

# INSPECTION REPORT

## WISTANSTOW C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Wistanstow, Craven Arms

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123517

Headteacher: Mr R Stephens

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough  
8339

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2001

Inspection number: 188680

Full 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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	5 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Wistanstow Craven Arms Shropshire
Postcode:	SY7 8DQ
Telephone number:	01588 673347
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J T Edwin
Date of previous inspection:	30 <sup>th</sup> April – 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8339	Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Special educational needs Mathematics Science Information and communications technology Art and design Design and technology Physical education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
14083	Andy Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19387	Mari Powell	Team inspector	Areas of learning for children in the Foundation Stage English Geography History Music Religious education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well does the school care for its pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

This is a small, village primary school with 83 pupils on roll who are taught in three classes. There are almost twice as many girls (55) as there are boys (28). This imbalance is most in evidence in classes 1 and 2 spanning the years with Reception aged pupils up to Year 4. All the children are of white ethnicity. The pupils come from supportive homes that place great value on the education offered by their local school. There are slightly fewer pupils than usual with special educational needs [17 per cent] and none has a statement of special educational needs. Very few pupils are entitled to free school meals [5 per cent]. The vast majority has attended some type of pre-school education and the ability of the children entering the school covers the full range, but is broadly average.

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

This is an effective school that helps pupils of all abilities to make good progress in their work. Standards are secure and the improvement in test results is faster than the national trend. Apart from some shortcomings in the current arrangements for the Foundation Stage, the school offers a good quality of education. The children are keen and enthusiastic learners who work hard and behave very well. The headteacher, governors and staff work together effectively in checking the school's progress and planning for continuing development. The school has above average income but clearly provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Standards of literacy and numeracy are secure with many pupils at the end of both key stages achieving levels that exceed those expected nationally.
- The lessons in both key stages are well managed and effectively organised to cater for the wide range of age and ability within each class.
- The teachers successfully foster the development of independent learning skills, building skilfully upon the pupils' positive attitudes to school.
- The headteacher has a good oversight of the work of the school and leads strongly through dedicated personal example.
- Relationships within the school are very good and this is reflected in the exemplary behaviour and highly responsible attitudes shown by the vast majority of the pupils.
- The school receives strong support from its parents and local community. The curriculum is enriched through work with local artists and by visits to places of interest.

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

- The planning of the Foundation Stage curriculum for the pupils under the age of five.
- The time available to the headteacher to support the teaching and curriculum development around the school.
- The quality of the accommodation.

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

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

Since the last inspection in 1996 the school has successfully addressed the vast majority of issues raised in the report. Standards are higher and the rate of improvement in the school's results in the national tests exceeds the general trend. The school's curriculum is now on a far firmer footing and fully meets the statutory requirements. The teachers know their pupils extremely well and have improved their use of the wide range of assessment data that the school now collects. As a result, the teaching in both key stages is

better focussed and the lessons have a brisker pace. However, the school recognises that the planning of the new Foundation Curriculum for the youngest pupils under the age of five remains at an early stage of development and needs more work. The governing body has a much-improved oversight of the work of the school and provides effective support for the headteacher and his staff. The governors' conscientious and thorough response to the health and safety issues identified in the last report has made a difficult school site and buildings far safer for the 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
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	A*	C	C
mathematics	A	A	D	D
science	A	C	A	A

  

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

Standards at the school have risen considerably since the last inspection. Although the small cohorts make the figures volatile it is clear that improvement has been at a rate much faster than the national trend. The table shows that in the national tests for 2000 the pupils achieved results in English that were in line with the national average and those achieved by pupils from similar schools. Their results in mathematics were below these averages and in science well above. However, the small number of pupils taking the tests each year means that such statistical analysis must be treated with caution. Last year, for example, there were a few pupils with special educational needs and not all pupils were able to take all the tests. Consequently, the school's results in English and mathematics were lower than in previous years.

The current Year 6 cohort contains the full range of abilities and the inspection findings indicate that the standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. There is a similar spread of ability in Year 2 but with a far larger proportion of higher-attaining pupils, many of whom are already working at levels that exceed the national expectations. Standards in reading and writing are clearly above average and in mathematics are well above average. The school does what it can to set realistic and challenging targets for the pupils' performance in the national tests and generally meets them. However, the leadership correctly identifies for parents that when one pupil is the equivalent of as much as 12 per cent the final figures are not always a fair reflection of the pupils' many achievements. For example, besides developing literate and numerate individuals the school's improved commitment to the arts means that many children are producing work of a good quality in art and design and design technology.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils work and try their best in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils behave in exemplary fashion and act with great maturity from a very early age.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils are learning a very good range of social skills that are helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals.
Attendance	Above average.

The high standards in the pupils' attitudes, attendance and personal development are a major strength of the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved considerably, particularly in Key Stage 1. Of the lessons observed during this inspection, 13 per cent were very good, 45 per cent good, 38 per cent satisfactory and 4 per cent unsatisfactory [one lesson].

The teachers have successfully adopted and adapted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy to suit the context of their school. They make effective use of their good knowledge of individual pupils to plan their lessons skilfully to cater for the wide range of age and ability within each class. In both Key Stages 1 and 2, their questioning is sharply focussed and they take particular care to ask questions that encourage the pupils to answer at length as well as posing the shorter 'closed' questions that check for specific knowledge. As a result, the children listen carefully to their teachers and to each other. The teachers' skilful classroom management and their frequent use of praise and encouragement underpin the extremely positive relationships throughout the school and lead to the rapid development of the pupils' skills of independent learning.

The school is a strongly inclusive community. The teachers strive to foster individual strengths and talents whilst the pupils are learning successfully to recognise the need for tolerance and understanding in their dealings with each other. For example, the school makes good provision for those with special educational needs and through regular review and discussion ensures that appropriate provision supports good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Good quality teaching also means that the higher-attaining pupils are successfully extended to reach the upper levels.

The teaching of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, but progress is less brisk because the school has yet to get to grips with the planning of this new curriculum. The problem is that the teachers tend to plan a good



range of relevant activities, but do not establish with sufficient clarity what it is that the children are expected to learn.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. With the exception of some aspects of the provision for the Foundation Stage, the school offers a broad and balanced curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The pupils are effectively supported and make good progress towards the regularly reviewed targets within their individual education plans.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its provision for cultural development. The provision for social and moral development continues to be strong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school effectively supports its pupils and the staff strive hard to promote their welfare.

