

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Holy Family Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided  
Primary School**

Benfleet, Essex

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115158

Acting Headteacher: Mrs H Minter

Reporting inspector: Kath Beck  
10090

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> January 2000

Inspection number: 188615

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Infant and Junior
School category:	Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	4 - 11 years of age
Gender of pupils:	Boys and girls
School address:	Kents Hill Road, Benfleet, Essex.
Postcode:	SS7 5PX
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. A. Ketterer
Date of previous inspection:	01/07/1996 - 04/07/1996

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Kath Beck	Registered Inspector	Under fives	What sort of school is it?
		Information and communication technology	How high are standards? How well are children taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Doug Binfield	Lay Inspector		Children's attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the school care for its children?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Lyne Lavender	Team Inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to the children?
		Music	
		Physical Education	
Alan Andrews	Team Inspector	Special educational needs	
		English	
		Art	
		Design and technology	
Martyn Richards	Team Inspector	Equal opportunities	How well is the school led and managed?
		Science	
		History	
		Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Holy Family is a Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic School for 222 boys and girls aged 4 to 11 years. At the time of the inspection there were 29 children in the reception (under five's class), 19 of whom were under five. The school is in a period of transition. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher, following the retirement of a long -serving headteacher. All teachers, except one, have joined the staff since the last inspection in 1996. At the time of the last inspection there were 235 children, taught in 9 classes, some of which were mixed age classes. Currently children are taught in 8 single aged classes by 8 full-time and two part-time teachers. Two teachers, as a job share, teach one class.

Holy Family is about the same size as other primary schools and is under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Brentwood. All children are baptised Catholics and come from the Parish of Holy Family with St. Thomas More, Hadleigh. Very few children come from the ethnic minorities. There are no children from travellers or refugee communities or with English as a second language. Few children are eligible for free school meals. A small number of children, have special educational needs. Children start school in the September of the academic year in which they are five. Baseline assessments made shortly after children start school show they have good social skills but academic skills range widely from well below average to above average, but mostly they are average.

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

Holy Family School is a good and effective school, which provides good value for money. Children in the under fives class make a very good start to their education. Standards in national tests are high, especially in English and mathematics, when the children leave at age 11. This is because teaching is consistently good throughout Key Stage 2 and children work hard. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined to raise standards further.

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

- Results in National Curriculum Tests in English and mathematics are very high, largely as a result of the school's commitment to enable all children to reach the expected standard, level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Teaching in the under fives is excellent and it is consistently good throughout Key Stage 2.
- Music, both singing and instrumental music in Key Stage 2 is high quality and a major strength of the school.
- A strong family ethos and caring community promote children's confidence to learn.
- Children's attitudes to learning are very good and this makes a big contribution to the progress they make in lessons.
- Relationships with parents are very good and this does much to enhance children's learning through the provision of resources or help with homework.

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

- Standards of attainment and quality of teaching in Key Stage 1, especially in Year 1 need to be raised.
- Children's attainment in information and communication technology throughout the school is below that which is expected. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements, as the school does not have the appropriate resources.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning is not checked often enough.
- Teachers make too little use of assessment to plan work that meets children's particular needs especially in Key Stage 1, and the higher attainers in science throughout the school.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements regarding teacher appraisal and information to parents.
- Too little is done to help children develop an appreciation of the richness and variety of contemporary multicultural society.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection in 1996, is satisfactory. At that time, Holy Family was found to be a good school, providing good value for money, and this remains the case. At the end of Key Stage 2 it continues to perform well when compared to all schools and similar schools. It has continued to increase the number of children reaching expected levels in national tests by the age of 11. All the action points from the previous inspection have been tackled, some more successfully than others. Health and safety matters have been resolved as a priority. Teaching has improved significantly. Subject policies and schemes of work effectively support the provision of a broad curriculum, including practical and creative work. Children are set individual targets for improvement each term and work is planned in line with the National Curriculum levels appropriate for each age group. The provision of a library has helped children to develop appropriate research skills. However, the weakness in teaching, identified in 1996 in Key Stage 1 when lessons were said to lack pace and challenge, remains, especially in Year 1. Standards in information and communication technology are still unsatisfactory and a system for the appraisal of teachers has not been implemented. The school has set targets for improvement in English and mathematics and is on course to meet these with ease. The school has a good capacity for improvement as the staff and governors are determined to do their best for all children.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	A	A	A*	A
mathematics	B	A	A	A
science	C	C	B	C

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

\* similar schools means, schools with less than 8% children eligible for free school meals.

This table indicates that the school has sustained and improved its standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. When compared to all schools, standards were very high in English in 1999. All children reached the expected level 4, in English and this means the school was in the top 5% of schools nationally. Over the past three years the schools results have improved in line with the national trend at the end of Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards over time in reading and writing, while above the national average, have declined, while the national trend has risen. In mathematics, results over the past three years have been lower than those in English. In the past year, the number of children reaching the expected level 2 has improved. When compared to similar schools, standards in English and mathematics are well below average and average, in writing. This is because the work is undemanding. The school's targets to improve standards are easily met, especially in science, and are therefore not challenging enough. The school has successfully focused on children attaining the expected level 4 at age 11, rather than challenging more children to achieve even higher levels of attainment. Current achievement in Year 6, from lessons and scrutiny of the work shows that many children are achieving well in terms of their earlier attainment in English and mathematics.

While standards are high in English and mathematics, they are not yet high enough in science. Standards are not high enough for children in Key Stage 1. Children under five are achieving very well for their age and are on course to meet and exceed the nationally expected desirable learning outcomes<sup>1</sup> at the end of the foundation year. Achievements in singing and instrumental music are major strengths of the school and recognised by many in the local community. This stems from high quality music teaching and commitment of the children to do well. Achievements in art, design and technology, history, geography and physical education are in line with expectations for children of aged seven and eleven.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Most children listen attentively and concentrate well. Children in the under five's class are very eager to learn as the work is inspiring.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. High standards of behaviour are consistent throughout the school, in lessons, the dining hall and the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Children are well-mannered, polite and show respect for each other. Children work very well together in small groups.
Attendance	Excellent. The attendance rate is very high in comparison to other schools. The unauthorised rate of absence is much lower than the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 91.2% of lessons. It was excellent in 3.5%, very good in 19.3%, good in 36.8%, satisfactory in 31.6% and unsatisfactory in 8.8%. This is a significant improvement since 1996 when 20% of teaching was unsatisfactory. Much of the high quality teaching is found in the under fives and Year 6. Children under five learn very quickly as their level of independence, interest and concentration is very high. Children in Key Stage 2 complete substantial amounts of work, while those in Key Stage 1 acquire skills and knowledge at a slower rate. There is a marked difference in the quality of teaching in English and mathematics between key stages. In both subjects, teaching is at least satisfactory in Years 2 to 6. Often it is good and very good in Year 6. It is high quality in the under fives class but unsatisfactory in Year 1. Children are managed very well through the provision of interesting tasks, which capture children's interests and provoke high levels of discussion. In turn this promotes children's confidence and self-esteem. Support staff and resources are managed very well. In the under five's class the teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and methods of teaching for children of this age and meets all needs. In Year 1, teachers are less confident in their subject knowledge and have less experience of teaching children in this year group. Teaching methods are often inappropriate and work does not motivate the children to work independently and try out their ideas. Overall, skills in literacy and numeracy are effectively taught, although they are not extended fully

<sup>1</sup> Desirable learning outcomes are the expected achievements of children at the age of 5 in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development, physical development, and personal and social development.



across other areas of the curriculum. The school has placed a strong emphasis on enabling children to reach the expected levels of attainment at age seven and eleven. As a result, there has been little challenge in all subjects for higher attaining children in Key Stage 1 and in science in Key Stage 2.

### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good in the under fives. Children in Key Stage 1 and 2 experience a broad curriculum that promotes their musical skills very well. There are weaknesses in science and information and communication technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Children are supported effectively by teaching and support staff, although the targets in their individual education plans are rarely included in lesson plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school's provision is underpinned by its religious character and ethos. Moments of wonder, empathy and humility arise in many subjects. Children of all ages are excited by their successes and that of others and are open in expressing their feelings of joy in art and music.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Health and safety arrangements and systems for promoting high standards of behaviour are strong features of the school. Teachers make too little use of assessment to plan future work.

The school works very well in partnership with parents. Parents welcome the significant improvement in links with the Church and communications between the school and home. The consistent implementation of the homework policy and home school agreement keeps parents very well informed about their child's progress so that they can support their children effectively in their learning. Children are offered a good range of opportunities, which support their personal development well. A broad range of visits by speakers, visits to the theatre, and community events do much to broaden their experience of life.

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

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	During this interim period, the acting headteacher, staff and governors are working well together to take the school forward and improve standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Many governors are new and developing their role in shaping the direction of the school. They have an understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school evaluates its performance appropriately using statistical information to identify areas of strength and weaknesses. However, monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching lacks rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Governors seek to apply principles of best value appropriately. The school's budget is carefully and effectively managed to ensure priorities identified by staff and governors are met. There are weaknesses in the adequacy of resources in the under five's class, and Year 1 classes as well as in information and communication technology.

