

# INSPECTION REPORT

**ST JAMES' CHURCH OF ENGLAND INFANT  
SCHOOL**

Whitehaven

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112297

Headteacher: Mrs J Potter

Reporting inspector: Mr D Twist  
1492

Dates of inspection: 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 188203

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	High Street Whitehaven Cumbria
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs N. Burns.
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Mrs Jane Hughes OIN 11084	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
Mr Phil Snelling OIN 3624	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Music Equal opportunities	Teaching and learning Quality and range of opportunities for learning
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St James' Church of England Infant School is smaller than average with 77 boys and 59 girls on roll from age 4 to 7 years. The school serves an area of mainly owner occupied housing close to the centre of Whitehaven, but the school has recently begun to draw pupils from more varied outlying areas. The school's role has remained steady over the last five years. The ethnic background of the pupils is mostly white of U.K. heritage (approximately 96 per cent) and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is low at below 1 per cent. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs (9 per cent), is well below the national average, and none currently have statements. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is slightly lower than average. Most pupils have had some form of pre-school experience and taken overall, their level of attainment on entry to Reception is broadly average.

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

St James' Infants provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It achieves the national average standard in most subjects, including English and mathematics, but performance in these is not always as good as in similar schools. Standards in science and physical education are higher. After a strong start in Reception, pupils' overall rate of progress is satisfactory, as is the quality of the teaching. The school works well with parents and members of the local community and is a friendly place where pupils behave very well and work hard. Whilst leadership is satisfactory overall, the school has not focused its efforts sufficiently on improving its performance. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Children learn well in Reception because of the exciting activities set for them.
- Standards in science are high.
- The curriculum is a rich one and provides a wide variety of experiences in addition to the time spent on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- The school puts a strong emphasis on moral development, which encourages pupils to behave very well and get on with each other.
- Teachers are good at setting out clear learning goals and sharing them with pupils so that they know what they are trying to achieve in lessons.

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

- The school's leadership does not put enough drive into raising standards.
- Pupils should achieve more in some aspects of English and mathematics.
- The school is not doing enough to promote good attendance.

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

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

The school was last inspected in June 1996, when the main areas for development centred upon the quality of work in information technology, procedures for assessing pupils' progress in all subjects, and improving the support for children with special needs. Information technology is now a much stronger area, with better equipment and an increased level of teacher expertise, which have led to improvements in pupil achievement. Methods of assessing pupils' progress have been further developed to the point where they are satisfactory in mathematics, writing and information technology and good in science. In reading, however, assessment has not kept pace with the greater rigour now expected. In the other subjects, there are few consistent procedures in place, although teachers have a good

awareness of what pupils achieve. Support for pupils with special needs has been improved through providing more detailed individual plans to guide their work. The school's response to the main issues from the last report has been satisfactory, but it has not had the same success in maintaining consistently high standards since then.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1999	1999	1999	
reading	C	A	D	D	well above average above average
writing	C	A	C	C	average
mathematics	C	B	D	E	below average well below average

The school's results show that there has been significant fluctuation in standards over the latest three years for which comparisons are available. Mathematics has been a weaker area than English for the last two years, and within English, writing standards have been higher than those in reading. In both mathematics and reading, the school's average scores against similar schools have been dragged down by the relatively small number of pupils who have attained higher than expected levels. Girls have performed slightly better than boys overall, but not significantly so. The results for 1999 show a considerable dip in all three areas, reflecting the fact that the year group had lower levels of attainment than usual. Factors that contributed significantly to this dip include the number of lower attaining pupils who joined the year group from other schools, and the very high rate of absence for that year (well over twice the national average). Results for the year 2000 are showing a slight improvement, but as yet there are no national figures for comparison.

Current standards of work seen during the inspection bear out the picture of steady improvement since 1999. Pupils' standards are average overall in reading, writing, spelling and speaking and listening. They are also average in mathematics, although pupils are better at learning number skills than putting them into action. Presentation of work is a weakness in most areas as it is often untidy and poorly set out. In both reading and mathematics, however, there are still not enough higher ability pupils reaching higher than average levels. Standards for this group are not high enough. Science and physical education standards are higher than for most schools and in all other subjects, pupils' attainment is typical of that normally found.

In Reception, pupils are progressing very well. In their creative development, they are likely to achieve expectations by the end of the year, but in all other areas of learning, most are in line to exceed these.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Best in Reception and Year 2 where most teaching engages pupils' interest and motivates them to work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Children are well mannered and considerate in lessons, at lunchtimes and as they move around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Children work co-operatively and respond well to any opportunities to take responsibility. Relationships are strong between all members of the school community.
Attendance	Average for the past year, but very low for the previous year. This was mainly because families took holidays in term time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Foundation stage	Key Stage 1
Lessons seen overall	Good	Satisfactory

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

Across the school, teaching is very good in one lesson in five, good in about one third of lessons and satisfactory in approximately half. No lessons were unsatisfactory. Teaching is best in the foundation stage (Reception classes) where almost half the lessons are very good. Lessons here are presented in an exciting way and the calm but purposeful atmosphere gives children plenty of confidence to learn. A lot is expected of the children and they do their best to meet these expectations.

Teaching is more ordinary in Year 1, where at times, not enough is asked of pupils and tasks are too easily completed. Time is not always used to best effect, particularly towards the end of the morning when pupils pack up too early. In the classes with Year 2 pupils, the majority of the teaching is good and teachers prepare interesting introductions to lessons, which hold pupils' attention, make them think hard and enable them to learn quickly. A strength in most of the teaching seen is the way teachers set clear aims for their lessons, which they share with the pupils. This helps pupils to concentrate on the most important parts of their activities and enables them to understand how well they are doing. An occasional weakness across Key Stage 1 is that there is too much revisiting of tasks which the children can do, before pushing on to tackle new learning. This particularly affects the higher attaining pupils whose progress is slowed.

Teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory overall. Children are effectively taught to recognise letters and sounds so that they learn to read quickly, but more advanced reading skills are not as effectively taught. In numeracy, mental arithmetic skills are well taught and pupils make good progress, but teachers do not place as much emphasis on applying these skills to solving problems.

Pupils with special needs are well supported with additional guidance to help them complete tasks. Support staff are very good at motivating these pupils and sustaining their interest and effort.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school offers a good curriculum. The quality and range of activities in the foundation stage is a particular strength. The school is successful in ensuring that pupils receive a rich and varied experience in other subjects in addition to core work in English and mathematics. Aspects of the reading programme are not always organised well enough.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Needs are carefully identified and good support is given with basic skills. Individual plans are mostly thorough, but occasionally need to set out more precisely what is to be achieved. Progress is carefully recorded.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Specialist support is limited, but the school's more informal everyday support is leading to good progress being made.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good in all areas. Spiritual development is central to the school's ethos. There is effective emphasis upon developing social skills, a sense of right and wrong, and an awareness of their own and other cultures. There is a strong personal, social and health education programme.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils' welfare is very well catered for including procedures for child protection. Good behaviour is well promoted, but good attendance needs to be given a higher priority. Tracking of pupils' progress is satisfactory, but not enough is done with the results.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The school runs smoothly and efficiently, but the headteacher needs to set clearer direction for work to raise standards. Staff who lead core subjects have successfully identified priorities for development, but these are not yet addressed with sufficient urgency in the school's management plan. The teaching is being checked, but not rigorously enough to have significant impact upon its quality.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are keen and supportive and maintain plenty of first hand contact with the school. They have a good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses in most areas, but need to know more about its standards to be able to hold it to account.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has improved its procedures for analysing how well pupils perform and now has enough information to direct improvement at the right areas. However, it does not act quickly enough in doing this.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is good. Staffing and resources are adequate and the school makes good use of the money available to the benefit of all pupils. The accommodation is very well maintained and of good quality.