The school fosters very good links with its parents who provide strong support for their children's education by helping with homework and fund raising; they also share their interests and professional expertise with the classes. The regular use of educational visits and visitors to the school, including music and theatre groups, considerably enriches the breadth of the school's curriculum. However, the planning of some aspects of the Foundation Curriculum lack coherence.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides strong and committed leadership that is moving the school forward. He receives good support from a staff team that is increasingly effective in developing the curriculum, checking standards and managing resources.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors offer effective support for the work of the school and, apart from a few omissions from their annual report to parents, meet their responsibilities in full.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is satisfactory evaluation of performance based upon the thorough analysis of evidence collected from a range of sources. This is used effectively to inform planning for future improvement. However, the headteacher needs more time to improve the monitoring and support of the Foundation Stage.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes full and prudent use of the resources at its disposal. Simple and effective checks are in place to ensure best value.

The school is generally adequately staffed and resourced for the demands of the National Curriculum. There have been good improvements in the provision of books and computers, but the school's accommodation is poorly suited to the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century education. The classrooms are small, storage space inadequate and the outside play areas tiny. Furthermore, the lack of a hall limits the range of the physical education curriculum.

#### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school and make many friends.</li> <li>• Behaviour at the school is very good.</li> <li>• Relationships are positive. The teachers and the children get on well together.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Special events such as arts and music weeks enliven the curriculum.</li> <li>• The teachers know the children well and take good care of them.</li> <li>• The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was no strong complaint about any aspect of the school's provision. However, there is concern about the increasing popularity of the school, the rising class sizes and lack of space to accommodate many more pupils.</li> </ul>

The inspection team strongly agrees with the very positive views expressed by the vast majority of the parents. They also agree that the school is reaching the point where very few additional pupils can be accommodated safely within the existing buildings.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Since the last inspection, standards across the school have improved considerably, not only in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, but also in the quality of the pupils' work in information and communications technology, art and design and design and technology. The very small numbers of pupils in each year group means that the statistical analysis of the results of the national tests must be treated with caution. However, when evaluating the results of the past three to four years it is evident that standards, at the end of Key Stage 2, have improved at a rate much faster than the national trend.
2. Deeper analysis of the school's test and assessment data raised several important questions that became key areas of investigation for the inspection team. For instance, on a three-year average, at the end of Key Stage 1 the boys appear to be achieving better in English than the girls. By the end of Key Stage 2, this situation has reversed. However, the considerable imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls in each year group adds further volatility to data. For example, there were only eleven boys who took the Key Stage 1 tests in the three-year period under scrutiny. The inspection team looked long and hard at the way the teachers question the pupils and the range of activities provided, but could detect no significant gender bias that would account for any apparent discrepancy in performance. The key message is that on average, by the time they leave school at age eleven, the pupils are achieving levels that are broadly between a term to two terms ahead in English, mathematics and science.
3. The school is making much more effective use of the information it gathers about the children's performance in tests and other assessments. As a result, the teachers now identify appropriate and challenging targets for each individual pupil. The accumulated data provide an appropriate and realistic set of public targets for the school, but these need to be treated with caution because one pupil can often amount to as much as 12 per cent.
4. In last year's national tests the pupils in Year 6 achieved results in English that were in line with the national average and those achieved by pupils from similar schools. Their results in mathematics were below these averages, but in science were well above. However, there were a few pupils with special educational needs and not all pupils were able to take all the tests. Consequently, the school's results in English and mathematics were lower than in previous years.
5. In the national tests of 2000 at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils achieved results in reading that were above the national average and in line with the results of pupils from similar schools. In writing and mathematics their results were well above the average both in comparison with similar schools and the national picture. A significant strength of this performance was that in mathematics the pupils' results placed them in the top 5 per cent of both schools nationally and of similar type.
6. The current Year 6 cohort contains the full range of abilities including a quarter of pupils with special educational needs. The inspection findings indicate that the pupils are achieving standards in English, mathematics and science that are broadly average. There is a similar spread of ability in Year 2 but with a far larger proportion of higher-attaining pupils, many of whom are already working at levels that exceed the national expectations. Standards in reading and writing are clearly above average and in mathematics are higher still.
7. The school has successfully adopted the national strategies for literacy and numeracy so that standards in these areas continue to rise. Throughout the school, the pupils' skills of speaking and listening are

effectively developed through the teachers' careful questioning and encouragement of group discussions. As a result, the pupils are articulate, thoughtful and discuss sensibly. Most learn quickly to read and write with accuracy and, in Key Stage 2, with increasing fluency. Most turn readily to pen and paper to record their thoughts and ideas. However, although virtually all of the pupils are capable of writing neatly and forming their letters correctly they do not always present their work in exercise books as well as they might do. In mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils show increasing confidence in simple number operations and about a half are increasingly adept in using this knowledge to carry out mental calculations with larger three digit numbers. By the age of eleven, number facts such as the multiplication tables are generally secure and the pupils have an increasingly wide range of strategies for tackling more complex problems.

8. The teachers have carried out significant improvements to the provision for teaching information and communications technology. As a result, standards are now in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages and the pupils' use of computers to control sequences of movements is much better than at the time of the last inspection. A further strength noted by inspectors is the constructive fashion in which both boys and girls make regular and collaborative use of the school's computers.
9. The quality of the pupils' work in subjects such as art and design, design and technology and history often exceeds the expected levels. The enthusiasm of the teachers, educational visits and the effective use of artists and other professionals have led to major improvements, in the breadth of the arts curriculum. This is reflected for instance in the pupils' drawings and designs; the effective construction of models and other artefacts and their interesting accounts of the exploits of Tudor seafarers. Standards in the other non-core subjects of the National Curriculum are generally in line with the levels expected at the end of both key stages.
10. The children enter the school at the start of the term in which they become five. They are assessed around five weeks after their arrival. The results of these assessments indicate that the children's ability levels are broadly average. They receive a sound start to their time in school and make steady progress. As a result, the vast majority is on course to meet the early learning goals set out in the Foundation Curriculum. They achieve best in their communication, language and literacy, mathematical and social and emotional development. However, their progress in a small minority of lessons relating to some aspects of their physical development is not always as fast as it should be.

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

11. The pupils' attitudes to the school and their interest and involvement in activities are very good. Their behaviour, personal development and relationships within the school are also very good. The teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and the pupils themselves have very high expectations of the standards of behaviour that are acceptable in the school. The vast majority of parents believe that the school consistently maintains high standards of behaviour and that the school is helping their children become mature and responsible.
12. The pupils' enthusiasm and their attitudes to the school are very good. They enjoy coming to school and there is very little lateness. The levels of attendance are above the national average and there is virtually no unauthorised absence. The vast majority of the pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their work. They are interested and fully involved in all activities, including the various extracurricular activities that are offered. The pupils are confident, motivated, enthusiastic and eager to learn. They listen carefully to their teachers, willingly ask and answer questions, and freely offer their own ideas and opinions. They quickly settle down diligently in class and stay on task.

