teachers;
 - subject co-ordinators become, similarly, better informed about classroom practices by monitoring teaching and learning so that they can carry out management responsibilities in their subjects more effectively (paragraphs 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 24);
- d) make sure that the quality of teaching throughout the school, in all subjects of the curriculum, reflects its own 'best practice' by further supporting teachers' professional development where weaknesses are identified (paragraphs 4, 9, 25).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
	32	47	12	9		

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	41	413
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	N/A	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	123

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	178

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	33

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.13
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	32	28	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	29	32
	Girls	26	26	26
	Total	56	55	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (87)	91 (86)	97 (85)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	30	32	32
	Girls	25	26	26
	Total	55	58	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	91 (81)	97 (80)	97 (85)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	33	60

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	26	27
	Girls	30	30	30
	Total	57	56	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	95 (89)	93 (85)	95 (93)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	27	27
	Girls	29	29	29
	Total	54	56	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	92 (89)	94 (85)	94 (90)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	12
Black – African heritage	18
Black – other	1
Indian	34
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	7
White	251
Any other minority ethnic group	23

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.5
Average class size	29.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	103.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	65

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	815387
Total expenditure	790204
Expenditure per pupil	1578
Balance brought forward from previous year	25045
Balance carried forward to next year	50228

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	494
Number of questionnaires returned	239

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	36	3	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	49	6	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	51	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	44	17	4	3
The teaching is good.	58	34	3	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	47	16	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	37	8	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	49	44	5	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	35	49	11	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	38	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	42	4	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	39	16	2	8