Staffing and accommodation are sufficient. Governors and staff have met their responsibilities well with regard to buildings, ensuring the children have an attractive environment in which to work.

## 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>• High standards of achievement.</li> <li>• Children of all abilities are given every encouragement.</li> <li>• The Catholic ethos, which pervades all aspects of the school.</li> <li>• Very good relationships between staff and children.</li> <li>• High standards of behaviour.</li> <li>• Good teaching.</li> <li>• Very good relationships with parents.</li> <li>• The school is led and managed well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The range of out of school activities.</li> <li>• A reduction in the size of some classes.</li> </ul>

The inspection team fully supports the parents' positive views. Children of all abilities are given a lot of encouragement but the work of the higher attaining children, especially in Key Stage 1, and science throughout the school, lacks challenge. The range of out of school clubs is satisfactory. The headteacher and governors are doing their best to reduce class sizes to 30. However, this is difficult as there are budgetary constraints and the school's published number to admit is 40. As the school has tried to maintain single age classes, the size of classes varies according to the number of children in the year group. Government initiatives and funding are assisting the current reduction in the size of Year 1 classes.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards in the under fives are very good. In the past two years, baseline assessments made soon after children enter school indicated that children enter the school with good social skills but a wide range of academic skills from below average to above average. Broadly their attainment on entry is average. This is a change from the previous inspection when attainment on entry was said to be good. At that time, baseline assessment was unavailable. The majority of children in the current under five's class are on course to meet and exceed the expected standards set out in the desirable learning outcomes in all aspects. This is because children are taught very well and given challenging tasks, which are planned very well to meet their differing abilities and promote their independence to try things for themselves. Higher attaining children in this age group are already reading and writing at levels expected in the early stages of the National Curriculum.
2. Test results show that children achieve high standards, especially in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. There is clear evidence that the number of children reaching the expected levels in these tests has increased over the past three years. Standards in science are not as good as those in English and mathematics as the school does too little to help the higher attainers realise their potential in the subject.
3. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics achieved by children aged 7 are not high enough. When compared to similar schools, they are low in reading and mathematics and broadly in line with the national average in writing. Weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and teaching in Key Stage 1 that were identified at the time of the last inspection are still evident. The children's work shows that they spend much time during the activity part of mathematics or literacy lessons completing worksheets that require colouring or filling in the missing words, limiting opportunities to use and apply skills learned before. Many children are achieving below the expected level 2b, especially in mathematics. Higher attainers are not challenged well and tasks do not match children's ability. Often all children are set the same task.
4. Eleven year olds have sustained high standards in English over the past three years. In 1999, results in national tests were very high and this placed the school in the top 5% nationally for English. Standards in mathematics are high and above average in science. Taking all three subjects together, children do very well when compared to children in similar schools, except in science.
5. The introduction of personal targets in personal and academic development in English and mathematics has motivated the children, particularly well in Key Stage 2. However, throughout the school children are rarely reminded of the targets they are to achieve so that they can judge the speed of their progress and agree new ones. For children with special educational needs, work is not matched sufficiently in class, to the targets set in their individual education plans. Work shows that children learn at a much faster pace in the under fives and in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1. The school has set targets for improvement. These have been exceeded already in science. Targets set for each year group in English and mathematics are based on a realistic assessment of children's progress. Even so they are not challenging enough as the school is well on course to meet them.

- 6 In other subjects, the children achieve very well in singing and instrumental music by the time they leave the school. They sing very clearly and with expression so that the mood of each song is conveyed with deep emotion to the audience. Older children learn to play the flute, cello, violin, and recorder to a high standard. The school orchestra has a very good reputation in the community. In the work seen throughout the school, children are achieving levels expected for their age in art, design and technology, history, geography and physical education. In art, there are some high quality examples of clay work in Year 2 and working in the style of Gustav Klimt in Year 3. Puppets in Year 4 show children's ability to design and make good quality, imaginative puppets to act out their stories written in literacy sessions. In history, children know about the main characteristics of historical periods such as Tudor and Victorian times. In geography, children know about maps and their use. At age eleven, children have appropriate games skills and the school reports the majority of children can swim the required twenty-five metres. Standards are below expectation in information and communication technology as the children spend too little time learning the subject. Lack of resources means children are unable to learn aspects of control technology, which is part of the National Curriculum.
- 7 There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls throughout the school. Boys are marginally better at mathematics than girls are. Girls in Key Stage 1 are slightly better at writing. Over time Key Stage 2 results in English, mathematics and science indicate a rising trend that is broadly in line with the national trend. Key Stage 1 reading and writing standards are declining, compared to the national trend, which is rising, although in mathematics, results are improving faster than the national trend. Even so, standards in mathematics are lower than in reading and writing and have been similar to or lower than those in other schools over the past three years.
- 8 Higher attaining children perform better in English than in any other subject in Key Stage 2. Children learn at a much faster rate in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1 and results show significant added value over time.
- 9 Teacher assessments in both key stages differ from tests and indicate low expectation or generous marking in Key Stage 1. Teacher assessments are closer to test results in Key Stage 2. This is an improvement from the previous inspection where assessment linked to appropriate levels of achievement in the National Curriculum was a key issue. Nevertheless, the lack of an induction procedure for new staff makes it hard for them to use assessment effectively to plan work for children's particular needs, especially in Key Stage 1.
- 10 Children with special educational needs in both key stages achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their abilities as they are supported effectively by additional support staff. This means they can complete similar work to the rest of the class. However, teachers' planning takes too little account of the targets set in their individual education plans to enhance progress.
- 11 Literacy and numeracy are used across the curriculum, although links with science and information and communication technology are limited. In English, at age 11, children read well and choose a wide range of genres. They write imaginatively with a good use of spelling and punctuation. Speaking and listening skills are good, especially in Key Stage 2 and enable children to take part in discussions with increasing confidence. These were integrated well into a Year 4 design and technology project. Children wrote plays to perform with puppets they had designed and made. In mathematics, very good mental arithmetic skills and accurate working in the four rules of number support high standards.

- 12 At the end of Key Stage 2, current work indicates that over three-quarters of children are on course to meet expected standards in English, mathematics and science. Achievements are higher in Key Stage 2, as children are often engaged in activities, which require effort, concentration and perseverance. In Year 1, especially, children do not always understand their work and what is required of them and this holds back their learning. Children in the under five's class are challenged to a very high level of imagination and independence so that they try things for themselves and learn very well from each other and their mistakes. Work is undemanding in Year 1 and children are not receiving enough stimulating work to extend their thinking. In this way, children, especially the more able, are held back.