13. Standards of behaviour are consistently very good. The pupils behave very well and act in a mature and responsible manner. Their conduct in the classrooms is very good and there is no disruption to learning. This is particularly evident in classes 2 and 3, where the lack of a full partition would allow excessive noise to distract pupils in the adjoining classroom. The children work and play in an environment that is completely free from oppressive behaviour. The combination of very high standards in the pupils' personal discipline, and consistently very good class management by the teachers, has a positive impact on the standards achieved. The pupils move around the school site and walk to the village hall for physical education lessons in a quiet and orderly manner. Their behaviour at breaks and lunchtime is also very good. Such is the standard of pupils' personal discipline that the school does not need to signify the end of breaks by ringing a bell. When the adjacent church clock chimes, the pupils automatically line up and quietly enter the school. There were no signs of either bullying or the isolation of individual pupils. There were no exclusions either in the academic year prior to the inspection or in the current year to date.
14. Relationships in the school are very good. The pupils relate very well to their teachers, to other adults whom they come into contact with, and also to one another. Children of all ages work and play very well together, for example boys and girls of all ages are fully included in playground games. They are polite, courteous and very welcoming to visitors. They collaborate well, share resources, take turns and listen to each other. The vast majority of pupils consistently show respect for their teachers, each other and the environment. During assemblies, they show appropriate respect for the occasion, willingly join in hymn singing and bow their heads reverently during prayers.
15. The pupils' personal development is very good. They are learning a very good range of social skills that is helping them to develop into well-rounded individuals. They support local and national charities and are learning to be aware of others less fortunate than themselves. They take part in sporting competitions and an appropriate range of visits, including residential experiences for the older children. The pupils respond very well to the opportunities for taking responsibility for their own work in the classrooms, and in many lessons, when not subject to direct teaching, they were observed working independently and showing initiative. They take the initiative for devising, organising and running their own playground games at breaks and lunchtime. Where opportunities for taking on formal responsibilities around the school are offered, for example collecting and delivering registers, the pupils respond in a mature and sensible manner.
16. The high standards maintained in the pupils' attitudes, behaviour, attendance and personal development are strong features of the school and make a positive contribution to the teaching and learning.

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

17. The last inspection identified shortcomings in the teaching in Key Stage 1. This is no longer the case. The school now offers a good quality of education, particularly in Key Stages 1 and 2. The teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but the teachers' planning lacks the precision that would help them to establish the brisker pace of learning found in Key Stages 1 and 2. Twenty-four lessons were observed during the course of the inspection of which 13 per cent were judged to be very good, 45 per cent good, 38 per cent satisfactory and 4 per cent [one lesson] unsatisfactory.
18. Throughout the school, the teachers have to work extremely hard to cater for the wide range of age and ability and the significant imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls within each class. This is managed most effectively in Key Stages 1 and 2 as the teachers plan their lessons skilfully to ensure a good match of task to the abilities of the children. There are many good examples of this in the successful way that the school has adopted and adapted the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. For instance, during the warm up sessions in mathematics the teachers are adept at

asking questions that suitably challenge both higher achieving pupils in Years 5 and 6 as well as the younger, less knowledgeable children in Year 4. In the subsequent group activities, the teachers make effective use of their chosen published scheme to ensure that whilst the teacher focuses upon one group of pupils the remainder works independently.

19. Despite the cramped accommodation, the classrooms are well organised and tidy. The extremely positive relationships that exist between adults and pupils are reflected in the high levels of trust shown by teachers who allow the pupils to locate appropriate equipment and resources, use them sensibly and take proper responsibility for returning them after use. This type of approach underpins the strong emphasis that the teachers place upon developing the pupils' independent learning skills that are in evidence throughout the school day. For instance, it is common to observe pupils entering school early in the morning, switch on a computer, load a program and commence work. In design and technology, the pupils know where the components are stored and select what they require for constructing their buggies in a sensible way to ensure no wastage. The pupils share equipment, tools and resources equably.
20. Another successful feature of the way that the teachers work is the emphasis placed upon discussion in a wide range of formal and informal settings. Their questioning skills are generally good, and particularly so in class 2. The teachers take care to ask questions that encourage the pupils to answer at length as well as posing the shorter 'closed' questions that check for specific knowledge. They do not impose their views on the class and do not always rush to affirm a correct answer. For instance, the teachers will often ask the rest of the class, 'Do you agree with X?' This is an extremely effective technique because it encourages everyone to listen. The pupils know that they always have to be on their toes if they are to be able to make a sensible response. The inspection team looked hard at the way that the teachers coped with the significant differences in the numbers of boys and girls. They found that the teachers take great care to ensure that there is no bias in their questioning; that both boys and girls get equal chances to contribute to class debate.
21. The teachers' high expectations for polite behaviour and committed working are clearly in evidence during such discussions. The children know they should raise a hand before talking and if one or two forget themselves from time to time teachers generally find it sufficient to deal with this by catching their eye. As a result, the pupils work extremely co-operatively in pairs and groups and generally listen carefully to the help, advice and opinions of their classmates. For instance, in one art lesson a group of four Year 3 pupils showed a high level of independence and skill in rolling out clay to an even thickness and using a mould cutter to create tiles of identical size.
22. As a result, almost all the pupils have a very good appreciation of the good progress they are making in many aspects of their work. Throughout the inspection it was possible to hold conversations during lessons where pupils spoke persuasively about their studies, what they were pleased with and what they found difficult. For instance, one pair of boys had completed a small buggy powered by an electric motor. The buggy worked spasmodically, but the wheels kept catching on the bodywork of the vehicle. As they patiently dismantled their components, they explained the situation lucidly and set out the modifications they intended to carry out to solve the problem.
23. The teachers support effectively the pupils with special educational needs. A thorough analysis of the needs of each child forms the basis of the individual education plans. These are particularly helpful to the teachers because they set out clearly recommended strategies to help each pupil to improve. The teachers receive good support in this aspect of their work from a teaching assistant who helps both individuals and small groups of pupils. The regular review of the learning of each individual and the well-orchestrated support means that the children make good progress towards the targets on their individual education plans.