## 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>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• There is good teaching .</li> <li>• Children are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• Children progress well and are helped to become mature.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• Children like school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents feel they could be better informed about their child's progress.</li> <li>• A few parents feel that the school does not work closely enough with parents.</li> <li>• Some parents feel that their children do not get the right amount of homework. (some too little, some too much).</li> <li>• Some parents do not think the school provides enough extra curricular activities.</li> </ul>

(11 parents attended the parents meeting and 21 questionnaires were returned.)

The inspection team broadly agrees with the parents' positive views of the school, although with some moderation. Behaviour is very good. Children's progress overall is satisfactory, although good in Reception. Most children are expected to work hard, but higher attainers in particular could sometimes be given more challenging tasks. Procedures for informing parents about their child's progress are satisfactory (although more information on current topics could be shared with parents). The team disagrees with the view that the school does not work closely with parents. Relationships are mostly very good in this respect and many parents make a valuable contribution to children's learning. The school's approach to homework is satisfactory and broadly typical of most infant schools. The range of extra curricular activities is better than found in most infant schools, in addition to which, the breakfast and after school clubs are very well organised and provide a valuable service to parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Over the last two years, the attainment of children coming into the Reception classes has been broadly in line with what is expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well in their first year in school (The Foundation Stage). Of the children currently in Reception, most are in line to exceed what would normally be expected of pupils by the time they enter Key Stage 1 in five out of the six areas of learning. These are personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy, mathematical development, physical development and knowledge and understanding of the world. In the sixth area, creative development, most children are on line to meet expectations.
2. For pupils aged 7, results in national tests have shown significant variations over the last three years. Performance in English and mathematics was average when compared with all schools in 1997. It rose substantially in 1998 to the point where mathematics was above and English was well above average. Results dipped in 1999 (the latest year for which comparative figures are available) so that writing was in line, but reading and mathematics were below average. When these figures are compared with those of similar schools they show that pupils' writing is in line, but reading is below average and mathematics well below average. When averaged out over the last four years, girls have performed slightly better than boys in English but similarly in mathematics. Standards in science, as judged by teacher assessments, have remained above average.
3. Based upon work samples from the last Year 2 cohort and work seen during the inspection, standards in reading and writing for the majority are average. However, on their current performance, few pupils are likely to reach a higher level in reading. Most have mastered the basics well and a few read with expression, but there is little confidence over more advanced skills, such as predicting what might come next, and higher attainers do not achieve as well as they should. Less able pupils receive support in developing their reading, but this is sometimes not put into place early enough to enable them to make maximum progress. In their writing, a significant number of pupils are on course to achieve a higher than average level of attainment, but there is also a large proportion who only just get over the crossbar to reach the standard level (level 2). Most children spell and punctuate accurately, and have a good command of basic grammar, but do not gain enough experience to write confidently for a wide range of purposes. Standards of handwriting are steadily improving, but overall there is too little attention paid to the way pupils set their work out. In speaking and listening, pupils are reaching satisfactory standards, but to attain higher levels they need more opportunities to give extended responses in class.
4. In mathematics, boys' and girls' achievement is satisfactory overall. However, lower achievers make better progress relative to their ability than more able pupils. The higher attaining pupils are not stretched enough, and thus do not reach the levels of which they are capable. Progress for all groups of pupils is better in mental arithmetic than in the application of number skills to solve problems. In science, all groups of pupils achieve well. They have a good level of knowledge in all the main aspects of the subject and the practically based curriculum has given them good skills of observation and investigation. Standards in information technology are average for most pupils and they are achieving satisfactorily across all elements. They encounter a good range of computer tasks, many of which are linked to work in other subjects. This has built a

- good level of confidence for them to attempt new software and put keyboard skills into practice.
5. In art, geography, history and music, standards are typical of those in most schools, and pupils receive a broad, well-planned range of experiences. In physical education, standards are above those usually found, and pupils show very good balance and control in their gymnastics activities.
  6. In the foundation stage, pupils make good progress as a result of challenging tasks and exciting teaching. This rate of progress flattens out in the Year 1 class, where teaching is more ordinary and activities do not always demand enough of pupils. In the two older classes, and particularly the Year 2 class, there is some catching up, although higher attainers are not all pushing through to the levels they should be reaching.
  7. Pupils who have special needs achieve well overall in relation to their ability, but their rate of improvement is better in numeracy than literacy, where reading support for some pupils needs to begin earlier and guided reading tasks need to be better organised. Most pupils make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. These help pupils to gain a sense of achievement because they are set out in small steps and are frequently reviewed.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are good overall, varying from satisfactory to very good, depending on the age of the pupils. For most pupils, this has a positive impact on the progress they make. The best attitudes to learning are found in the Reception and Year 2 classes, where teaching engages pupils' interests and motivates them well. For example, pupils were brought to the edge of their seats in a Reception literacy lesson, when the teacher captured their interest by producing a variety of objects from a "feely bag" to match letter sound cards. Pupils concentrate well during lessons and collective worship; they are not distracted from their activities and they produce a good volume of work. Occasionally, pupils' attention wanders when they are not given enough work to do and they become restless. This is sometimes apparent during the last ten minutes of the morning session, particularly in Year 1, when preparations for lunch and toileting begin too soon.
9. Pupils generally enjoy coming to school. They are eager to be involved in all aspects of the school and participate regularly in the extra-curricular programme of sport and music offered by the school.
10. Behaviour of all pupils is very good. Even the youngest children are very well mannered and behave with maturity in the dining hall, playground and during collective worship; there is a calm learning environment as a result. Pupils are trustworthy and always complete errands with care. For example, Year 2 pupils take turns to help stack the dining room chairs after lunch. There have been no exclusions from school in the past year. Parents have a very positive view of behaviour in the school.
11. Relationships throughout the school are good and this creates a friendly and supportive learning environment. Pupils are very caring of one another and are quick to offer support for their classmates. They are sensitive to the efforts of their friends when they try hard to achieve something for the first time – joining in with counting or singing, for example. There is lively camaraderie around the dinner tables that encourages even the most timid children to participate. Pupils relate well to the adults working in the school and they respond well to the interest teachers show in them.

Such a supportive learning environment helps pupils to become more confident and builds their self-esteem. Pupils are quick to take up areas of responsibility and they carry out tasks competently.

12. Levels of attendance vary dramatically from year to year. Attendance for the academic year 1999/2000 was satisfactory but in the previous year, attendance levels were very low in comparison with other schools. This irregular pattern of attendance has been seen before in the school and is mainly due to the large number of pupils taken out of school on family holidays during term time. Interruptions in pupils' attendance during the school year adversely affect their achievement. Instances of unauthorised absence are very low but this is partly because the school authorises too many term time holidays. Most pupils are brought to school on time by their parents and lessons start promptly.
13. Pupils' behaviour has improved since the previous inspection and the other qualities reported in this area have been maintained. Attendance levels are not as good as those previously reported.