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

- 13 The school's provision for children's personal development and the promotion of Catholic, Christian attitudes and values is highly valued by parents, as it makes a significant contribution to children's learning. Since the last inspection, attendance levels and the arrangements for children's personal development have improved.
- 14 Children have very good attitudes to school. In nearly all lessons they listen carefully, concentrate well and join in discussions with interest. Attitudes to learning are often outstanding in literacy and numeracy in the under fives' class. Children listen attentively, almost hanging on the teacher's every word, during the introductory session. In group work, they support each other very well, work independently without frequent reference to the teacher, confidently practising their new found skills. In the plenary session children speak confidently sharing their ideas. They complete substantial amounts of work in the time set. Similar characteristics are found in many Key Stage 2 lessons and art in Year 2. Since the last report there has been an improvement in the attitudes of children at Key Stage 1. There are instances of inattention that impairs learning but this stems from inappropriate teaching methods, which do not capture children's interest, and limits their involvement in lessons. Children work hard and participate well in all class activities. Throughout the school the use of low quality worksheets and copying exercises limits opportunities for children to use their initiative.
- 15 Children's behaviour is very good which enables children to work in a very good atmosphere, free from oppressive behaviour. This is a consistent feature in all aspects of school life. Serious misbehaviour and bullying rarely occurs. There have been no exclusions in the last three years. Children from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into the life of the school. Children are courteous and helpful to other children and adults. They listen to each other's ideas and respect the school rules.
- 16 Relationships and the provision for personal development are very good. Teachers and other adults have a very good rapport with the children, which teaches children to be polite, helpful and to show respect for others. Children co-operate well with one another, especially when working in small groups. They are well-mannered and helpful to visitors. Personal development is supported effectively by the wide range of educational visits, participation in school clubs and support for charities. Children's involvement in the social and fund-raising events organised jointly by the school and the Parish gives them a good sense of responsibility. Year 6 children act as prefects and the house point system for juniors is popular and effective in promoting high standards of work and behaviour.
- 17 Attendance is excellent. The attendance rate is very high in comparison with other schools. Unauthorised absence is much lower than the national average. A few children arrive late. This delays a prompt start to learning each day for some children. Steps are being taken to address this matter.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 18 Children are mostly, taught well. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 91.2% of lessons. In 3.5% it is excellent, mostly in the under fives and Year 6. Teaching is very good in 19.3% per cent, good in 36.8% and satisfactory in 31.6% of lessons. It is unsatisfactory in 8.8% all in Year 1. Overall, this is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. At that time, teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better in 80% of the lessons. One fifth of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching was better in Key Stage 2 than Key Stage 1. This is still the case. Changes in teaching staff have had a significant impact. Now, teaching is excellent in the under fives, it remains unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Teaching is often strong at the end of Key Stage 2 where the majority of lessons seen were very good. This has a significant impact on children's achievements and learning.
- 19 In the under fives, the teacher's knowledge, understanding and teaching of basic skills is excellent. These together with very effective planning and high expectations enable children to apply considerable intellectual, physical and creative effort to all their tasks. The children know the classroom routines well so that time is used very well. This allows them to feel confident and acquire skills, especially those in literacy and numeracy, rapidly by completing substantial amounts of work. Skills in literacy and numeracy are taught very well through practical and written tasks that make the children think hard. Tasks are demanding so that children are fully engaged in their work. They show great delight in using new found knowledge to write simple sentences, spelling accurately, without help from the teacher. The teacher gives very good feedback to the children encouraging them to try things for themselves, praising and encouraging their efforts to promote high levels of self-esteem. Children are clear about the work they have to do and receive good feedback on how they can improve.
- 20 Explanations by the teacher and opportunities for the children to demonstrate what they can do helps them to see how well they are doing and gives them confidence. For example, in literacy children are invited to write words to make a sentence, such as 'I went to the park at the weekend' on a flip chart. Higher attaining children use simple dictionaries to help them find the words they need when writing on their own. Children with special educational needs are well-supported so that they can play a full part in all elements of the lessons.
- 21 The difference in the quality of teaching between Key Stage 1 and 2 results from teachers' varying subject knowledge and expertise with a particular age group, especially Year 1. In Key Stage 1, teachers' knowledge is better in art and physical education than literacy and numeracy. This is because some teachers in this key stage are new and have missed training in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This combined with the lack of a clear induction policy means these teachers have insufficient knowledge to promote the rapid acquisition of skills in these subjects. They use inappropriate whole class teaching methods that make it difficult for children of varying abilities to keep up and sustain their interest. As a result children learn at a much slower rate.
- 22 In Years 2 to 6, teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to teach basic skills, such as phonic awareness and mental arithmetic, effectively, so that children acquire knowledge and skills well. As children are managed very well and expectations of behaviour are high, teachers ensure children work in a positive and stimulating atmosphere. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to aid learning. Practical tasks capture children's interest and ensure high levels of concentration, more than is the case with undemanding copying tasks completing low quality work sheets.

- 23 Recent training has enhanced teachers' knowledge of information and communication technology. It is taught in a small computer suite, consisting of six computers, by a teaching assistant with good knowledge of the software, according to the plans written by the class teacher. Groups of twelve children, spend up to half an hour a week learning the subject. This is insufficient to gain the required skills. Lack of classroom resources means there are few computers for children to practise on after their lesson. Resources are dated and children are unable to apply skills learned on computers at home. Aspects, such as word processing and data bases, observed during the inspection, were taught well but information and communication technology is often seen as a separate subject rather than one that can be used across all areas of the curriculum.
- 24 Homework is used very well throughout the school to enhance children's learning and links well with work done in class. It enhances research skills in history and geography as well as English and mathematics.
- 25 Expectations of what children can attain are good in Key Stage 2 and sometimes unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1. Year 6 teachers know the children well and expect a lot of them especially in English and mathematics. However, in Key Stage 1 and in science throughout the school, teachers make too little provision for higher attaining children. Targets set for improvement each term are not checked often enough to find out when children have achieved them and move on to the next one.
- 26 Lesson plans are satisfactory. Teachers in both key stages set out clearly what is to be taught and how children are to learn it. Work is matched well to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Especially in Key Stage 2, activities are planned to be challenging and make the best use of time. However, lesson plans give little consideration to the checks to be made to ensure children have grasped new learning. It is unclear how teachers ascertain what children have learned in each lesson and how this information is used to plan the next stage in learning, especially for the higher attaining children.
- 27 Teaching methods are good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. Teachers use a good range of whole class discussion, demonstration, followed by group tasks. This stimulates children's interest. Clear explanations provide new knowledge and effective questioning reminds them what has been learned before. Often work is linked to children's daily lives which makes learning purposeful. However, in most subjects in Key Stage 1 and occasionally in Key Stage 2, children are asked to complete worksheets. They do this by colouring in a picture or filling in missing numbers or words. This hinders opportunities for children to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and does not allow them to show initiative in their work. Sometimes teachers guide the children's work too closely, which limits opportunities for them to use their own ideas.
- 28 The quality and use of day to day assessment are unsatisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. Although teachers give guidance on what children are to do during lessons, they give little information about what children need to do to improve. Marking of work is inconsistent and usually consists of ticks and praise rather than targets for improvement. As a result, especially in English, children have little idea about what they do well and how they need to improve. In Key Stage 2, teachers give useful advice that sustains children's intellectual effort so that they acquire the knowledge and skills they need at a faster rate.
- 29 Teaching of children with special educational needs is good. The specialist teacher knows the children well and motivates them effectively with good use of praise and encouragement. She provides a good range of activities based on building reading, writing and numeracy skills systematically. Children enjoy the tasks which preserve their self-esteem so that they can do

their best to keep up with the other children. Communications between the special educational needs co-ordinator, teachers and teaching assistants are satisfactory and means these children are supported effectively within their class and group work. Individual educational plans are up to date and well matched to children's needs. There is room for improvement in the communication of targets in the children's individual education plans so that teachers can link work closely to them in lessons and enhance progress.

- 30 High quality teaching in music means children who are gifted musically are challenged very well through instrumental music tuition and the school orchestra. All children are taught to play the recorder and sing to a high standard.

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

- 31 The overall planning of the curriculum, including the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is satisfactory. Specific detail included in individual lesson plans, except in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, does not take sufficient account of the needs of the higher attainers and those with special educational needs. Activities, therefore, are not planned specifically for these groups and they underachieve as a result. This is particularly so in English and maths at Key Stage 1 and is reflected in the results of national tests at age seven. A rich and well-balanced curriculum in the under five's class enables children of all abilities to reach high standards. This is because work is well planned to challenge children's particular needs and challenge their intellectual and physical abilities. In Key Stage 1 and 2, children with special educational needs are included in all aspects of the curriculum and effectively supported in class but few links are made between the targets set in their individual education plans.
- 32 The school's ethos is one of care and a high priority is placed on children's personal development. Children learn about the use and misuse of drugs and sex education through the health education programme. Opportunities in lessons allow them to ask and answer questions but there are occasions, for example in science and geography, when too much is done by class teachers, which stifles children's initiative.
- 33 The school's provision for the spiritual and moral development of the children is heavily influenced by its religious character and ethos, but is strongly present in its secular curriculum and day to day life. This was a major strength at the last inspection and remains so. Children learn to reflect on, and respect their own beliefs and values, and those of others. Moments of wonder, empathy and humility arise in many subjects. In literacy work, for example, younger children discussed how people should care for each other, and how others might feel in a given situation. The children are excited by others' successes as well as their own, and are open in expressing their feelings of joy in music and art.
- 34 Teachers comment on fairness, courtesy and consideration for others whenever occasion arises. They give examples of kindness and honesty in their everyday dealings with the children. They use a thank you book to record their appreciation of individual children's kind or helpful deeds. The teachers are swift to apologise to the children when they are in the wrong.
- 35 The children develop their social skills through good co-operation in class groupwork, and through taking responsibility for small practical tasks in the school day. They are very alert to the needs of others. Older children helped new entrants at lunchtime, and learned about the needs of the elderly and infirm in a literacy lesson. The children recognise a broader social responsibility by contributing generously to charity. The school's support for children's cultural development is shown in the strength of its music and singing, in the attractive displays of literature around the school, and in the good range of visits provided for the children. However, too little is done to help children develop an appreciation of the richness and variety of contemporary multicultural society. This constitutes a significant weakness in an otherwise strong programme.



- 36 Considerable efforts have been made to ensure the provision of a broad and more balanced curriculum since the last inspection when it was a key issue. All subjects are now included and the focus is rightly on literacy and numeracy. The programmes of study based on national guidance are now in place for art, geography and design and technology and teachers follow these well. Despite efforts to balance the curriculum, with the appointment of a classroom assistant to teach information and communication technology, there are still serious deficiencies in the control aspects and the school is therefore not meeting statutory requirements. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum, for example, data handling in mathematics, is not developed, as the subject is taught in isolation. In science, the work is too prescribed and children lack opportunities to use their skills and knowledge in investigations. This holds learning back, especially for higher attainers.
- 37 The school has a very strong tradition in music, which it has maintained very successfully over the years despite staff changes. Both orchestra and choir perform publicly in the local Catholic Church and at the annual area music festival with neighbouring schools. Seasonal concerts are a feature of school life to which parents and members of the local community are invited. The standard of singing is very high and all children in Key Stage 2 play the recorder well.
- 38 Educational visits are planned to places of interest, for example, the Braintree museum. Here, children experience what it was like to be at school in Victorian times. It provides them with additional insights into the past when studying this historical period in school. A satisfactory number of clubs is provided for older children although these are less than at the previous inspection. These are popular and include orchestra, recorder, netball and football.