24. The teaching of the Foundation Stage pupils is satisfactory, but the children's present rate of learning is not as fast as in other parts of the school. The teachers' planning is not so sharply focussed because they are still getting to grips with the requirements of the new curriculum. At the moment they are working hard to plan a broad range of suitable activities, but insufficient attention is paid to deciding what it is that the children are going to learn as a result of these experiences. This means that in some lessons, such as the unsatisfactory physical development lesson, the pupils neither improve nor refine their dancing because the teacher has thought more about linking the lesson to the theme of 'teddy bears' rather than those aspects of movement that might be developed and extended.

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

25. Since the last inspection, all areas of the curriculum have been reviewed and a much more secure framework for teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 has been established. The school has also begun to review its curriculum for the youngest children in the Foundation Stage in line with recent national guidance. This process is at a comparatively early stage. The planning of activities does not yet sufficiently take account of the successive steps through which the children need to progress in order to securely achieve the early learning goals in all areas.
26. The literacy and numeracy strategies in Key Stages 1 and 2 are successful because they ensure that the pupils' skills develop steadily as they move through the school. The absence of schemes of work was identified as an area of weakness in the previous inspection. This issue has now been addressed and greater curriculum coherence at Key Stages 1 and 2 has been achieved. The provision for the teaching and learning of information and communication technology increasingly ensures that the necessary skills are being developed in line with the recommendations of Curriculum 2000. The teaching of religious education is firmly based on the locally agreed syllabus, but there is still room for enrichment by planning to include some of the suggestions that appear in the recently produced national guidelines. Overall, the curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 fully meets the statutory requirements.
27. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is well planned. Their needs are identified in individual education plans and activities are carefully tailored to ensure that the pupils make progress. There is an effective support programme that involves both individual and small group work additional to the normal lessons. This strategy raises their attainment nearer to the levels expected by the end of Key Stage 2.
28. The extracurricular activities and contributions by members of the community considerably enrich the pupils' learning. Opportunities to work with story tellers, musicians and a variety of artists have resulted in high quality work in fabric printing and landscape collages, garden sculptures from willow branches and a magical environmental experience when pupils walked in the countryside accompanied by a storyteller. The musical provision is boosted by additional recorder and guitar lessons. Recently the pupils benefited from the opportunity to perform a school musical accompanied by a local rock band. Visits out of school often provide memorable starting points for topics in geography and history. An example is the visit to the Egyptology Museum in Liverpool as a starting point for a Key Stage 2 study of Ancient Egypt. The community contributes very positively to the pupils' learning. The parents are very effective co-educators of their children, accompanying swimming trips, supporting curriculum enrichment days, hearing reading and supporting homework through the home-school diaries. Community figures, such as the school nurse and local police officers, are regularly involved in the provision of sex and drugs education. This supports effectively the school's programme for personal, social and health education and is further evidence of the high priority placed on the pupils' personal development.

29. The provision to foster the pupils' spiritual awareness is satisfactory. School worship provides some opportunities for reflection, but the range of stimuli for this aspect is a little narrow. There are better opportunities for contemplating the deeper meaning of life through some of the environmental work of the school and in the reading and writing poetry.
30. The school places great emphasis on developing the pupils' moral and social awareness. Consequently, the provision is very good. The pupils have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The older pupils, for example, know that some activities that affect the environment are morally questionable. The adults rely on the pupils to use equipment independently and responsibly, and the pupils respond very well to the trust that is placed in them. The older pupils are courteous and supportive towards each other and also to the younger pupils. Some of the very youngest pupils are socially immature, but benefit from the high standards of courtesy and consideration shown to them by adults and by the older pupils.
31. The cultural strand within the curriculum has improved and is now good. The school has examined a range of areas where pupils' cultural experiences can be broadened. The religious education curriculum with its provision for developing multi-faith awareness and respect for differences is an important feature. Equally, the work on the pupils' local towns and villages, emphasising their rich architectural heritage and strong local traditions helps to develop the pupils' sense of pride in their local identity. The range of literature in classrooms and the library reflects the cultural diversity of Britain and the pupils hear music and appraise works of art from countries such as France, Holland, Egypt and Africa.
32. There is a close partnership with other local schools through shared development activities and some very positive pre-transfer experiences enjoyed by the pupils at the end of Year 6.

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

33. The school effectively supports its pupils and the staff strive hard to promote their welfare. The headteacher places a high priority on pastoral care and provides very good leadership in this aspect. The teachers are very approachable and totally supportive. The non-teaching staff are caring, committed and provide good support for both teachers and pupils. All staff, teaching and non-teaching alike, have a very good understanding of the school's pastoral and welfare procedures, and implement them consistently and conscientiously. Good provision is made for medical and first aid requirements and the arrangements for dealing with routine matters such as minor injuries are very good. Conscientious teachers, who are alert and vigilant, all come out on to the playground and supervise the pupils very well at breaks. The supervision of the pupils moving to and from the village hall for physical education lessons is also very good. Experienced and efficient midday supervisors undertake lunchtime supervision, and their standard of care is high.
34. The school makes appropriate use of relevant external support agencies, for example the educational welfare officer, and good use of its learning support staff. The classroom assistants, and parent helpers in the infants' class, are deployed effectively to support pupils and teachers. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good and has a positive impact on their attainment and on the progress they are making. The child protection procedures are securely in place and there is a very good awareness throughout the school. There are also very good procedures for health and safety that are well known by all staff who consistently demonstrate good practice in lessons. The governing body and the headteacher take their health and safety responsibilities very seriously and all the required safety inspections and checks, including risk assessment, are regularly carried out and properly recorded. A key issue in the previous inspection report was the need for the school to complete a health and safety



audit and associated risk assessment. This has been successfully addressed. Nevertheless, during the present inspection, a few potential safety hazards, mainly caused by the school's accommodation, were brought to the attention of the headteacher.

35. The school has effective procedures in place for promoting and monitoring discipline and good behaviour. For example, the subject of bullying is well addressed in personal and social education lessons. All members of staff have very high expectations of behaviour, and discipline is administered consistently and well. This has a positive effect on the high standards of conduct that are maintained throughout the school. Attendance is monitored rigorously. Absence is correctly recorded, followed up and appropriate action taken on the few occasions when it is necessary.
36. The headteacher, class teachers and the support staff know the pupils extremely well and have a very good understanding of their individual personal needs. The school maintains manageable pupil profiles and the teachers monitor their pupils' academic progress and personal development well. There are good procedures in place for marking, assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment and progress. The information gained is used consistently to monitor the attainment of individual pupils' and in the planning of work. The day-to-day assessment is good and helps teachers to differentiate work for individuals and groups of pupils within the classes. Another key issue from the previous inspection report was the need to develop a consistent system for assessing and recording the pupils' achievements. Again, this has been successfully undertaken.
37. Wistanstow CE Primary School is a very caring school that provides effective support and guidance for all its pupils.