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

14. Across the school, 19 per cent of lessons seen were very good, 32 per cent good and 49 per cent satisfactory. Teaching in the Foundation Stage (Reception classes) is good and that in Key Stage 1 satisfactory. The differential between Reception and Key Stage 1 can be seen from the following breakdown: in Reception, 44 per cent of lessons were very good, 32 per cent good and 22 per cent satisfactory; in Key Stage 1, 9 per cent were very good, 32 per cent good and 59 per cent satisfactory.
15. The excellent relationships which teachers in the Reception classes quickly establish with the children gives them the confidence they need to help them learn. Teachers handle the children sensitively but firmly in a way that establishes a calm, orderly and purposeful environment. From the very start these teachers expect a lot of the children, in their work and behaviour, and in the way they look after resources and treat each other. All the adults work closely together and constantly share information about the pupils, so that their experiences are consistent at all times. Pupils are given enjoyable activities that stretch them. In the very best teaching there is sparkle in the presentation and a confidence gained through experience. At other times, where there is less experience, teaching is sound but not so exciting.
16. The strong relationships found in the Reception classes are also to be found in the Key Stage 1 classes, where there is usually a happy atmosphere. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and are particularly good at setting out objectives at the start of the lesson. They share these with the pupils so that they know what it is they are learning about and often come back to them at the end of the lesson to check on how well they have been achieved. These summary sessions are also used for other purposes as well. For example in English lessons, the opportunity is often used to share what different groups have done and in mathematics, to correct problems and misunderstandings which may have arisen during group work. Throughout the school, the contribution made by classroom support staff and other adults is valuable, particularly in the way they support groups and individuals. This ranges from guiding pupils on computers to helping pupils with special needs in practical mathematics activities. Another particular strength of the teaching is the attention teachers give to using and teaching the correct vocabulary and terminology in subjects so that pupils soon come to understand and use words like 'digits' in their mathematics work.

17. On most occasions teachers question pupils well so they are encouraged to explain ideas or to think more deeply. For example, the question “Why is our head so hard?” led children to consider the function of the skull. Teachers’ management of pupils is mostly good though some hold their attention more effectively than others. At times in the Year 1 class, not enough is demanded of pupils in giving their full attention and in making sure they are all quiet and listening carefully. On the other hand, in the other classes, a wide range of effective strategies was seen. These included the good use of resources such as individual pens and writing boards in order to ensure that all pupils were involved in answering questions.
18. There are some weaker aspects in teaching. Time is not used well in the fifteen minutes at the end of the morning session, when preparing for lunch and toileting becomes more important than the quality of the learning going on. There are insufficient demands made of higher achieving pupils. Written and oral tasks are sometimes too easy and the pupils are required only to make limited responses. Extension work is too often more of the same thing rather than something harder. For example, in numeracy, Year 1 pupils capable of taking 1 from 30, 50 or 80, spent too much time taking 1 away from 5. In literacy, these pupils used a word wheel to make three letter words, which they could already do. Their extension task was more of the same. The information from previous assessment of pupils’ achievement is not always considered carefully enough when these tasks are set.
19. Whilst teachers give good introductions to lessons and summaries at the ends, the activities given to Key stage 1 pupils are often superficial or not given enough time. They do not allow pupils to apply knowledge or skills to a substantial challenge often enough.
20. The teaching of both literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall. Children are taught the basic skills of reading well, such as recognising letters and sounds, so that they learn to read quickly. However teaching of higher reading skills is not so good because guided reading sessions are not always organised effectively and tasks undertaken in the literacy hour are not always challenging enough. In numeracy there is a strong and increasingly successful emphasis on developing pupils’ mental skills but too few opportunities for them to apply their skills in solving problems.
21. Teaching for pupils with special needs is good. Teachers and support staff are very aware of pupils’ emotional and learning needs. Support staff are good at motivating these pupils, helping them to join in to the full and sustaining their interest. No pupils have been identified as gifted or talented.

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

22. The curriculum for pupils in the Foundation Stage is very well planned to help children meet the standards set out nationally for children of this age (the early learning goals). There is a strong emphasis on learning through play and the provision of exciting and enjoyable practical activities. There is also a strong emphasis at the beginning of the key stage on children’s personal, social and emotional development and higher achieving pupils are challenged by suitable extension tasks throughout.
23. Whilst the curriculum for the youngest pupils is much better than at the time of the previous inspection, that for pupils in Key Stage 1 is similar and has maintained its strength. It meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced in the way it covers all subjects and links different subjects together well. For example, learning in one science lesson about the body was reinforced through a computer program on

body parts. Good use is made of visits and the local area, from simple street walks to trips out to visitor centres and other places of historical interest. Personal, health and social education is effectively built into work in science and physical education and through role-play such as in the 'St James' Health Centre'.

24. The curriculum is suitable for pupils with special needs. Pupils who need them are provided with individual learning plans that are kept up to date through regular reviews. Some, however, are not specific enough in the targets they set and this makes assessment of progress more difficult; for example 'to learn and recognise two letters per week' rather than specifying which ones. There is a good level of extra curricular activities, with recorder and football clubs for boys and girls.
25. The school has adopted the national literacy and numeracy guidelines to provide an adequate curriculum for these areas. However there is a need for the school to make adaptations to boost achievement in particular areas. For example, the present approach to developing reading skills in the oldest children does not work well. In some literacy and numeracy hours, pupils need to be given more time on activities than at present to meet their particular needs.
26. The school has very good links with the community, particularly in the way it involves parents and the wider family. There is a lot of additional adult support in classrooms from parents and other relatives who work skilfully with the children. They make interesting activities possible such as when one mum brought in her baby to bath with the Reception children. There are strong links with the next door playgroup which helps many children to become familiar with the school and well prepared before they start in Reception. The 'breakfast' and 'after school' clubs are very beneficial. A link with the Sellafield nuclear site has helped pupils to study the natural environment. There are strong links with the junior school to which the pupils transfer so they are well supported when they move, for example by a 'buddy' system. Many students spend time working alongside pupils through the strong links the school has with a local college.
27. The school has maintained its good provision for spiritual, moral and social education and improved its provision for cultural development since the previous inspection. Spiritual development and a strong Christian ethos are central to the school's work and it maintains close links with the church and clergy. These links add to pupils' understanding of God's place in their world and they are able to build stronger ties with the junior school through the joint services they attend. Through personal and social education, pupils become more at ease with talking about their feelings. The good quality "before and after school" care allows pupils to mix with their peers in less formal settings and to enjoy a range of social opportunities. Pupils learn to mix well in all aspects of school life and this helps to ensure lunchtimes and playtimes are enjoyable social experiences. Lunchtime staff organise skipping games for pupils and this teaches them patience and cooperation. Moral development is strong and pupils are guided towards a clear understanding of right and wrong, which contributes much towards their high standards of behaviour. They learn about the less fortunate by visiting the elderly and raising money for charity and this helps develop their sense of social and moral responsibility. Again the personal and social education programme is a major part of promoting this area. In their social development, teachers encourage pupils to become more self-confident and take responsibility for their own actions. They learn to work and play cooperatively from the start so that even the youngest Reception pupils take turns sensibly on computers or the climbing frame. Cultural development is mainly through art, music, history and geography. The school takes every opportunity to enrich its curriculum; for example through Arts Week, by celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year or linking class work on Buddhism to

assembly music. Parents and friends of the school bring in their personal expertise and knowledge and share different cultural beliefs with pupils. For example, they learned about the customs surrounding a Bangladeshi wedding and were then better able to appreciate the cultural diversity of their own and other countries.