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

- 39 The school cares very well for its children and this enables the provision of a secure and caring environment, which ensures a firm foundation for learning. This is a very strong feature of the school, which is much appreciated by parents and the children.
- 40 Very good arrangements are in place for children's welfare, health and safety. Since the last inspection a detailed child protection policy has been adopted. Staff now show due diligence in implementing procedures relating to health, safety and child protection. The buildings have been improved by the provision of facilities for the disabled. Accident records are well-maintained and the arrangements for dealing with first aid and illness are efficient. The personal, social and health education programme is planned well. This includes appropriate provision for sex education and awareness about the use and misuse of drugs.
- 41 Procedures for promoting high attendance are good and make an important contribution to the school's exemplary attendance levels. Systems for following up unexplained absences are particularly effective. Criticisms in the previous report about weaknesses in registration work have largely been addressed, although there are still minor shortcomings in recording reasons for absence in some registers.
- 42 There are very good systems for promoting high standards of behaviour which enables children to work in a positive and supportive atmosphere. The school's approach is made clear in the home school agreement and all staff place emphasis on encouraging good behaviour. This is backed by a comprehensive policy covering reward systems and procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour, including bullying. This has been fully and effectively implemented.

- 43 Procedures for monitoring children's personal development are good and those relating to academic progress are satisfactory. Teachers know the children well. They record details about personal achievements and characteristics on the pupil profile sheets. This is used well for setting termly targets for the child's personal and social development. Information kept about progress in curriculum areas, with particular emphasis on English and mathematics, is useful but gives little detailed guidance about what children know and can do. Each pupil is set a target for improvement in English, mathematics and social development in the forthcoming term. This procedure is very popular with parents as it gives them an idea of their child's progress, but there is scope for improvement in the way in which teachers check children's progress towards them.
- 44 The school does not have a written policy for the assessment of academic attainment and teachers use their own individual methods. Procedures for assessing what children learn are generally satisfactory but the use made of them is not. Individual targets based on National Curriculum levels have been set in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 which reflect the school's targets in these subjects. There is some good practice in the use of these targets for planning future work, for example in mathematics in Year 6. Generally, however, the assessment of children's strengths and weaknesses is not sufficiently used in planning future work, and this is a key issue from the inspection. Teachers set their own individual tests at the end of topics but this is proving to be difficult in mathematics now that the National Numeracy Strategy is in place. In Key Stage 2, end of year optional national tests are used in English and mathematics to check progress. The results of Standard Assessment Tests are analysed but action is not always taken where needed, as, for example, in the case of the higher attainers at Key Stage 1.
- 45 Effective records are kept of children's personal and social development which show how well they are known and understood by their teachers. Records of academic attainment, for example in reading, are maintained and termly targets are sent home to parents, which they are pleased to receive. However, there is little evidence of specific action on them and there are no records of whether or not they have been achieved. The school's procedures for identifying children with special educational needs are satisfactory and comply with the National Code of Practice. Individual education plans for children with special educational needs have realistic targets but these are rarely included in planning class lessons.

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

- 46 The school works very well in partnership with parents which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Parents are very pleased with the school, particularly the high standards children achieve, the attitudes it promotes and meetings with parents. Results from the questionnaires indicate overwhelming satisfaction with nearly every aspect of the school's work. However, over a third of respondents feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Inspection evidence shows that there is a small but satisfactory number of school clubs for the orchestra and for different sports. Children also have opportunities to take part in concerts, social activities, musical events and activities organised jointly with the Church.
- 47 A few parents are concerned about class sizes. There are up to 37 children in the Year 3 and Year 4 classes. This is because the school has tried to keep children of one age group in the

same class. In each class children are supported effectively by teaching assistants. Inspection evidence indicates that the children in both classes learn well, although time for individual discussion with the teacher is sometimes limited.

- 48 The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is excellent. Parents fully appreciate the recent introduction of an open and welcoming approach. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully provided better information about the areas to be taught, which helps parents to support their children at home. Parents receive very good information about events in school from regular newsletters and about their child's progress at consultation meetings with teachers and in the annual written reports. This enables all parents, including those with children with special educational needs, to have a clear view of what their child can do and what they need to do to improve. The format of the governors' annual report to parents has been improved, although statutory requirements are not fully met. It does not include details about progress on the action plan arising from the previous inspection or about the provision for the professional development of teachers. Absence levels are not shown in the prospectus, despite a comment on this in the previous inspection report.
- 49 There are very good links with parents. Parents are very interested and supportive to children's learning. The new home school agreement has been well-implemented. As a result, homework arrangements are much improved and make an effective contribution to learning. Such work is set well and marked regularly. A few parents help in classes whilst others provide invaluable help with school trips and other activities. Parents' views on important policy issues are carefully considered as part of the governors' consultation arrangements. Meetings and events at the school are well-attended. The Friends Association is very successful in arranging social and fund raising activities, which helps to raise substantial sums for additional resources and buildings for the school. Such events do much to support the family and community ethos of the school.

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

- 50 During this interim period, the acting headteacher, staff and governors are doing well to move the school forward. Many of the key staff and governors are very new to the school and have yet to fully establish their roles. The school development plan provides a clear direction for school development over the next year and this now includes the impact on children's attainment. Day to day management and financial administration is good. The acting headteacher is successfully sustaining the aims and values of the school, building an atmosphere in which staff and governors work well together as a team so that there is a strong commitment to good relationships and raising standards. A particular recent success has been the promotion of the partnership between the school and parents. While the school is successful in meeting the learning needs of most of its children, including those with special educational needs, the progress of higher attaining children is not monitored rigorously enough and is unsatisfactory in some important subjects.
- 51 Since September 1999, the delegation of management responsibilities has improved. Subject co-ordinators are responsible for drawing up and implementing action plans, both in the immediate and longer term, for their subjects. These are based on an audit of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The co-ordinator for information and communication technology has a very clear view about the development required in the subject to enable children to reach at least expected standards. However, developments in the subject are limited in the current financial year by lack of resources. Also the co-ordinator for the under fives has done very well to establish the class and its curriculum in a very short time.

- 52 There is a good, shared commitment to improvement and the school clearly has the capacity to succeed. The acting headteacher, staff and governors have a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of standards in the school and how they compare with all schools and similar schools. They are determined to raise standards further, especially in Key Stage 1. The establishment of an independent nursery within the school and specific provision for the under fives is clear evidence of this. However, staff and governors are less aware of the weaknesses in teaching and what to do about them. This is because there is currently no formal system for the regular appraisal of teachers and monitoring the quality of teaching. The local authority has monitored initiatives, such as the National Literacy Strategy and given the school very positive feedback. Some monitoring of performance and targets for improvement were set in previous years, but the system has come to a halt and there is little evidence of target setting for current staff. As a result the undemanding level of work in Year 1 has not been addressed to improve the rate of children's learning. Except in English and mathematics in Year 6, little has been done to identify ways in which learning of the higher attaining children can be accelerated. Developments outlined in the development plan indicate the targets in terms of percentages of children expected to achieve the expected standards in English, mathematics and science. These are too low in science and though realistic in English and mathematics, should be reached without too much challenge.
- 53 The previous inspection report said that the governing body was very supportive and had a strong commitment to the school. This continues to be so. Governors are well-informed about the school through regular visits, which they report back to the full governing body, and conduct their business efficiently. They meet regularly and have a good structure of committees. However, statutory responsibilities are not met with regard to the information and communication technology curriculum, and a formal system of appraisal of teachers' performance. In addition, the governors' annual report to parents does not include information about progress on the school's action plan following the previous inspection, and the percentages of children's authorised and unauthorised absence have been omitted from the school prospectus.
- 54 The school's budget is carefully and efficiently managed, and used to ensure that the priorities governors and staff identify are met. The budget is finely balanced, with only a very small sum kept in hand to meet unexpected circumstances. The governors are fully aware of this, and monitor spending very carefully. The funds made available for the education of children with special educational needs are correctly applied. The school's accommodation is used efficiently, as is the equipment provided to support children's learning. At present the school lacks the hardware and software to provide a full education in information and communication technology. While the school has sufficient qualified and experienced teachers, the absence of systematic programmes for the induction of new staff, and for teacher appraisal, limits their effectiveness. The governors' and headteacher's monitoring of the school's effectiveness is still in its early stages, but they are successful in ensuring that good value is obtained in the use of its resources.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55 In order to improve the school further, governors, acting headteacher and staff should build on the strengths of the school to:

- (1) Improve children's standards of attainment<sup>2</sup> at the end of Key Stage 1 and the quality of teaching, especially in Year 1, by:
  - a) improving teachers' expertise for working with children of this age, particularly in the provision of appropriate teaching methods;
  - b) providing more demanding work in which children are challenged to think hard and reduce the number of worksheets that require colouring in pictures or filling in the missing words;
  - c) indicating in teachers' planning, the different tasks for higher and lower attainers;
  - d) making clear to the children what they need to do to improve.