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

38. Relationships between the school and parents are very good. It enjoys the active support of most parents, the majority of whom consistently expressed a high level of satisfaction with most aspects of the school. There are a number of committed parents who regularly help in the classrooms, organise after school activities, accompany the children on out of school trips and are fully involved in their children's work in school and at home. The parents support homework and home reading and consistently enter appropriate comments in the home-school link books. The vast majority of parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems or complaints, but a small minority did not agree that the school works closely with them. The inspection evidence did not support those parents' points of view. The headteacher and his staff are very approachable and make themselves available to parents at the end of each school day. Surprisingly some parents did not agree that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team judged the provision for extracurricular activities to be good for a school of this size. There is an active parents teachers association that organises social and fund raising events for the school. A considerable amount of money has been raised for the school by the parents.
39. Communication between the school and home is satisfactory. Although the school does not send out regular newsletters, the parents are frequently notified about specific events and activities. Nevertheless, they are given no specific information about either the curriculum or the topics that are taught in the school. The school publishes a comprehensive and informative prospectus and the governors hold an annual meeting with parents and publish an annual report. However, there are a few omissions, such as a financial statement and details of disabled access and provision, in the latest governors' report. The parents are given a personalised and informative progress report and offered the opportunity to attend appropriate consultation meetings to discuss their children's work and progress with their teachers. Although there is some variation in the quality of the reports, most of them clearly indicate what the pupils can and cannot do, what they understand and the progress they

are making. Some parents did not agree that they were kept well informed about how their children are getting on. The inspection evidence did not support these comments.

40. Overall, the partnership with parents enriches the school's work and has a positive impact on the pupils' learning and personal development.

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

41. The school is well led by a highly respected and hard working headteacher who enjoys the universal support of the staff, governors and parents. Since his arrival three years ago he has provided a strong, professional lead for the school community so that together they have worked successfully to address virtually all of the issues raised by the last inspection report. As a result, the curriculum is more firmly established, the quality of teaching has improved and standards are higher.
42. At the same time the headteacher has been teaching a class for a minimum of nine out of ten sessions each week. Whilst it is easy for him to learn what is happening in one of the other classes because they share the same teaching space, his current teaching commitment makes it far harder to provide the necessary support and advice to help improve the Foundation Stage. The school roll is rising and at the time of the inspection it was anticipated that the next twelve months might offer greater financial flexibility. The inspection team shares the view of the headteacher that he needs more time to carry out those aspects of his job that would lead to further improvements in teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage. **This is a key issue for action.**
43. The small staff team works well together. Each understands their roles and responsibilities and a good start has been made to performance management. For example, each teacher has their own specific targets that relate precisely to the school's improvement plan as well as regular opportunities for their own professional development. As in most small schools, each teacher carries a large load of responsibilities, but throughout the inspection good teamwork was observed. For instance, as well as sharing their professional knowledge when planning the curriculum together, all the teachers are frequently seen on the playground with the pupils and parents at the start and end of the school day. The resources, such as programmable electronic toys, are located and dispatched to adjacent classrooms at a moment's notice.
44. The school improvement plan is a useful document. It provides a good overview of the school's current priorities and sets out clearly who is responsible for action, how much is to be spent and the criteria to decide whether or not the necessary improvements have been successfully carried out. The plan is carefully devised through careful collaboration between the staff and governors and is regularly referred to as progress is reviewed.
45. The governing body has a far better oversight of the management of the school than at the time of the last inspection. This is because the headteacher shares information and delegates widely and wisely. For instance, the governors now operate successfully a series of committees that meet regularly to develop policy and undertake review of key aspects of the school's work. As a result, the governors are developing a much better understanding of the school's curriculum. Similarly, the group responsible for the maintenance and development of the school's premises has established a rigorous programme of review and risk assessment that has addressed the shortcomings identified in the last inspection report and made the school a far safer place in which to work. The one slight weakness is that the latest annual report to parents omits some of the necessary detail required by law such as the arrangements for the admission of disabled pupils and the school's targets for the national tests. Apart from this, the governors now meet their responsibilities in full.

46. The governors make generally prudent use of their delegated budget, the income generated by the parents and a local trust fund. The financial procedures are secure and a governor with accounting skills plays a significant role in helping the headteacher to keep track of the school's expenditure. The new secretary is still learning her job, but the purchase of equipment and supplies is subject to simple checks to ensure best value. The governors are acutely aware that the value of some decisions, such as the use of professional artists and theatre groups, is difficult to quantify. However, the positive response of the children, the quality of their work and the keen support of the parents are clear indicators that the money is being put to good use.
47. The school is well resourced with books and equipment for most subjects of the National Curriculum. For example, the recent improvement in computer provision has been particularly effective in helping the teachers to promote the development of information and communications technology across the school. There is an adequate number of teaching and ancillary staff to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The leadership spends wisely to ensure that the teachers receive regular training to keep up to date. For example, the teachers will shortly benefit from additional training in the use of their new computers. However, neither of the Foundation Stage teachers has yet been able attend the local authority training to help to prepare them for the successful introduction of this new curriculum. The inspection team agrees with the staff that this is a training priority. **This is part of the key issue for action.**
48. The school's accommodation is poor and hinders the successful development of many aspects of its work. The staff and pupils make the utmost of the limited facilities at their disposal, but nothing can disguise the fact that almost 60 pupils across Years 2 – 6 share one big classroom with no proper partition to insulate against noise and very limited storage space. The small classroom used for worship and lunches is cramped and uncomfortable and the playground tiny. Although good use is made of the village hall, some aspects of the children's physical education, such as gymnastics, are impossible to teach due to the lack of the necessary equipment. The adults working at the school share one cramped toilet/changing room. The children fare little better with the majority having to cross a courtyard to reach a toilet. The minute office shared by the headteacher and secretary doubles as a staff room. The staff and pupils striving to cope with a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum deserve better than this and the governing body is rightly looking at ways to improve the situation with the help of the local authority. The inspection team agrees with the views of the parents that accommodation is poor and that **this is a key issue for action.**

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to improve further the quality of education offered by the school the headteacher, governors and staff should
- (1) Review the current planning of the Foundation Curriculum so that
    - it reflects more accurately the stages of learning laid out in the national guidance;
    - the teachers' day-to-day planning focuses more precisely on the learning that is to take place and then the context in which it will be managed;
    - they should also take steps to ensure all members of staff working with children under the age of five receive appropriate training in the planning and delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. (Paragraph 47)
  - (2) Ensure that the headteacher has sufficient time out of his classroom so that crucial aspects of his role, such as the formal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, can be carried out thoroughly; the findings recorded and shared with colleagues. (Paragraph 42)