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

28. The school makes satisfactory provision for the well being of its pupils. Teachers know the pupils well and are happy to help parents with any concerns or pastoral issues.
29. Child protection arrangements are secure and staff are familiar with the protocols. The headteacher and the teacher designated responsible for child protection work together effectively to ensure pupils in their care are safe. Outside support agencies are brought in to work with the school as required.
30. Systems to cover health and safety issues are in place and are known to staff and pupils. The headteacher is careful to include lunchtime staff in health and safety arrangements and they are conscientious in their duty of care. Effective first aid cover is provided by a number of staff and good care is given to any pupil with specific medical needs.
31. The school has effective procedures to promote discipline and good behaviour and this is an area which has improved since the last inspection. The system of rewards and sanctions works well and pupils are keen to prove they are trustworthy and hardworking. The very good behaviour seen throughout the school reflects the success of these systems and adds much to the positive learning atmosphere which pupils experience each day. Effective procedures are in place to deal with any rare instances of oppressive behaviour.
32. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory and this is reflected in the very unstable attendance figures, which fluctuate from year to year. The headteacher and governors recognise that the school has a problem with pupils being withdrawn from school to accompany parents on holidays but has not yet instigated a sufficiently rigorous monitoring system to track these and other absences. The problem is made worse because absence is not always correctly recorded in the class attendance registers; this leads to confusing statistics and a muddled picture of the true situation.
33. The school keeps a close eye on the progress children make during the Foundation Stage. Effective links are formed with the local pre-school group and staff also complete home visits to learn more about the pupils. The information they gather is used to form an initial assessment of each child when they start school. This data is used well to guide teachers' planning. Reception teachers adjust their planning in the light of what their regular assessments tell them. For example, when it became clear in the course of a mathematics lesson that some of the children could count well beyond 5, the teacher altered her plans to allow the children to work with larger numbers.
34. In Key Stage 1 the quality of assessment is variable. In English, the assessment of writing is satisfactory because it is checked in small steps. The assessment of reading is unsatisfactory; it does not break down into small enough steps the reading skills children need to acquire. The assessment of mathematics is satisfactory. Appropriate records are kept of pupils' attainments and planning is adjusted to reflect their achievements. However, assessment of higher attaining pupils is not effectively used with the result that they are not always set work that is challenging enough.

Assessment in science is good. Careful note is taken of the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils and lessons are planned with this knowledge in mind. Good records of information technology skills are also being kept to guide teachers' planning. Although assessment in the other non-core subjects is neither systematic nor formal, teachers still have a good knowledge of what pupils can do, as shown by the detailed progress reports they write.

35. Pupils with special educational needs are assessed and reviewed regularly against the criteria identified in their individual education plans. This helps staff to move them along at a good pace.
36. The good features identified in the last report are still present in school. Systems to promote good behaviour have improved. However, the school has not kept pace with the greater rigour demanded in the assessment of reading to support pupils' progress effectively. The school does not monitor and promote good attendance effectively enough.

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

37. Parents and carers have positive views of the school, as expressed in their questionnaire responses and at the pre-inspection parents' meeting. They are pleased with the standard of teaching and the high expectations staff have of their pupils. They also value highly the "before and after school" clubs and many make full use of these facilities.
38. The school establishes satisfactory links with parents and this encourages them to contact the school with any worries or questions. Reception staff arrange home visits and this helps to settle new children into the school without too much anxiety. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children until they are settled and this arrangement works very well. During the week of the inspection, Reception teachers welcomed new children and their parents into the classroom and were very sensitive to their needs and this set a positive tone for their future relationship. The school's prospectus provides a good overview of the life of the school and the governors' annual report to parents is a useful document although it lacks some of the statutorily required information.
39. Most parents feel well informed about the progress their children are making at school. Teachers are good at telling parents, both verbally and in the end of year written reports, how well their children are doing. These reports are detailed and well written and provide a very good summary of what pupils can do and how they can improve, although the school needs to ensure the report format covers each curriculum subject separately. However, teachers are not as good at informing parents of what their children will be studying next and some parents would like to be better prepared to support their children's learning at home.
40. A small number of parent helpers work regularly in classrooms and they have a significant impact on pupils' learning. They support individuals and small groups in their activities and guide them effectively in their learning. They offer one to one help for some pupils with special educational needs and enable pupils to work in smaller groups than would normally be possible.
41. Most parents have signed the Home-School Agreement and they reinforce the work of the school through their support of children's learning at home. They listen to their children read and regularly complete the reading records. However, some parents do



not meet the obligations within the attendance section and persist in taking their children out of school for extended holidays. This irregular attendance has had a negative impact on pupils' attainment and on the standards achieved by the school.

42. The school has maintained a similar quality of partnership with its parents since the last inspection.

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

43. The school's leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff is satisfactory overall, but has strengths and weaknesses. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the budget is well managed to ensure that staffing and resources are adequate and that the school's premises offer a good quality environment for pupils. Whenever funds are allocated to support developments, efforts are made to obtain the best value for money. For example, clear criteria are set by which to judge the effectiveness of expenditure. Together with both teaching and support staff, the head and governors have worked successfully to create a happy school with good relationships and an ethos which reflects most of the school's aims.
44. The main weakness in leadership is that there is not sufficient drive to raise standards. Although the school's development plan is wide ranging and detailed, it does not focus enough on pupils' attainment and it is hard to see which of the many proposed actions are considered the most important. The school has been building up the amount of information it keeps about what pupils have achieved and what they can and can't do, for example, through analysis of the most recent national test results. What it has not yet done is to use this data as the basis of a co-ordinated plan to improve in key areas such as higher reading skills or application of number skills in mathematics.
45. Staff with responsibility for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have undertaken some monitoring of teaching and learning in their areas. Some of this has been effective and has highlighted particular strengths and weaknesses, which have become the subject of staffs' individual action plans. However, these plans are not built into the school's overall development activity with the result that there is not enough clear direction being set and improvements are too slow to take effect. Whilst the headteacher has a good level of awareness of the quality of teaching across the school through informal contact, this is not checked rigorously enough to bring about continuous improvement. The Foundation key stage is being very well organised and led. There is a clear vision for what the youngest pupils should be achieving and this is well communicated to all adults who support their learning.
46. The governing body, many of whom are new to the role, are keen to support the work of the school. There are many good examples of their working to increase their insight into the school's work, such as working with readers and tracking pupils through their school experience. However, they need to have more information about the school's performance, such as how well its standards compare with similar schools, in order to best direct its efforts. A few statutory requirements are not yet being met in relation to the school's documentation.
47. Since the last inspection, the role played by subject co-ordinators has improved substantially, particularly in the core subject areas. The school's leadership and management has maintained its previous strengths, but has not fully kept pace with many of the greater expectations placed upon it. Analysis of the pupils' attainment is now much better, but to bring about consistent improvement, leadership needs to act more decisively on the information it has.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. **The headteacher, staff and governors should now address the following issues:**

**(1) Improve the effectiveness of management by giving a higher priority to raising standards through:**

- making the raising of pupils' attainment the main priority in the school development plan
- acting more effectively on the results of subject leaders' monitoring and evaluation activities, and the information gained from assessment and testing

(Paragraph numbers 44, 45, 47)

**(2) Raise standards in mathematics by:**

- setting more challenging activities in lessons, particularly for higher attaining pupils
- giving more emphasis to the application of number skills to solve problems

(Paragraph numbers 2, 4, 18, 86, 87)

**(3) Raise standards in reading and writing by:**

- improving the accuracy and detail in assessments of pupils' reading
- introducing more advanced reading skills for higher attainers
- improving the organisation of guided reading sessions
- creating more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects and for different purposes

(Paragraph numbers 3, 20, 34, 73, 75, 81)

**(4) Improve the promotion of good attendance by:**

- monitoring patterns of attendance more rigorously
- applying agreed procedures with more consistency

(Paragraph numbers 32, 41)

The following issues, whilst not key issues for action, should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- provide the governing body with more information on the school's performance (Paragraph number 46)
- ensure that statutory requirements are met in respect of the school prospectus, children's progress reports and the governors report to parents (Paragraph number 39)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	19	32	48	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		136
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals		13