Paragraphs: 3 - 12, 14, 18, 21 - 27, 31, 52, 74, 76, 79, 81, 89

- (2) Improve attainment in information and communication technology<sup>3</sup> throughout the school by:
  - a) providing resources to ensure National Curriculum requirements are met;
  - b) increasing the amount of time available for children to learn and practise skills across the curriculum;
  - c) recording clearly what children know and can do.

Paragraphs: 6, 36, 74, 105 - 111

- (3) Implement a system for inducting teachers new to the school and for monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning in all subjects, so that teaching is of a consistently high standard throughout the school. This can be done by:
  - a) having a clear focus when observing lessons or scrutinising children's work;
  - b) identifying what each teacher does well to promote successful learning and share this with colleagues;
  - c) agreeing where improvements are needed to make learning more effective.

Paragraphs: 9, 21, 52, 54, 74, 75, 89, 120

- (4) Make better use of assessment to plan work that meets children's particular needs by:
  - a) clarifying what it is children know and can do and using this to plan demanding work;
  - b) linking targets in individual education plans more closely to work that is done in class;
  - c) providing more challenging work in science, which allows children the opportunity to use their initiative.

Paragraphs: 5, 7, 9, 28, 31, 44, 50, 52, 70, 74, 81

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<sup>2</sup> Already identified in the school's development plan.

<sup>3</sup> Part of the school development plan

- (5) Meet statutory requirements with regard to:
- a) the appraisal of teachers;
  - b) information for parents in the school prospectus and governors' annual report.
- Paragraphs: 48, 52

In addition to the issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- make better provision for children to develop an understanding of the multicultural nature of our society.

Paragraph: 35

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	57
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3.5	19.3	36.8	31.6	8.8	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

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	222
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	10
<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y R – Y 6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	18
<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0
<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.2
National comparative data	5.4

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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	16	20	36

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	14	15
	Girls	18	19	20
	Total	32	33	35
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (88)	92 (91)	97 (100)
	National	82 (77)	83 (74)	87 (81)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	14	16	16
	Girls	19	20	20
	Total	33	36	36
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	92 (89)	100 (89)	100 (100)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (85)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	14	19	33

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	14	13	14
	Girls	19	17	17
	Total	33	30	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	100 (94)	91 (75)	94 (78)
	National	70 (63)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	18	14	15
	Total	30	26	27
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (89)	79 (89)	82 (98)
	National	68 (63)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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	4
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	217
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

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

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24
Average class size	28

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

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998
	£
Total income	336,343
Total expenditure	338,918
Expenditure per pupil	1,592
Balance brought forward from previous year	6,270
Balance carried forward to next year	3,695

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	219
Number of questionnaires returned	102

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	30	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	2	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	42	5	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	55	2	0	1
The teaching is good.	63	36	1	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	46	6	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	32	4	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	52	5	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	58	37	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	45	1	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	23	29	7	20

## **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**

- 56 There was no requirement to report separately on this area at the time of the previous inspection.
- 57 Provision in the areas of learning for children under five is very good. Baseline assessments made soon after children enter the school, over the past two years indicate that while children start school with good social skills their academic attainment is broadly average. Work is demanding and challenges children to achieve very high standards. Children learn very quickly and the majority are on course to meet the nationally expected desirable learning outcomes at the end of the reception year. Some are already achieving at the early levels of the English and mathematics National Curriculum.

#### **Personal and social development**

- 58 Personal and social development is excellent within a secure and stimulating environment. The climate for learning is very supportive and motivates children to do their very best at all times. They quickly adapt to class routines and often work independently of the teacher or teaching assistant, confident in their ability to do the work successfully. Children's responses to questions are valued and built upon to underline teaching points. In this way children are confident to try out their ideas in front of the class. For example in the whole class session in literacy, when asked by the teacher they volunteer willingly to try to write words they believe they can spell on a flip chart without fear of "being wrong". Children are very keen to learn and often become absorbed in what they are doing. They work very well in small groups and their attitudes to learning are outstanding. Children listen attentively to adults and to each other. They share equipment very well and take turns when playing games. When using the computer they support and help each other and celebrate each other's successes, sometimes spontaneously clapping to show their recognition of their friends' efforts.
- 59 The adults who form the under fives' team provide excellent role models for the children as they work collaboratively and co-operatively together with a sense of mutual value and respect.

#### **Language and literacy.**

- 60 Language and literacy are taught very well. This enables children to acquire basic literacy skills quickly as they participate in literacy lessons each day. Skills in speaking and listening are developed very well as the teacher chooses many activities that capture children's interest fully. For example, when sharing a 'big book' such as 'We're going on a Bear Hunt', with the teacher, children listen intently and respond in a way that shows they have listened carefully and thought deeply about the story, so that they give confident, clear responses to the teacher's questions. Work is planned very well to meet particular needs. Children are given much encouragement to try and write words using skills learned before. Their success is recognised and valued which spurs them on to do more. Children with special educational needs are supported very well to take part in lessons, develop good speaking and listening skills and vocabulary to help them learn to read and write. Higher attaining children are challenged very well so that they write simple sentences with correct spelling and punctuation and can already read short books with accuracy and enjoyment.

## **Mathematics**

- 61 Mathematics is skilfully taught so that children already know how to count up to fifty. They recognise and write numbers to 20 and the higher attaining children make up and write sums up to 10. Imaginative tasks promote the rapid acquisition of knowledge and skills in all aspects of mathematics including investigative work. Learning is made real for the children. For example, children threw two dice individually to identify numbers to be added together. Able children recorded these and wrote the answer. Least able children threw a dice and built a block of bricks the same as the number on the dice. They repeated the action and then counted the total of the bricks. The children supported each other very well and gave each other time to think and correct any mistakes. The practical nature of the tasks motivated the children very well and made learning real. In addition to skills in number and mental arithmetic, children know the names of flat shapes, such as circles, squares and triangles and have gained an awareness of coins such as 10p, 20p, by playing in 'the shop'.

## **Knowledge and understanding of the world.**

- 62 Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. This aspect is taught very well through visits into the local environment. Learning about the world is brought to life by focusing on holidays which children have taken both in this country and abroad. Children know they need a passport if travelling abroad and designed and made one of their own. This involved using skills in literacy and mathematics. They have good knowledge of life in the past and now, particularly in the way people like to travel. In science, children know much about growing up, having studied pictures of themselves as babies and how they have changed over 4 or 5 years. Skills in information and communication technology are good, especially in the use of mathematics programmes to reinforce learning within the numeracy sessions.

## **Physical development**

- 63 Achievement and progress in physical development is good. Children have good manipulative skills, cutting, sticking and painting with care. Tools and equipment are used safely. In physical education they acquire good skills in throwing and catching, changing direction on command and working co-operatively with a partner or in a small group. Available space is used well, and children listen attentively to the teacher's explanations and practise skills with concentration and care. They show very mature attitudes when changing for physical education, dressing and undressing themselves with little fuss.

## **Creative development**

- 64 Achievement and learning in creative development is very good. The teacher provides demanding activities to promote independence and the acquisition of skills. These are linked to other areas of the curriculum. For example, following their work in literacy on the book, 'We're going on a Bear Hunt', children designed and made homes for different sizes of bear. This enabled them to use their imagination to the full as well as solve problems. Speaking and listening skills were promoted well when some children acted out the 'Bear Hunt' with the teaching assistant. They made up their own version. Within the classroom there are opportunities for children to choose to develop their creative skills in the 'telephone corner', art area, 'shop', construction toy area or through the use of playdough or clay. In art, children respond well to the demanding opportunities to represent their ideas in a variety of ways including drawing, painting, colouring and sticking. Very good teaching enables children to learn skills such as mixing colours and choosing different media for best effect.

## Other factors related to the quality of education

- 65 The quality of teaching is excellent in literacy and numeracy and very good in the rest except physical education, where it was good. The teacher and teaching assistant work very well together to ensure a consistently high standard of teaching and support. Communications between the two are very clear so that the assistant is fully aware of what children are to achieve. In turn, assessments made by the assistant are accurate and fed back well to the teacher to plan future work. Their enthusiasm for learning is clearly conveyed to the children so that they are highly motivated to learn and do their best. Lesson plans are very good with a clear focus on what the children of all abilities are to achieve in each lesson or activity. Expectations of what the children can attain are very high and lessons are often planned to challenge children well into the levels of the National Curriculum. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the children has a very high profile in all lessons, which significantly enriches the children's learning experiences. In turn, children often respond with a sense of awe and wonder to the interesting and stimulating activities in which they participate. They enjoy being in the class and respond to activities and lessons with enthusiasm and a sense of anticipation and curiosity.
- 66 Excellent methods and organisation provide children with a wide range of stimulating practical and written activities which promote high standards and children's self-esteem. The pace of lessons is appropriately fast with children being encouraged to listen, think, and respond by providing answers, suggestions, predictions and ideas. These are valued and built on to extend children's knowledge and understanding. Time is used to the full and the teacher makes best use of meagre resources. Not a minute is wasted. Children's attainment is assessed very well so that work matches their precise needs. Feedback in lessons makes it very clear to the children how well they have done and what they need to do to improve.