- (3) Pursue the proposed development of the school site and buildings so that the teachers and pupils have a working environment that is better suited to the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum. (Paragraph 48)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	24
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	7

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	13	45	38	4	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>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	83
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

<b>Special educational needs</b>	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	14

<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	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### *Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.4

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	2000	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Girls	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Total			
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (88)	90 (100)	89 (94)
	National	83 (82)	85 (83)	90 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Girls	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Total	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	89 (100)	85 (100)	90 (100)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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

**The Key Stage 1 table left blank because fewer than ten pupils took the tests.**

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	4	9	13

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Girls	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Total	8	8	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	67 (100)	67 (78)	75 (89)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
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Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Girls	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	Total	10	9	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91 (89)	82 (89)	82 (89)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

**The numbers of boys & girls reaching level 4 are omitted because fewer than ten of each took the tests.**

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	76
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	3.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.7
Average class size	27.6

**Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	25

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

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

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

***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
	£
Total income	148,178
Total expenditure	149,602
Expenditure per pupil	1824
Balance brought forward from previous year	4610
Balance carried forward to next year	3186

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	41

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	44	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	39	54	2	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	44	0	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	54	5	0	2
The teaching is good.	49	44	2	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	39	20	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	66	32	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	39	2	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	51	29	17	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	51	49	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	49	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	63	15	0	5



## **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**

50. There are presently ten children in the Foundation Stage. They share a class with 13 other pupils, 12 of whom are of Year 1 age. There are three entry points, September, January and Easter, at which children can join the class. Many have attended the local playgroup with which the school has strong links and which supplies useful information about the children's early progress. The teachers assess each child soon after they begin school and the results of these tests indicate that each intake contains the full range of abilities, but is clustered around the average. However, there is often a good proportion of children with above average communication skills.

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

51. Most of the children make a confident start at the school, but some children are reluctant to share materials and equipment and to co-operate with others during play. Moreover, a few boys in the current cohort are somewhat immature in their social behaviour and require a great deal of adult support. This is sensitively given and is helping them to make satisfactory progress towards achieving more settled behaviour that also takes account of the needs of other children in the group. By the end of the foundation stage, the majority of children learn to concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate. Most achieve the early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage.
52. The teaching is satisfactory because the adults provide suitable guidance to the children by sharing their experiences, for example by reading in a group and in practical group work in numeracy lessons. They are now providing regular experiences where the children themselves can choose and plan what they do. There are also some opportunities for role-play during which the children can exercise their imagination and interact socially. However, these are currently not always challenging enough and are not planned in a way that ensures that the learning intentions are absolutely clear. The teachers have recognised the need to make the classroom environment more stimulating so that the children can use the equipment and materials more independently. A satisfactory start has been made by designating corners as writing and listening areas, but the accommodation does not readily allow the creation of discrete spaces for the wider variety of experiences which children need in order to fully develop their personal and social skills.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

53. Overall, the children's language skills are average when they start school, but a few of the children have above average speaking skills. They use their well-developed vocabulary effectively, for example, when discussing their activities and the books they read. By the time they complete the Foundation Stage, the majority achieve the identified early learning goals. They enjoy the early experiences of chanting rhymes and listening to stories either on tape or read by adults. When they to act out some of the familiar stories they hear, their language development is enhanced. The more confident children quickly learn to organise their ideas and make spontaneous observations, for example during discussion time. The children know that print carries meaning and recognise that the various labels in the classroom have a purpose. Most are making satisfactory progress in recognising letters and linking sounds to them. Others are beginning to recognise a few common words in print. This is the result of very regular, structured teaching of letter names and sounds. Most can write their own name unaided, and a few children have succeeded in making simple written recordings of a visit

to a Victorian schoolroom. However, a significant minority has difficulty in achieving recognisable letter shapes and in orienting letters between two lines.

54. The teaching is satisfactory and ensures that the early learning goals in this area are largely met. A number of children, however, need a considerable amount of adult interaction in order to be able to talk in a wide range of contexts. For this to be fully effective, very precise learning goals need to be identified for each activity, including some that challenge the pupils who enter school with well-developed speaking skills. The children are taught how to hold writing equipment such as pencils, crayons and markers. A writing table provides ready access to mark making equipment. However, the adults do not always make full use of opportunities to encourage the children to write for a relevant purpose. For instance, during the preparation for a picnic there was no attempt to encourage the children to 'write' either a list of what to take or invitations to friends to attend. The children respond well to books because the adults read to them in a way that captures their interest. Nevertheless, there is scope for books to be displayed in a more appealing and inviting way.

### **Mathematical development**

55. The children make good progress in developing an understanding of numeracy. This is a direct result of the good teaching in this area and the use of games and other practical activities to develop their counting skills. For instance, after counting practice in the classroom, a group of the youngest children developed their skills further when accompanied by an adult, they engaged in a playground jumping game using two large dice as they jumped along a ladder of numbered squares. The children playing with a doll's house were well able to use the language of position as they arranged a variety of furniture. The children are learning to write numbers as they record the total of sandwich and dinner eaters each day. By the end of the Foundation Stage, they are able to organise numbers and objects in sets and recognise subtraction as representing the 'removal' or 'taking away' of quantities. They also know the names of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and can match these to pictures and objects in the classroom.
56. The teaching is confident, as the teachers have a clear idea of what they want the children to learn in each lesson. The provision of practical activities ensures that the children's conceptual understanding develops steadily as the learning experiences are carefully structured.

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

57. The children are acquiring a satisfactory range of skills such as cutting and joining materials in various ways. They are learning to use the keyboard and control the mouse on the computers and also how to enter instructions in an electronic toy in order to control its movements. They experiment with sand and water play through which they develop a tactile awareness as well as the concept of quantity. While involved in an investigation of how sound either reaches the ears or can be blocked off, the children concentrated well and made accurate suggestions while conducting their own investigations. Through their visit to a Victorian schoolroom and a developing awareness of their own local area, the children are acquiring a satisfactory sense of changes over time.
58. The adults provide the children with a satisfactory range of practical experiences and support them well to develop their observation skills. However, at times, the full potential of the learning is not realised. After a focused activity, some children move off to somewhat unstructured activities not related to the core learning intention. Some of the children are now ready to use a wider range of equipment on a more regular basis and to engage in an extended range of investigations that stimulate their curiosity and develop their ability to ask questions.