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	13.1
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 1**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	33	25	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	25	28	28
	Girls	21	23	22
	Total	46	51	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	79 (92)	87 (94)	86 (93)
	National	72 (83)	80 (79)	86 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	28	28	29
	Girls	23	22	24
	Total	51	50	53
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (94)	86 (94)	91 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (81)	87 (84)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	1
White	77
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

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

*This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.*

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.2
Average class size	26.2

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	52

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	262697
Total expenditure	239114
Expenditure per pupil	1794
Balance brought forward from previous year	11615
Balance carried forward to next year	35720

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	135
Number of questionnaires returned	21

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	38	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	38	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	48	0	5	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	48	24	0	0
The teaching is good.	62	38	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	57	10	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	19	5	5	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	38	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	52	10	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	24	62	0	10	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	48	0	10	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	10	48	10	5	29

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

49. Children are admitted to the two Reception classes in the September of the year in which they reach five years old. About half of the forty five children admitted have attended the playgroup close to the school, other children have attended a variety of settings in the local area and a small number have had no experience of pre-school provision of any type. At the time of the inspection, just over half of the children had started school, the majority on a part-time basis. A group of ten of the oldest Reception pupils was fulltime. The school operates this staged intake in order to maximise the opportunity for children to feel settled and secure within their new environment. Teachers believe this works well for all children and inspection findings bear this out. All children were happy to come to school and had settled well.
50. The Reception classes provide a very good foundation for children's learning. Assessments carried out for the last two years as children have started school show that the majority have skills similar to most others of the same age. The Reception teachers report that the picture will be similar for this year's new entrants, in all areas of learning. Work from the previous school year indicates that children make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development and good progress in most other areas by the end of the Reception year. The good progress made is due to the high quality curriculum provided, good teaching and the excellent standard of care which staff give to the children. The atmosphere they create is warm, happy and relaxed, yet challenging and purposeful. Expectations of standards of work and behaviour are very high and children rise to the challenge. This ensures that children develop very good attitudes to other people, to school and to learning.
51. Teachers use their assessments of the pupils very well to ensure that their needs are provided for and that they can take full advantage of all experiences on offer. There are nationally agreed expectations for what children should be able to do by the end of the Reception year. The curriculum is very well planned in relation to these early learning goals, to provide for all ability levels. It is varied and practically based, giving a good balance between activities directed by the teacher and those chosen by the children themselves. Teachers introduce the more formal work of the literacy and numeracy curriculum gradually and skilfully, which ensures that children have a good degree of confidence in their own abilities. A strength of the teaching is the excellent teamwork between the adults who work with the children. This ensures that all children have the same opportunities.
52. The good standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained and planning is improved.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

53. Children make very good progress and by the time they leave the Reception class, they are likely to exceed the learning goals in this area. All pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to school. They are happy and willing to learn and their confidence and relationships develop well. For example, many children have made 'special' friends who they like to sit with. All have quickly learned the routines of 'lining up' and putting hands up to speak. They are pleased with their achievements and are confident in explaining these to others, as in a Science session, when a group explained how they had tested to find the best paper for writing on and reached a conclusion. They choose independently from a wide range of activities on offer and work at them for

quite long periods of time, sharing with others well, for example when building with construction sets. Activities such as carrying out experiments in science and role-play are developing teamwork and co-operation.

54. Teaching in this area is very good. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage co-operation and good behaviour, through praise and rewards. They manage the children very well and have excellent relationships both with the children and each other. Staff themselves are excellent role models, treating all who enter the Reception area with politeness and courtesy. These factors enable children to feel secure and motivate them to do their best.

### **Communication, Language and Literacy**

55. Children make good progress in this area and are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the time they leave the Reception classes. They make good progress because staff are skilled teachers of literacy. A good start is made in teaching children letter sounds and names. The children's interest and enthusiasm are captured through exciting teaching. For example, they are encouraged to pull objects beginning with a chosen letter from a bag and show them to their classmates. All pupils are fascinated to see what is coming out next and are fully involved in learning. This activity is extended, as the children are asked to find objects beginning with the same letter at home and bring them to form part of a display. From the earliest stages, children have the opportunity to listen to and talk about stories, and share books in different situations. Group reading sessions are taught very well and ensure that children quickly learn to read. They learn to follow words and text from left to right and top to bottom, using pictures to help them make sense of the story. As they gain confidence and understanding, they join in with the reading, recognising letter-sounds, familiar words and rhymes.
56. After a short time in school, children confidently talk about their recent summer holidays, explaining the places they have been to and how they travelled to get there. With prompting, most were able to recall some of the things they had seen and done. Other children listened attentively and most waited for their turn to speak. Teachers take every opportunity to extend vocabulary. For example, when a child said he went to France on a boat, the teacher asked, "Does anyone know what we call the boats we travel on to cross the sea to France?" Another child supplied the word 'ferry'. They also encourage children, through skilful questioning, to extend their answers beyond one or two words and this helps them to organise their thoughts and express their ideas.
57. Children are beginning to develop their handwriting skills through regular practice of writing patterns and letter shapes. They attempt to write their own names and choose to write party invitations and cards in the 'writing corner'. Most are beginning to develop good pencil control and an awareness that their writing can be read by other people.
58. Teaching of literacy is very good. Strong features are the very clear understanding staff have of the way in which young children learn to read and the activities they choose to excite and stimulate their imaginations. Language development is central in the planning of all areas of learning. This ensures pupils start to read and write early and develop confidence quickly. Staff check carefully where pupils are up to in developing their skills and this results in good progress being made.



## **Mathematics**

59. Children make good progress and are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the time that they leave Reception. This is because staff assess their capabilities early, and move them quickly to the next steps in learning. An example of this was when the teachers discovered that a small group of children were secure with numbers beyond five; they adjusted their planning accordingly to include higher numbers in the following sessions. Staff encourage pupils to develop good numeracy skills and become mathematicians through a wide range of activities. They print and paint shapes such as squares, circles and triangles, and make them out of play-dough. Tabletop displays encourage them to sort and match items into sets by colour and by shape, and to make repeating patterns. Number activities are reinforced well through songs and rhymes such as 'Five little speckled frogs' that involve the children in counting. Simple addition and subtraction activities are carried out practically, for example, with children counting toy frogs in and out of a 'pond' as they sing the song and placing paper frogs on a number line. Children are encouraged to use mathematical language as they carry out this work.
60. Teaching of mathematics is good overall. Mathematical activities are planned well and children's responses are assessed carefully. Teachers work hard to make mathematics practical and fun and they reinforce children's understanding well through the activities that they provide. This ensures that children have a good foundation to build on and that they quickly develop confidence, particularly with number. Support staff make a valuable contribution as they talk to children and support their work.

## **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

61. Children make good progress in this area and are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the time they leave Reception. Teachers provide an interesting and practical range of learning experiences for children to take part in. They build well on the knowledge they bring with them from home and extend this knowledge through encouraging them to ask questions about why things happen and how they work. For example, in a discussion about holidays, children brought in pictures of the places they had visited. They then found some of these places on globes and maps, learning the difference between a town and a country in the process. They then extended their learning through talking about how they had travelled to their holiday destinations and giving suggestions about the different ways in which we can cross the sea. In a science lesson, the children were testing the absorbency of different types of paper. They made predictions about what would happen, carried out the experiment carefully and examined the results. Some pupils were able to make suggestions such as, 'If we had left it for a longer time, it would have soaked up more water.'
62. Teaching is very good. The well-planned activities challenge children's thinking and encourage them to observe closely and give reasoned explanations. Carefully framed questions extend children's knowledge and help them to reflect on what they have learned.