## ENGLISH

- 67 The previous inspection found that overall attainment in English was in line with national standards and often higher. Observation of lessons during the inspection show that children's attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly in line with national standards. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is now above national standards.
- 68 The school's results in the 1999 reading and writing national assessments for children aged seven were above national standards. However, the percentage of children reading the higher levels in reading tests was well below the national average and in writing it was close to the national average. Overall, results in reading for the four year period 1996-1999 have moved down to just below the national standard. In writing, they have remained consistently above it. Compared to similar schools, the 1999 results in reading were below average and in writing they were broadly in line with the average.
- 69 The school's 1999 results in the national English tests for children aged eleven were very high compared to national standards. The percentage of children reaching the higher levels in the tests was also well above the national average. Overall, results in the period 1996-1999 have been consistently above the national standard and have risen at a faster pace than in most schools. Compared to similar schools, the results are well above average.
- 70 The National Literacy initiative has been introduced satisfactorily and most children respond well to the structures and routines of the literacy hour. Children's learning over time and in lessons at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory overall. However, it is often unsatisfactory at Year 1 in spite of the small class sizes. This is mainly because teachers' expectations of what children can achieve are too low. In particular, the higher attaining children are not sufficiently challenged. Children's learning at Key Stage 2 is consistently good. In both key stages, the learning of

children with special educational needs is satisfactory. The support given by the specialist teacher is good, but work in classrooms is not always linked to the targets set in the children's individual educational programmes.

- 71 At Key Stage 1, children's listening and speaking skills are satisfactory. They join in discussions with enthusiasm, speaking audibly and convey meaning. An example of this was a Year 2 lesson in which children were successfully finding words and phrases to describe characters in a story. However, in some Year 1 lessons there is unnecessary chatter and children do not always listen attentively. This is mostly because tasks are not sufficiently well matched to their abilities. Children enjoy reading and using books. They use letter sounds well to tackle new words. By the age of seven, many read with confidence and to a good standard. Writing skills are satisfactory with a basic understanding of sentence structure, including the use of capitals and full stops. Handwriting is also satisfactory. Letters are usually correctly formed.
- 72 At Key Stage 2, children's speaking and listening skills are good. They respond to questions and take part in discussions with increasing confidence. They are willing to express their views and to give reasons for them. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson when children discussed the impact that large out-of-town superstores have on those unable to travel, such as the elderly and infirm. This work linked well with children's social and moral development. Children's standards of reading and writing are good. Many of them read with fluency and good understanding of the text. They have a good knowledge of books and authors and read regularly at home as well as at school. They write for a range of purposes, including plays, stories, diaries, headlines and reports. The context of what they write is sensible and often imaginative with good use of spelling and punctuation. Some good examples of writing in the style of Edward Lear were seen. Presentation of work is mostly good. Handwriting is neat and legible.
- 73 Overall, teaching is satisfactory, but with a significant difference between the stages. At Key Stage 1, three of the six lessons observed were unsatisfactory, all at Year 1 and this hinders children's progress. At Key Stage 2, there were no unsatisfactory lessons and all but one of those observed was good or very good. This is broadly in line with the findings of the previous inspection. All teachers show a sound understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and have satisfactory or better subject knowledge. Homework is used effectively to support learning, particularly at Key Stage 2. Where teaching is good, teachers know what children are to learn and the purpose of lessons is explained clearly to them. Classes are managed effectively and children are motivated to work hard and behave well. There is a good range of activities and questions are used skilfully to move learning forward. Higher attainers are suitably challenged and extended. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. Tasks are presented well and work builds systematically on previous learning. Activities move ahead at a fast pace and children are given ample opportunities to be actively involved. An example of this was seen in Year 5 lesson in which children identified verbs, adverbs and adjectives from the text. Another example was seen in a Year 6 lesson in which children considered the features of putting forward a point of view effectively. In both these lessons, children showed very good attitudes towards their work and were respectful of others.
- 74 The unsatisfactory teaching in Year 1 takes place when expectations of what children can do are too low. Work set is not sufficiently well matched to children's needs, particularly the higher attainers. Teachers' lesson planning is more concerned with identifying activities rather than what children are to learn. There is an over-reliance on worksheets and insufficient emphasis on the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, children do not always make sufficient progress in their learning. Inappropriate teaching methods mean children become restless and time is lost in trying to regain their attention. Throughout the school, there are few opportunities for children to extend their learning through the use of information and communication technology.
- 75 The co-ordinator is new to the responsibility and did not lead the staff training to introduce the

National Literacy Strategy. She was not involved in the school's target setting for English and has not yet had time from her own class teaching to monitor and evaluate the work in other classes.

## MATHEMATICS

- 76 Standards of attainment in mathematics are average at the end of Key Stage 1 and above average at the end of Key Stage 2. In the 1999 national tests, the number of children reaching the expected level of attainment was well above average at the end of Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 1 many children achieved at the lower level 2c, rather than 2b or 2a. This is not high enough. Compared to similar schools, the number reaching the national average at the age of 7 was below average and at age 11 was well above average. In the previous inspection in 1996, standards were found to be satisfactory or high and since then, they have continued to improve in line with national trends.
- 77 At the end of Key Stage 1, children can count to one hundred and put numbers in order, reading and recording them accurately, matching the number word to the correct digits. In mental arithmetic, they can double and halve numbers, although those with special educational needs find this difficult. Children know the number bonds to twenty and understand simple place value. They recognise common two and three-dimensional shapes drawing them appropriately to show their properties. Children use their mathematical skills to make bar charts and represent data in science and geography. There is not enough extension work for the higher attainers. Worksheets, which are often used, are not sufficiently stimulating to motivate the children to want to learn more. The correct mathematical terms are learned from the under five's class onwards and children learn to spell the words correctly.
- 78 This is continued in Key Stage 2. At the end of this key stage children reach a high standard both in the mental application and the writing down of their work. They show increasing speed and accuracy in exercises using the four rules of number and can use a calculator to check answers. After some practice, they can predict the next square number from a pattern and continue the series. Knowledge of the multiplication tables is patchy and some are being held back because they do not have these facts at their fingertips. Children regularly and successfully use their numeracy skills in investigations, for example, using cubes on a hundred square to solve problems. In work on shape and measurement, drawings are neat and accurate and show good understanding of area, perimeter and volume. They can collect data and represent it accurately as bar charts and line graphs, although this is not developed sufficiently using information and communication technology. Those with special educational needs reach average levels of attainment through the effective additional support they receive. Work is closely matched to the needs of higher attainers so that they reach the standard of which they are capable.
- 79 There is a marked difference between the quality of teaching at Key Stage 1, where it is satisfactory and Key Stage 2 where it is good overall. It ranges from one lesson in Year 1, which was unsatisfactory, to a very good lesson in Year 6. These results are directly related to individual teacher's knowledge of the subject and their skill in teaching it. Where teachers are confident, lessons are well-planned and include a range of problem solving activities where children can apply the skills they have learnt. The National Numeracy Strategy is used effectively to plan lessons taking account of children's different abilities, their individual targets and what has been taught previously. Teaching is thorough in these lessons, children are keen to ask questions and generally make good progress. They work hard and persevere when given challenging investigations and record them neatly in their exercise books. In the lessons where there are weaknesses, teachers are not as well prepared and planning does not take into account the needs of the higher attainers. This is especially so in Key Stage 1, where the concentration has been on children achieving results in line with the national averages. Little extended work is planned for the more able mathematicians and they become restless and underachieve as a result. Children with special educational needs are particularly well-

supported at Key Stage 2 and with this help are able to do similar work to the rest of the class. All are expected to do regular homework to improve their skills in mathematics and most comply with this.

- 80 The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is a key feature in the school's development. A significant emphasis has been placed on staff training to enable teachers to change the structure of daily mathematics lessons to include such aspects as oral and mental arithmetic. Not all have found this easy and their teaching lacks confidence as a result. Special mathematics areas have been made in some classrooms that are attractive and place emphasis on the subject. Interactive displays encourage children to test their knowledge and skills, for example, 'Follow Me', where they are expected to double and halve numbers in a sequence. There has been some monitoring of the teaching of mathematics since the Strategy was implemented but this has been inconsistent because the co-ordinator has taken on more senior responsibilities. School targets have been set in mathematics for the end of Key Stage 2 and individual children's mathematical targets reflect these. Areas of weakness are identified and children and staff work together to improve these and raise standards of attainment.