## **Physical development**

59. The inadequacies of the accommodation restrict some aspects of the children's physical development. For example, there are no opportunities for them to develop physical control through using wheeled toys, large-scale climbing equipment and natural obstacles. Within the classroom, the children's fine motor control skills are satisfactorily developed as they learn to use tools and equipment for writing, painting, and cutting and joining materials. For instance, they use construction toys that require quite a degree of co-ordination.
60. The adults are very aware of the constraints of space on the pupils' physical development and have taken advantage of the local village hall for some physical activities such as movement and dance. There is a good level of awareness of safety factors and the teachers help the children to develop their independence by encouraging them to change their clothes unaided for physical activities. However, the pace of learning in the lesson observed was much too slow. This was because the teacher had focussed more upon linking the dancing to the theme of 'teddy bears' rather than identifying how the children might dance and the ways in which she could extend their movements to greater effect.

## **Creative development**

61. This is an area where the children broadly meet the early learning goals by the end of the Foundation Stage. The children satisfactorily exercise their imagination during role-play activities and in response to stories they hear. Their achievement would be greater if they were given more time and freedom to develop their ideas but the organisational challenges of a mixed age Foundation Stage and Year 1 class currently inhibit this approach. Again, the constraints of space make it difficult for unfinished creative work, such as painting and modelling, to be left out and returned to at a later stage. When given the opportunity, the children respond with excitement to creative activities. This was evident in a music lesson where they used percussion instruments and played as a whole class to a graphic score. It was also evident when a group composed and performed a short percussion accompaniment to a taped story.
62. The adults make a commendable effort to provide displays that stimulate the children's imagination and their interest in a range of cultures. A display of posters and artefacts linked to Sikhism, for instance, attracted the children's attention and gave rise to some interesting speculative talk. The children are given opportunities to act out characters, supported by the use of some props. This is an area which can be developed further and suitable time set aside to extend the activities beyond relatively short bursts. Overall, the teaching is satisfactory and ensures that the children make progress.

## **ENGLISH**

63. Standards in English are improving and at a faster rate than is seen nationally. In the 2000 tests for seven-year-olds, performance in reading was above the national average and in writing it was well above this. A good proportion of the pupils achieved the higher level 3. In 2000, the relatively small cohort taking the end of Key Stage 2 tests attained results which matched the national average despite the fact that the group included a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs than in previous years. At both key stages, the pupils' performance matched that of pupils in schools of similar type.
64. The inspection findings indicate that standards in reading and writing are continuing to improve. A significant proportion of seven-year-olds are attaining higher than average levels in both reading and writing. Although few pupils are expected to achieve the higher levels at the age of 11, the attainment

of a significant proportion of the pupils is well in line with what is expected at this stage. This is because the school's literacy strategy is now firmly in place and also because the quality of discussion in many lessons across the curriculum is making a very positive contribution to developing the pupils' vocabulary and their ability to organise their ideas.

65. The children begin school with average speaking, listening and early reading skills, although a significant minority are highly articulate and confident in their approach to print. At Key Stage 1, there are good opportunities for developing talk, for example, in lessons in science, geography and history. For instance, after setting up a science investigation using ice cubes, many pupils approached their teacher with apt, clearly expressed observations about the changes in the ice cubes under different conditions. Similarly, very effective teaching in a religious education lesson for older pupils inspired a lively exchange of views about factors which mar the beauty and continued survival of the Creation. These older pupils are capable of sustaining an argument and offering counter arguments on a variety of topics. The enjoyment of talk and opportunities for displaying their knowledge, for example, about history, was very evident.
66. Pupils at both key stages are competent readers. By the end of Key Stage 1, they have a good grasp of letter sounds which gives them confidence in tackling unfamiliar words. The pupils with below average literacy skills make good progress because of the regular additional help they are given. The less confident readers benefit from group reading sessions. A group in Year 1 made good progress while reading 'The Dolphin Pool' as a result of the regular prompting they received to use a range of reading clues such as illustrations and the identification of initial and final letters such as in 'Wilf' and 'Wilma'. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' accuracy and fluency improve because they read a wide variety of texts, both fiction and non-fiction. There are also regular opportunities for finding information using the computers. The breadth of these opportunities ensures that pupils view reading as an enjoyable and important activity. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are at least satisfactory and, in the case of a minority of the pupils, above average.
67. A good proportion of the seven-year-olds have above average writing skills. Their ideas are well sequenced and they generally punctuate their sentences appropriately with full stops and a capital letters. A few higher-attaining pupils are beginning to develop more complex sentence structures by using effective connecting words such as 'because'. The majority of the pupils use their secure phonic knowledge to ensure that basic words are correctly spelt. By the age of 11, the pupils make satisfactory progress in expressing their ideas in writing. Although standards in the upper classes are average overall, the writing has good features such as the increasing complexity of the sentences as the pupils strive to achieve various effects. Furthermore, a few pupils are developing their skills in paragraphing when they have opportunities to engage in more extended writing. Some average and below average pupils do not consistently apply simple spelling rules to ensure greater accuracy. This has rightly been recognised as needing attention during writing sessions and now needs to be indicated more prominently in the recorded marking of work. A real strength of the writing in Key Stage 2 is the frequency with which the pupils are encouraged to write poetry on a wide variety of topics. Many different forms are used and pupils are conversant with the use of effective similes, as in the following verse:

The ancient Aztec temple  
Built of blocks of stone  
Ancient, massive, crumbling  
Like an extinct dinosaur.

68. Often the pupils demonstrate their word processing skills well by using different fonts and layouts for recording their work.
69. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils' handwriting is generally neat and well formed. This results from the regular practice of letter shapes and basic techniques of joining letters and spacing words. By the age of 11, many pupils have developed an individual style, but at times the handwriting of some pupils is not well formed and the general presentation of their work in exercise books is unsatisfactory.
70. The teaching of English is good across the school. Appropriate prominence is given to developing reading and writing skills. Opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills are also a considerable strength. This was well demonstrated when the pupils listened and responded to their teacher's lively recital of a long narrative poem. As a consequence, these pupils were fired to suggest some vivid words and phrases to substitute those in a published poem. This provided a further useful opportunity for the teacher to reinforce the correct technical terms for language and for the pupils to demonstrate their knowledge of features of poetry such as rhyming couplets. In the oldest class, there is good support for the pupils to understand the different features of note taking and continuous prose. Historical texts and fact sheets in religious education were also effectively used to develop their skills. However, at times, the pupils' interest in the contents of information texts causes them to neglect aspects such as spelling and punctuation during their written recording. The teachers' good questioning skills are a feature of all English lessons and enable the pupils to become adept at posing their own questions. For example, during a note taking session using information about Egypt some pupils decided to record their notes using key historical questions as headings for organising their information.
71. The majority of pupils are very engaged in their learning and sustain concentration well. This is because there is an interesting variety tasks that are carefully matched to the needs of pupils. At times, however, a few older boys are somewhat reticent during whole class discussions and do not consistently make an effort, for example, to recall common spelling patterns they have been taught and might use to proof read their writing more rigorously.
72. The literacy curriculum is well managed. Very careful planning has resulted in appropriate provision being made for mixed age classes. There is a good balance of tasks to ensure time is available to develop the different aspects of English. The teachers know how to foster literacy skills in a range of curriculum areas. The marking of English work is often helpful in showing pupils how to improve, but the marking of written work in geography, history and other areas is not always well focused. The pupils' work is regularly assessed. Examples of writing are retained in individual portfolios and there are regular records of the pupils' reading. Books to support work in English are readily available in the classrooms and the small but attractive library that the pupils are encouraged to use independently.