## **Physical Development**

63. Children are likely to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year and make good progress. They are given good opportunities to develop and extend their physical skills, particularly through gymnastics lessons. They learn how to run, jump and land correctly, and are already making up movement sequences. Good attention is given to helping children refine their skills, develop control over their bodies and develop an awareness of space.

64. In the classroom, children are provided with many opportunities to develop their manipulative skills. They cut carefully around shapes when making 'Humpty Dumpty' figures for a display. They roll out play-dough, pressing out shapes for food for the role-play café, and make towers and structures with different sized blocks. Most pupils are beginning to use the mouse independently to control images on the computer screen, and can click to make choices or go on to the next activity. Outdoors, they play sensibly, for example, with a range of balls of different sizes, learning to throw and catch.
65. Teaching is very good, particularly in gymnastics. High expectations are set and children are continually challenged to improve their skills. Activities are introduced enthusiastically and this motivates the children well.

### **Creative Development**

66. Children's creative development is on course to meet expected levels by the end of Reception, and they make satisfactory progress. They are given good opportunities to paint, print, draw, cut and stick, exploring texture and shape. They choose the materials they use, for example when making 'Humpty Dumpty' collages. They make careful representations of the work of famous artists, such as Van Gogh, using pastels and chalk. Opportunities are given for children to explore materials such as sand, water and paint. For example, children were finger-painting frogs, and the teacher encouraged them to feel the texture and thickness of the paint and try different ways of applying it. Fewer opportunities were observed for children to construct 3D models out of chosen materials, although these are planned.
67. Opportunities are provided for children to memorise and sing simple songs and familiar rhymes. They join in with these enthusiastically and enjoy choosing songs for the group to sing. A good range of musical instruments is available for children to choose independently. A role-play area was set up as a café, however the pupils were not observed using this during the inspection period.
68. The small amount of teaching observed was satisfactory with activities being carefully planned. High expectations are set and children are encouraged to use resources sensibly and safely. Their achievements are recognised through the careful display of finished products. This develops the children's self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities.

### **ENGLISH**

69. In the 1999 tests at the age of seven, pupils achieved below the national average in reading and in line with the national average in writing when compared with all schools and with schools of a similar type. Results for 2000 show a slight improvement on those in 1999, although national comparisons are not yet available.
70. In the 2000 tests very few pupils achieved the higher level in reading. In writing, a good proportion of pupils achieved the expected level and also the higher level. However, almost half of these pupils achieved at the lower end of the expected level.
71. Inspection findings indicate that the majority of the current Year 2 pupils are in line to meet average standards for their age, in both reading and writing. However, there is little indication at the present time that the number of pupils achieving the higher level in reading will increase significantly, or that a higher percentage of pupils will reach the more secure level 2 standards in writing.

72. At the end of Key Stage 1, reading standards are average. By the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils have mastered the mechanics of reading and the more able are reading fluently and with good expression. Most pupils appear to enjoy books, although few can name a favourite author or a favourite type of book. However, many know the differences between fiction and non-fiction books and can explain how a contents page is used. Children can find words in a dictionary, with a little prompting, and the more able are secure in their knowledge of alphabetical order. Almost all pupils can recall the stories they have read in class. They use picture clues well to help them work out the meaning of texts. They use letter sounds and blends confidently to help them work out unfamiliar words. These strategies are skilfully taught throughout the school. However, pupils are less confident at predicting what might come next in an unfamiliar story, and at 'reading between the lines'.
73. Although progress in reading is steady at Key Stage 1, teachers do not build quickly enough on the good foundation laid down in the Reception classes. This is largely because pupil's reading is not assessed accurately enough and insufficient significant information is recorded about their reading behaviour. Consequently, pupils are not always set reading tasks at the right level of challenge and this particularly affects the progress of higher attainers. Less able pupils are also affected because the appropriate levels of support are not always put into place as early as they might be. Group reading sessions do not always provide a sufficient amount of focused teaching for these pupils.
74. Parents give good support to their children in reading, sharing books with them at home and filling in comments diligently in their home-school reading diaries. They help their children write book reviews and many take them to visit the library. A good number of parents and other members of the community help with reading activities in school and add much to children's learning in this area. An example of this is 'Grandad Cyril', a school governor who hears children read with obvious enjoyment, enthusiasm and skill.
75. Attainment in writing is average for the majority of pupils in Year 2. However, a significant percentage of middle and lower ability pupils do not attain a high enough standard. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the good progress made in the Reception classes is not maintained into Year 1. Progress in this year group is steady, rather than sharp. Although this improves for Year 2 pupils, it is too late for some children to achieve the appropriate levels in the national tests. Secondly, children are given too few opportunities to write for different purposes and audiences and not enough opportunities are created for pupils to write in other subject areas. As a consequence, many children do not become confident and imaginative writers and progress is slowed for all but the most able. When children are given the opportunity to write for a real purpose and the time to complete the task, good results are produced. An example of this was in a Year 2 lesson, when children were asked to write thank-you prayers, to be made into a book for use in assembly. The prayers they wrote were thoughtful and moving, showing real understanding of the form of writing they were using.
76. A strength in writing is the pupils' ability to spell and punctuate accurately. This is a result of good, systematic teaching, which is carefully planned. Most pupils are able to spell a good range of common words, with a high level of accuracy. They use appropriate strategies for working out words that are new to them. These include blending letters, breaking words into smaller 'chunks' and identifying initial letters and endings. Children quickly develop an understanding of what makes a sentence. They

- use this skill in their story writing to good effect. The more able children use a good range of joining words and are beginning to use more complex sentence structures.
77. In the areas of reading and writing, standards are not judged to be as high as they were at the last inspection.
  78. The school has recently introduced a new handwriting scheme. This, in conjunction with regular practice and direct teaching, is improving children's letter formation. However, teachers pay too little attention to standards of presentation. Not enough guidance is given as to the standards expected and as a result, children's work is not as neat and tidy as it could be.
  79. The majority of Year 2 pupils attain a satisfactory standard in speaking and listening. Most pupils are willing to speak in familiar situations, for example, when explaining about their work at the end of literacy lessons. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other. However, in discussions children are not always confident at expanding their answers beyond simple phrases or in using talk to express their ideas and thoughts. This is often in spite of teachers' efforts to encourage pupils to respond more fully to questions and attempts to develop their vocabulary. More use could be made of the good quality role-play areas in each classroom to provide planned opportunities for talk.
  80. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. They make the best progress and attain well in relation to their abilities when they are supported by additional adults in class and when activities are interesting and exciting. A good example of this was in the Year 1 class when a support worker reinforced letter sounds through the use of a 'feely' bag. Children were asked to pull a mystery object out of the bag, name it and place it on the correct square on an alphabet mat, saying its letter name. They enjoyed this activity and so their motivation was increased.
  81. Teaching in English is mainly satisfactory. However, some good lessons were also observed. All teachers plan their lessons well, in relation to the National Literacy Strategy. They have good relationships with their pupils and usually manage them well. In the best lessons, teachers introduce new work skilfully, building on pupil's prior knowledge. Questions are used well to check what children have understood and activities involve all pupils. For example, in the Year 2 class, children all had an individual white-board and pen and were asked to spell words quickly, holding up their boards for the teacher to see their answers. Where teaching is more ordinary, tasks are often less exciting and demand too little of the more able pupils. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, these pupils were making three letter words using a 'word wheel'. Most children did this within minutes and were given more of the same as an extension task.
  82. Homework is centred on reading and handwriting. Reading diaries provide a useful link between home and school, although these could be further developed to become more of a dialogue between parents and teachers in order to raise skills.
  83. Satisfactory use is made of Information Technology in literacy lessons. Pupils play literacy games to develop reading skills for example, and use a word processor.
  84. The co-ordinator manages the subject efficiently. She supports colleagues appropriately and has identified sensible priorities for action, through checking results and talking to teachers about their work. For example, the school is aware of the need to improve children's comprehension skills and has planned to closely examine the impact of group reading sessions on pupil performance. Resources are plentiful, of good quality and managed well.