## SCIENCE

- 81 At the time of the last inspection children's attainment in science was found to be in line with national expectations. The quality of teaching in the subject was satisfactory overall. However, there was some unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 1, and in some lessons children's progress was hindered by undemanding work.
- 82 Attainment remains average in relation to national expectations at the end of both key stages, although the numbers of children achieving above these expectations is not as high as it should be. There has been no change in the quality of teaching, and the weaknesses identified in the last inspection are still evident.
- 83 The 1999 national testing and assessment programme shows that children's attainment at the end of Key Stage 2, over the last four years, has been broadly in line with the national average. Standards in 1999 were higher than in preceding years, with the percentage of children reaching the nationally expected level well above the average. The number reaching the nationally expected level for seven year olds was also very high. However, when the numbers of children achieving above the national expectation is considered, a different picture emerges. The numbers reaching these levels were well below average at the end of Key Stage 1, and close to the national average at the end of Key Stage 2. When children's attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is compared with that in schools with a similar pupil intake, the percentage reaching the national expected level is above average, but the percentage achieving higher levels is below average.
- 84 This data and the findings of the inspection show that while the school is successful in helping a high proportion of its children to reach the nationally expected standard in science, it does too little to help higher attainers realise their potential in the subject.
- 85 Children's attainment when they enter the school is variable from year to year, but broadly average. Most, including those with special educational needs, make steady headway in learning science. The scheme of work has improved markedly since the last inspection and ensures that successive lessons build up children's knowledge and skills in a well-ordered way. The children respond well to their lessons, showing a lively interest, good levels of concentration and a keenness to contribute to class discussions. Their positive and confident manner, together with brisk, well-informed teaching, helps them get the best from their lessons and make sound headway. However, most lessons take little account of those children who learn science quickly or easily, and who need to move ahead speedily to more challenging work. These children usually do the same work as their classmates, and this holds them back.



- 86 The school's science programme covers all the required elements of the National Curriculum. In learning about materials and their properties the younger children recognise materials in daily use, and how they are suited to their purpose. By the time they are eleven they have extended this knowledge. They know about processes for separating mixtures, about solubility and saturation, and about what distinguishes solids from liquids and gases. The younger children know how bulbs light up in an electric circuit, and about the importance of safety when dealing with electricity. By the end of Key Stage 2 most understand magnetism and polarity. They can place switches in series or parallel circuits. Although little work was seen on life processes, it is clear that most older children have a sound grasp of the function of major body organs, and important body systems such as digestion. They know about classes of animals, and about the importance of food chains. In learning this, they build on Key Stage 1 work on the conditions animals and plants need to grow and thrive.
- 87 In the course of the work programme children at both key stages set up experiments and record their results. Their attainment in this aspect of investigative science is below average because the work is too heavily directed by their teachers. They have few opportunities to devise, set up and conduct simple experiments of their own, or to take independent decisions about the measuring and recording of results.
- 88 Of the five science lessons inspected, all but one were satisfactory. One at Key Stage 2 was very good, and one in Year 1 was unsatisfactory. Good oral work was a major strength in many lessons. The teachers led discussions confidently, asking challenging questions that made the children think hard. They know the subject well, and this enables them to select motivating activities for the children, capturing their interest and concentration. In the very good lesson children were learning about liquids, gases and solids, linked with recent work on the water cycle. The teacher set up an excellent classroom demonstration of the water cycle and challenged the children orally to explain the precipitation they observed. They found this very difficult, but worked very hard to put their ideas into words. By the end of the lesson most had a good understanding of the processes involved.
- 89 There were however weaknesses in lessons which were otherwise satisfactory. Work was seldom planned to extend higher attaining children. In several lessons teachers did not give the children enough opportunity to think issues out for themselves. Too much of the written work in science is merely copied, or consists of filling worksheets, or colouring in. It is factors like these that prevent children making the faster headway in science of which they are capable. In the unsatisfactory Year 1 lesson, the teaching method chosen was unsuited to such young children, and the pace of their work was slow.
- 90 The teaching and learning of science, while still satisfactory, has not progressed significantly since the last inspection. An improved scheme of work has been introduced, and a start made with assessment. Teaching equipment is more readily available. However the school's targets for raising standards in science, in its development plan, are far too low. Shortcomings in teaching remain to be addressed, and the school's current systems for monitoring teaching, and standards of learning, lack rigour.

## **ART**

- 91 Three art lessons, one each in Years 2, 3 and 6, were seen during the period of the inspection. Additional evidence was obtained from an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. The programme is broad and balanced. There is an up to date scheme of work and sufficient time is given to the subject. These are

improvements since the previous inspection. Children at both key stages are achieving appropriately for their age. This is also an improvement since the previous inspection, which judged the work of the infant children to be below expectations for their age.

- 92 Children's learning, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory over time. In two of the lessons observed, the learning was of a high quality. At both key stages, children use materials and equipment sensibly and show increasing confidence in experimenting with media. An example of this was seen in a Year 2 lesson when children were given opportunities to model in clay. Children work imaginatively with pencils, pastels and crayons to draw and colour. This often helps them illustrate work across the curriculum, for example in history and science. It also assists the development of their design skills, for example, Year 4 children constructing repeat patterns as part of their work on making jewellery in the style of the Anglo Saxons. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of observational skills. An example of this was seen in a Year 6 lesson with children studying a range of everyday objects from various angles to produce an abstract design using paints, pencils and glue. As they move up through the school, children show a growing confidence in the ability to represent what they have seen through pictures. They mix and apply colours with increasing skills and learn satisfactorily about size, shape, texture and shade. Appropriate attention is given to the study of the work of well-known artists and children successfully copy their styles. For example Year 3 children have effectively produced patterns linked to the style of Gustav Klimt and are enthusiastically painting their version of 'Starry Night' by Vincent Van Gogh.
- 93 Teaching was good in Years 3 and 6. It was excellent in Year 2. Teachers have secure subject knowledge that is shared effectively with children. Activities are planned well and there are realistically high expectations of what children can achieve in the time available. Explanations of tasks are clear and questions are used skilfully with time for children to think and to draw on their own experiences. Resources are organised well and there is a good mix of whole class, group and individual teaching. All children are motivated to work hard. They have good attitudes towards the activities and their behaviour is good. This has a positive impact on the progress made. In the Year 2 lesson, children's imagination and enthusiasm were really fired. They watched enthralled as the teacher worked with clay and their own creative efforts were of a high quality. The lesson was very well-structured with a good mix of whole class discussion and practical work. A strong emphasis was rightly placed on building skills systematically and this had a good effect on children's knowledge and understanding of the media. The teacher used appropriate vocabulary to describe the properties of clay and the children quickly did the same. Time was very well used and the whole sessions had a sense of purpose.
- 94 The co-ordinator sees teachers' planning and much informed exchange of ideas takes place. Displays of work in classrooms and the shared areas are satisfactory and help to enrich the children's visual awareness.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

- 95 Only one design and technology lesson was seen during the period of the inspection and this was in Year 4. Judgements were informed by an examination of teacher's planning, scrutiny of children's work and displays around the school. The subject is taught regularly by all teachers, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. The programme is broad and balanced and children are achieving appropriately for their age. This is also an improvement since the previous inspection, which identified the need to raise standards in the subject as a key issue.
- 96 Children's learning, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory over time. They are provided with appropriate opportunities to design and make a range of products. They

show increasing knowledge and understanding of structures and mechanisms as well as the ability to develop their ideas through shaping, assembling and arranging different materials and components. A good example of this was seen in Year 2 where children had used considerable imagination to construct robots with materials such as paper, card and foil. Another good example was seen in Year 4 where children had made colourful puppets including moving parts. Good links are made across the curriculum, for example Year 4 children have started to design and make jewellery in the style of the Anglo-Saxons.

- 97 In the lesson seen, the quality of teaching was good. This was because the activities had been well-planned and the teacher was clear about the purpose of the lesson and what was to be learned. The children benefited from the teacher's secure subject knowledge and high expectations of what they could achieve in the time available. Good questioning skills challenged the children's thinking. The tasks were presented effectively and children were motivated to do their best. They showed good attitudes towards the subject and behaved well. This had a good impact on the progress they made. Emphasis was rightly given to the importance of being aware of the purpose for which a product is made. The children showed an awareness of this as well as a willingness to refine and change their ideas.
- 98 The co-ordinator is new to the responsibility. She sees teachers' planning, but has no time to monitor the teaching of the subject. She has produced a useful personal action plan for developments. Some teachers use the national guidelines for teaching design and technology to assist their planning. Others use guidelines previously set by the school. This causes a lack of clarity in what is to be taught. The co-ordinator's priority is rightly for the school to agree a scheme of work for the subject to support teaching and learning.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