## MATHEMATICS

85. Current standards in mathematics are average, reflecting a steady but unspectacular improvement in pupils' achievements. The 1999 tests for pupils at seven point to attainment being below average nationally and well below average when compared to similar schools. The results for the Year 2000, which cannot yet be compared to other schools, are better than in 1999 and the work of the present Year 2 pupils suggests that they will do better again when they take their tests in 2001.
86. Boys and girls do equally well and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, whilst attainment is good for low achievers, high achievers do not reach the levels they should. This is the main reason the school's results compare unfavourably with similar schools. Standards are not as good as they were judged to be at the time of the previous inspection in 1996, with a particular dip to below average last year. However the effects of the new national numeracy arrangements are beginning to be seen and pupils are making better progress, particularly in mental arithmetic. Low achievers make good progress because they are well supported in class by classroom assistants, students or other adult helpers and their work is usually well matched to their needs. Higher achievers, on the other hand, are not stretched as much as they should be by activities that they often find too easy.
87. Teaching in most of the lessons seen was satisfactory with some better teaching of older pupils. Teachers are putting a great emphasis on developing pupils' mental skills and thoughtful questions at times encourage pupils to think deeply about the answers they give. However, opportunities are often missed in getting them to explain how they have reached an answer or how they might do a sum differently. The direct teaching at the beginnings and ends of lessons is where the most useful learning takes place. For example, teachers strongly emphasise the teaching of correct mathematical vocabulary and they explain or demonstrate ideas well to pupils. The middle part of most lessons, where pupils do tasks or activities, is weaker. Sometimes this part of the lesson is too short so that pupils have just got into the activity and it is time to finish. At other times the activities themselves have too little substance and pupils are not challenged sufficiently, particularly higher achievers. More emphasis needs to be placed on giving pupils activities where they can apply the skills they have learned rather than simply practise mechanically. This may involve older pupils in particular, in having problems to solve and making choices about how they solve them. Where lessons draw too heavily on a commercial mathematics scheme without enough adaptation, activities can be unsuitable as they are often pitched at only one level. This was particularly noticeable in Year 1. A strength of the teaching is the way teachers use summary sessions at the ends of lessons to tackle misunderstandings which have emerged during the activities and check the learning. This helps pupils to be clear about what they have learned.
88. Teachers plan their lessons well and pupils' progress is regularly assessed. Whilst the information from assessments is used to plan the next lessons, this is not effective in ensuring that higher achievers are fully challenged. The implementation of the national numeracy arrangements has led to some reduction in the amount of written work pupils undertake. This makes it all the more important that pupils who write their numbers wrongly, for example back to front, are quickly and regularly corrected.
89. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The coordinator has overseen the implementation of the national numeracy strategy, which is leading to a steady rise in standards. Now some adaptation is needed; for example to ensure organisation of lessons best meet the needs of pupils of all abilities, or the balance between direct teaching and pupils' activity work is right. The coordinator has observed teaching of

numeracy and some development points have been discussed but there is scope for sharper action to ensure consistent practice across all classes.

## SCIENCE

90. By the time they leave the school, pupils' standards in science are above average. There are no tests for pupils at Key Stage 1, but teacher assessments show that the school's performance has been better than that of similar schools, particularly in respect of the number of pupils exceeding the expected level for 7 year olds. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs make good progress. These standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.
91. By Year 2, pupils show by their work that they have a good level of knowledge and understanding across all the main strands of the subject. This is particularly strong in the area of Life Processes and Living Things where the school has made good use of a local nature reserve and the new school garden to enhance pupils' first hand knowledge of plants and creatures. An effective collection of resources, which is skilfully used by teachers to impart new knowledge, also makes a significant contribution to the high standards in this aspect of the subject. For example, an excellent collection of animal photographs was used to highlight features such as wings or strong hind legs, which enabled pupils to categorise the animals according to the ways they move. In other areas, pupils are aware of the main properties of materials and have undertaken experiments with sound and electrical circuitry. Their recorded work on these topics shows that they have a good grasp of the main concepts covered and that they have used good skills of observation and measurement. For example, they have recorded plant growth in varying conditions as part of an investigation to develop their ideas of fair testing.
92. The quality of science teaching is high. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and this helps them to plan interesting activities, which push pupils' scientific understanding forward. Clear lesson aims are a common feature of science teaching, such as 'To be able to identify and label bones and joints in the human body'. Teachers share these objectives with the pupils in terms that they can understand. This helps the children to gain a clear picture of why they are engaged in the activity and of how they are progressing in their learning. Questions such as, 'What tells us that this animal can swim?' focus the pupils' attention and make them think hard about features previously taken for granted. When dealing with the human skeleton, in the mixed Year 1 / 2 class, the teacher illustrated what would happen if our spine was not jointed but rigid, by putting a long ruler down a pupils' back. The class were captivated as they watched the volunteer's attempts to bend. Their understanding was improved by this simple but effective practical demonstration, which was carried out with good humour.
93. One feature of the school's curriculum, which helps to develop pupils' understanding, is the combining of activities from different subjects where these have sensible links. For example, Year 2 pupils were asked to record their findings on animal movement on a chart, the contents of which were then to be transferred to a graph on the computer. This supported the development of their mathematics and information technology skills as well as extending their range of recording experiences in science. The overall curriculum is well planned. It has been developed by the subject co-ordinator from the nationally recommended scheme and adjusted to allow pupils to revisit key learning during their two years in the key stage. Pupils' work is carefully assessed with detailed teacher comments on selected samples of work. This allows teachers to keep a close eye on pupils' progress through the scheme of work

94. The subject is well led, and good quality guidance is provided for colleagues on what to teach, how to resource lessons and how to grade pupils' work. The co-ordinator has an accurate picture of the quality of teaching in science and has clearly identified future targets for further development. These include the use of the internet to enhance opportunities for pupils to undertake simple research, and further work on tracking pupils' progress. Since the last inspection, the main areas of improvement have been increased emphasis upon practical investigation, the introduction of more specific scientific terminology to pupils, and more use of information technology to support pupils' recording. This represents satisfactory development from an already healthy picture.

## **ART**

95. Standards in art are broadly typical of most schools. As at the time of the last inspection, they are better in two-dimensional work, with painting and drawing being the strongest areas. Pupils have made good quality observational drawings, supporting work in other subjects such as science when they illustrate investigations with plants. Their paintings of the seasons in connection with a recent topic show a good grasp of shape and colour, which Year 1 and 2 pupils have mixed successfully. More three-dimensional work is being experienced than previously, with modelling in clay and salt dough for example. However, the range of this activity is still too narrow.
96. Only one art lesson was observed and this was well taught. Year 1 and 2 pupils enjoyed a lively lesson, which moved at a good pace and demanded a lot of them. As they drew basic figure shapes from direct observation of each other, the teacher kept a good eye on their progress and pointed out where they might improve. An effective introduction featuring good demonstration by the teacher enthused the pupils who were then keen to 'have a go' themselves. Their work rate was high because they were enjoying the tasks set and making good progress in learning to observe shape and proportion with greater accuracy. Outcomes for the majority were of an above average standard. An added bonus was the links drawn with current science work on 'The body'. Pupils reinforced their science knowledge as they discussed bones, joints and muscles when considering the size and shape of limbs in their artwork.
97. Pupils are learning about the work of other artists as they recreate the style of Van Gogh in paints, or use the computer to represent the more abstract work of Piet Mondrian or Jackson Pollock. The Arts Week, run in the Summer term, has given pupils a chance to work with a number of local artists and crafts people, as they make leaf sculptures, use air brush techniques, or simply learn about artists styles and subject matter. This rich experience significantly enhances the art curriculum.
98. The newly appointed co-ordinator for art has a good knowledge of what needs to be developed to further improve the organisation of the subject. Current targets include the development of a more consistent assessment system to record pupils' achievements and also the compilation of a portfolio of children's work. This is to support colleagues with ideas for planning work and to give guidance in setting expectations and evaluating pupils' work.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

99. Standards in both subjects are similar to those found in most infant schools. Since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be good, the school has ensured that that coverage of the curriculum continues to provide a well balanced experience for pupils in both subjects. Achievement is satisfactory.