- 99 Only a small number of lessons were seen during the inspection. Nevertheless it is clear from these, from work displayed in the school, and from a scrutiny of previous work, that children's learning develops steadily in geography and history as they move through the school. They reach the levels expected of children of this age in both subjects.
- 100 The school has succeeded in retaining a broad programme of work in both subjects while also making the necessary time available for the new initiatives in literacy and numeracy. In geography, children's learning has improved since the last inspection, and sufficient time is now spent on the subject, while in history the strengths recognised then remain.
- 101 Central to the geography programme is learning about maps and their use. Younger children make maps and plans of places they have visited, and some recognise an outline map of the British Isles. They have made their own simple plans of local areas, and of the school grounds. Older children extend these skills. They identify important towns and regions in the British Isles, and many countries on a world map. They can read a compass, measure distance using a scale, and match map features to aerial photographs. Other good work, again with a mapwork component, has involved the study of river systems, and their impact on landscape and land use.
- 102 In history the main strength of the work programme has been in the development of the skills of historical enquiry. Through lessons on the Egyptians, the Tudors and the Victorians, children learn about people's daily lives, about historically significant individuals, and about important events in the period. They also refine their understanding of how historians use and interpret evidence. Very young children looked at old and new toys, trying to find out what features were associated with age. This helps them learn the difference between past and present. Later in the school they examine bags of mystery objects to see what they can deduce about the owner of each collection.
- 103 Teaching in geography and history is good. The teachers select themes and teaching methods cleverly to capture the children's interest and attention. Much of this work is practical, and the

subjects come to life for the children. Older children recently studied the Victorian period. Some of their studies focused on schooling in Victorian times. Within this unit of work they studied original photographs, discussed entries in old log books, and conducted imaginary interviews. They went on a visit to Braintree Museum where a very strict Victorian teacher taught them in a Victorian classroom. Some of the resulting work is of a very good standard. Older children often undertake personal research on geographical and historical subjects, much of it at home. Some of this work is of an excellent quality.

- 104 Most work in geography and history is carefully, and neatly presented. The children enjoy learning, and put forward their own ideas with confidence and enthusiasm.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

- 105 Three lessons in information and communications technology teaching were seen during the inspection. All information and communication technology, except in the under fives, is taught by a teaching assistant, to plans written by the class teacher. Discussions with children and staff, and a scrutiny of work in children's books and folders show that attainment in this subject is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2.
- 106 There has been some improvement since the previous inspection as children have acquired a broader range of skills. Difficulties with regard to the availability of appropriate computers and software remain. The children's work programme does not adequately meet the full statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and children still spend too little time learning the subject.
- 107 At the end of Key Stage 1, most children are confident within a narrow range of uses of computer technology. They handle the keyboard and mouse confidently, and some know how to save their own work. They use simple word-processing skills to select the font they want to use and change it. These are carried through into the early stages of Key Stage 2.
- 108 At the end of Key Stage 2, children use their word processing skills to present their work and import pictures from 'clip art' in designs for Christmas cards. In previous years they have spent little time on computer work and so have not developed skills in desk top publishing or other advanced word processing skills. They are unaware of the many uses of information and communication technology in the outside world and make little use of CD-Roms to support research in subjects such as history. They rarely organise, enter and store simple data, in order to present it graphically. Children in Year 5 have just learned to devise questionnaires to enter into a database for future interrogation. They have not learned about the use of information and communication technology to control, model or monitor events and equipment as required by the programmes of study.
- 109 In the lessons seen, children acquired new skills quickly. The tasks were planned well by class teachers with the teaching assistant, so that she was very clear about what to do. Some children draw well on their experience of computers at home and were not afraid to try things out to find out how the programmes worked. This knowledge helped them to persevere when things did not go as they thought they would. Other children are less confident. The teaching assistant has very good knowledge of word processing skills and knows well the aspects of information and communication technology she is teaching in each lesson. She conveys this knowledge carefully and clearly to the children so that they build well on what they have learned before. She assesses their progress well and writes a detailed report for the class teacher on children's progress and the work covered each week. This report also goes to the information and communication technology subject co-ordinator to assist with monitoring progress. It enables work to be planned so that skills can be built up over time. It takes little account of children's different abilities with computers. However, over time children's learning is unsatisfactory in both key stages. The main reason for this is the lack of resources.
- 110 Explanations and demonstrations are clear and help children to make good progress in basic computer skills. Lessons have good pace and structure so that children take on new learning

and apply it correctly. Appropriate subject vocabulary is used and children are encouraged to use their initiative. Children receive good feedback, which consolidates new skills and ensures that they make best use of the available software. However, the resources restrict the time spent on the subject. Children are taught in a newly established computer suite for about half an hour a week in groups of twelve, while the rest of the class works on art or other foundation subjects. This means there is little time for children to follow up their work during the week.

- 111 Children have yet to develop their skills systematically as they move through the school. This is because there is no comprehensive system for assessing and recording children's work. The co-ordinator, as at the time of the last inspection, is new. She has a very good view of the developments needed and has estimated the cost of essential resources. She established the computer suite in September 1999 so that resources could be used to best effect and children's skills have improved rapidly since then. The co-ordinator has a very clear view about children's achievements in the subject and monitors regularly the work being done.

## **MUSIC**

- 112 The school has maintained its high standard in music since the last inspection and the work in this subject is a major strength of the school. Although only one lesson was seen during the inspection, evidence from teachers' planning, hymn practices, assemblies, video recordings and CD shows that the range and variety of musical activity is still very good at Key Stage 2.
- 113 Planning shows that children in Key Stage 1 learn to play untuned percussion and the work is based on a commercial scheme. They also sing unaccompanied in assemblies satisfactorily and have a good knowledge of the words. Greater emphasis is given to music at Key Stage 2, where all children learn to read musical notation and to play the recorder from Year 3 onwards. A large number can do so well and form part of the school orchestra. This meets regularly and includes violin, cello and flute and plays confidently in front of an audience, for example, at seasonal concerts and the area music festival. In assemblies, the singing of hymns is tuneful and conveys both the mood and emotion of the hymns. The choir has recently made an excellent CD of material chosen by the children. During the school day, classes sing prayers and graces in a meaningful way and this contributes significantly to their spiritual development.
- 114 The co-ordinator teaches music to all Key Stage 2 classes. In the one lesson seen, children made very good progress because of the high quality of the teaching. This teacher is an able musician who passes on her enthusiasm and knowledge to the class. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and the class is positively encouraged to improve technique. Children have a good understanding of technical terms and are keen to play well. Those in the school orchestra are able to demonstrate their skills for others to follow. The teacher has a very good knowledge of individual children's abilities that she uses to good effect to extend their competence. Homework is regularly given and children are expected to practise playing their instruments.
- 115 The school has a very strong musical tradition for which it is well known among parents and the local community. Musical instruments are provided for the children on a loan basis. A visiting instrumental teacher is employed to teach stringed instruments and supports the music co-ordinator effectively. The high level of expertise and enthusiasm of the co-ordinator is a significant factor in maintaining the school's musical life. She recognises that more now needs to be done to support teachers at Key Stage 1 and to monitor teaching and learning during this stage.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

- 116 Only dance and games in the physical education curriculum were seen during the inspection.

Gymnastics, athletics and swimming are timetabled to take place at other times during the year.

- 117 At Key Stage 1 children learn basic step routines in dance, sometimes accompanied by music. They 'become' Mr. Men characters in Year 1 taking large bold strides as Mr. Strong and devising loose shaky movements to represent Mr. Jelly. They successfully learn to change weight from one foot to another in Year 2, building a sequence to include twists and turns and more complicated routines. Most have good control and co-ordinate actions well.
- 118 In games lessons at Key Stage 2, older children develop satisfactory skills of sending, receiving, striking and travelling with a ball in hockey. They successfully learn basic skills in rugby and improve their techniques of catching, grounding and retrieving the ball. Children begin to learn the rules of the game and are able to chase an opponent to regain possession. In dance, they learn to mime effectively the performance of athletes taking part in the Olympic Games. They express with feeling the poise of runners, discus and javelin throwers, determinedly imitating their efforts. Almost all children can swim the recommended twenty- five metres by the time they leave the school.
- 119 Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and good in Key Stage 2. One very good lesson was seen. Several teachers have good subject knowledge which they impart to their children. Therefore, all work hard to develop their skills and make great efforts to improve and this leads to satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and good progress at Key Stage 2. Staff demonstrate good techniques and make effective use of individuals to show the rest of the class what to do. Children relish the opportunity to perform in front of others. Teachers value children's efforts and contributions and this reassures those who are less confident and who would otherwise be reluctant to join in. Sensible routines have been established, including safety aspects, and all know what is expected of them so that lessons start promptly. Staff are appropriately dressed and this enables them to join in activities alongside the class. Teachers know their children well and use different strategies to motivate them and prolong interest in the work. Sufficient time is given to warming up and cooling down at the beginning and end of sessions, and this is a marked improvement since the last inspection.
- 120 A scheme of work has been introduced recently. It includes individual lesson plans for teachers at both key stages. These are effectively used by the few who are less confident and help to ensure that children develop knowledge and skills as they move through the school. Little formal monitoring of standards in physical education takes place and there are few plans to do so. The co-ordinator does, however, see lesson plans and gives advice to staff.
- 121 The curriculum is broadened through additional activities such as netball and football clubs which are popular with both girls and boys. Teams successfully take part in local leagues and competitions. The school organises its own swimming gala and sports days and athletic teams represent the school at both Catholic and district sports. These activities help to recognise sporting achievements and develop children's social skills well.