100. An important feature of the work in these subjects is the use made of visits and visitors, which helps to make them relevant to the pupils' own lives. They walk around the area to look at the different types of houses and other buildings, and make trips to visitor centres. This helps pupils to build up their knowledge about the locality in the past and present. For example, older pupils know about past industries such as mining or that a particular building, which had been used as a hospital, is now being converted into flats. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils were particularly interested in some dolls and furniture brought in by a parent governor, some of which had been made by her grandfather about 60 years ago. Pupils were absorbed by the display and fascinated to learn about her grandfather's life as a railwayman and how some of the furniture had been made from the wood of the local dock gates when they were renewed.
101. Teachers build effectively on pupils experiences when, for example, they create displays with maps showing where children have been for their holidays. This work builds well on experiences in the Foundation Stage. In the Year 2 class the teacher effectively developed pupils' geographical skills through a lesson aimed at teaching them to write their address correctly. Pupils were able to find Whitehaven on a map of the United Kingdom, to correctly name the countries of Great Britain and find a particular road on the local map.
102. Management of the subjects is satisfactory, with one teacher coordinating both. Work is based on a three-year cycle of topics, which helps to eliminate repetition. Individual topic plans are being developed to ensure there is progression in learning from year to year in geography, under the newly revised curriculum arrangements. There is scope for the coordinator to look more closely at teaching and pupils' work, in order to identify where improvements could be made. Manageable but more rigorous assessment would also enable teachers to present a clearer picture of particular pupils' attainments at any particular time.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

103. By the time they reach the end of the key stage, standards in information technology are average overall and the vast majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and skills. Pupils with special educational needs are progressing well in the subject as a result of good levels of support as they practise the skills they have been taught.
104. Attainment is better than at the time of the last inspection when many pupils were judged not to be achieving their full potential. This improvement has come about as a result of a number of substantial developments in the subject. There are now more and better computers and software, staff are better trained to use them to teach specific skills, and there are systems in place to track pupils' progress. The co-ordinator, who leads the subject well, has provided staff with useful guidance on how they might use information technology to enhance their topic work. This has led to a rich curriculum in which computer work is used to help develop skills in subjects such as literacy, mathematics, science and art. For example, pupils have used word processing software to practise writing their addresses and an art program to recreate work in the style of artists such as Mondrian. All groups of pupils work well together on computers, sharing the equipment and collaborating over tasks such as labelling parts of the body in a science program.
105. From the evidence available at this early stage in the term, standards are broadly similar across most of the main strands of the subject. Pupils are developing a good level of familiarity with the main keyboard operations such as inserting capitals,

deleting errors or selecting fonts to suit their purpose. They can enter simple data to produce block graphs, such as when they transfer information from their science recording of categories of animal movements. Literacy programs such as interactive stories are well used by pupils to develop their reading skills and their awareness of story structure. The area of research using computers is not yet sufficiently developed as there is only limited software available and the school has still to incorporate use of the Internet into the curriculum.

106. No full lessons of information technology were observed during the inspection, but pupils were observed at work in all classes and the support they received from teachers and classroom assistants was of good quality. Tasks were clearly explained so that pupils knew exactly what was expected of them and any errors were quickly spotted. If pupils make mistakes, staff encourage them to think about how they might be corrected rather than providing an instant solution. Questions such as 'How could you make that easier to read?' for example, made pupils search for ways to set out their work more clearly. A good feature of the teaching is the way in which supporting adults are continuously making and recording judgements about pupils' levels of competence as they attempt each new skill. This helps to build up a picture of what needs to be reinforced with particular children, or where some need a greater level of challenge because they are finding the work too easy.
107. Future plans for the subject are realistic and include more regular monitoring of pupils' work and of the quality of teaching and guidance they receive. The additional training needs of staff in coping with the full teaching potential of the Internet have also been identified. The recent rate of development, including staff undertaking information technology qualifications in their own time indicates that there is a good capacity for continuing improvement.

## **MUSIC**

108. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and are similar to those found in most schools. Pupils undertake appropriate work in appreciation of music and in performance. No class lessons were seen during the inspection.
109. Older pupils are confident singers, able to sing in tune and with good tone and expression. In whole school singing sessions they show they can follow a melody successfully and show sensitivity to words and mood. They have a good sense of pitch when singing hymns and songs and can recall the words from memory. They build up their knowledge about different types of music through listening in assemblies (for which there is a planned programme) and in class lessons. Emphasis is put on playing music from different cultures. Some older pupils can recognise the sounds of particular orchestral instruments such as the violin or cello.
110. There is provision for the development of pupils' musical skills through clubs and events. Some older pupils learn to play the recorder, which helps them become familiar with the way music is written. The school has a 'music week' and an end of year concert.
111. Responsibility for the subject has recently been changed and it is effectively managed. Music is included in the school's three-year topic plan, which is supplemented by detailed year plans. These are helpful and give good guidance to teachers to help achieve progression from year to year.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. Standards in physical education are better than in most schools. During the inspection, activities were observed in movement and gymnastics, with games skills being planned for other periods during the year. Above average standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection.
113. Most children show good balance and control of their movements in gymnastics lessons. They make good use of space in the hall as they move around at varying pace and with sudden changes of direction at the sound of a tambourine. They have good awareness of others' movements and show agility in the way they avoid having to compete for space. The majority display good imagination and initiative as they invent different combinations of movements using small and large body parts in turn for their balance. As they 'grow from the floor' in their warm up exercises, Year 1 pupils show particularly good control in the slow extension of arms and legs until at full stretch whilst balanced on their toes.
114. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. All staff give good attention to the children's understanding of health and fitness, referring for example to the importance of warming up to loosen muscles and to the effect of exercise on heart rates. Pupils learnt that strenuous exercise increases the heart's activity as they felt their hearts beating before and after their floor exercises. One observed that 'It's much more bumpy than it was'.
115. The features that characterise the best teaching include the way in which teachers highlight good performances by asking pupils to demonstrate to their friends. This is particularly effective in giving pupils a visible role model to copy and results in improved performance, as they are motivated to emulate the selected pupil. Good attention to points of technique also helps pupils to develop better skills. For example, in a lesson on jumping and landing, the teacher encouraged pupils to think hard about how their knees flexed to absorb their weight and allow softer contact with the floor.
116. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory, given the current focus on developing other 'core' subjects. Resources have been built up to a good level to provide pupils with good quality equipment and the scheme of work has been aligned with new national requirements. This helps to ensure a balance of different types of activity. Plans to monitor teaching and learning have been made for the coming term. This is needed to support the continuous improvement of standards in the subject.
117. A drawback in the current arrangements for physical education is the timing of sessions in the hall. Although pupils have two sessions per week, they are constrained in the amount of activity that can be undertaken in any one lesson by the time limit of approximately twenty minutes. This makes it difficult to fully develop the skills being introduced.