## **MATHEMATICS**

73. In the three years leading up to national tests of 2000 there was rapid improvement in standards in mathematics. However, last year's very small cohort in Year 6 contained some pupils with significant special educational needs so that the overall performance in the national tests was below both the national average and that of similar schools. Nevertheless, when looking at the broader picture of the past three years it is clear that on average the pupils leave school about a term ahead of the expected level.
74. In the national tests for 2000, the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 achieved results that were very high and in the top 5% when compared with both schools nationally and schools with a similar number of

pupils entitled to free school meals. Once again the three-year average indicates that the seven-year-olds generally move into Key Stage 2 about a term ahead of the expected level.

75. Closer analysis of these data suggests that in mathematics in Key Stage 1 the boys perform better than the girls, but that this picture is reversed by the end of Key Stage 2. However, this variation is likely to be caused by the volatility inherent in any analysis of such small numbers of pupils. The inspectors' observations of lessons, discussions with the pupils and analysis of their work found no bias in teaching methods and a generally positive attitude to the subject that spanned both genders. In numeracy lessons, the teachers take great care to involve both boys and girls and match their questions accurately to the abilities of the pupils. The children with special educational needs are effectively supported and the brighter ones stretched by the effective use of a published scheme.
76. The inspection findings indicate that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are currently broadly average. Although there remains a small minority of pupils with special educational needs who are unlikely to reach the expected level, the vast majority should do so and there are one or two higher-attaining pupils who could clearly exceed them. At the end of Key Stage 1 standards continue to be well above average. There are a few pupils with special educational needs who struggle with mathematics, but at least a half of the cohort are highly competent mathematicians and in many cases already exceed the expected level.
77. The teachers have successfully adopted and adapted the national strategy for teaching numeracy to suit the context of their school. The improved systems for assessing the pupils' knowledge and understanding mean that the teachers know their children well and are far sharper in ensuring a better match of task to ability. Thus in the opening mental mathematics sessions the pace of work is brisk. In one very good lesson with Years 2, 3 and 4 the teacher's thorough and thoughtful preparation kept all the children on their toes. The aim was to help them to gain confidence in reading and understanding larger three-digit numbers. Each pupil had his or her own numbered card, but the difficulty of the number matched closely the ability of the child. The teacher praised the class when every pupil succeeded in reading their number and reminded them how difficult they had found a similar task two days previously, 'That's much better than Monday. You're getting really good.' This work was then skilfully extended so that the pupils had to stand up if their number was odd or even, divisible by five or ten and so on. They managed this very competently showing good knowledge of basic number facts. Finally, each group had to work collaboratively to order each of their cards from smallest to largest. This last exercise illustrated once again just how well the children manage to work together successfully with minimum fuss or bother.
78. Although the organisation of the subsequent group work for three age groups provides the teachers with a major challenge, the mixed-age class has its benefits. For instance, the group of higher-attaining Year 2's are able to work alongside the Year 3 and 4's and successfully practise the mental addition of two digit figures when solving problems with larger numbers. By the time the pupils reach the top class (Years 4, 5 and 6), their wide range of abilities means that the teacher has to rely much more upon the positive attitudes of the pupils, their willingness to work independently and the careful use of the published scheme. The time following the opening mental maths session is often spent in the focussed support of one group whilst the remainder works independently. This works well and the pupils all explain their work cogently and speak sensibly about what they have learnt in recent lessons. The analysis of their books shows that there is successful coverage of the full breadth of National Curriculum programmes of study.
79. The strength of the pupils' work in mathematics lies in their enthusiastic response to investigations into aspects such as probability and the quest for patterns in number and shape. However, there is weakness in the sloppy way in which some pupils present their work, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6.

They all know how to use a ruler and date each day's work, but some can not be bothered to do so. This is not picked up in a consistent fashion in the teachers' marking. Although all books are marked regularly, and the teachers make supportive and encouraging remarks, there is seldom a written commentary that tells the children how their work might be improved.

## SCIENCE

80. In last year's national tests the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 achieved results that were well above both the national average and the results of pupils from similar schools. The teachers' assessments of the seven-year-olds show that standards at the end of Key Stage 1 were slightly below average. However, the strength of performance lies in the greater than average proportion of higher-attaining pupils whose results exceeded the expected levels at the end of both key stages. An analysis of the results of the past three years reveals that taken overall there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls and that by the age of eleven the pupils are generally leaving the school about two terms ahead of the expected level. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
81. This year standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are broadly average because the current Year 6 contains a significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Nevertheless, it is clear from scrutiny of their work that pupils of all abilities are achieving appropriately with a few higher attainers still on course for the higher levels. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are higher than last year and slightly above average because although there are a few lower-attaining pupils there is a much larger group of pupils who are achieving highly in many aspects of their work.
82. It was possible to observe only one science lesson during the inspection but the analysis of the pupils' work across the school shows that they are covering the full breadth of the National Curriculum programmes of study.
83. By the age of seven, the pupils understand some of the similarities and differences between a range of man made and natural materials. They are developing a secure understanding of a range of physical phenomena such as sound, light and electricity. Most know that we need light to see and that shadows are formed when light rays are obstructed. They have learnt the names of some parts of the eyes such as the pupil and the iris. The children have a reasonable number of opportunities to investigate at first hand. They do so, for instance, by testing simple circuits to light up bulbs and observing the effects of different forces on plasticene, such as pull, twist and squeeze.
84. The range of practical and investigative work increases during Key Stage 2 and generally builds steadily on what the children have learnt in Key Stage 1. For instance, by the age of eleven the pupils have learnt to sort and classify different rock samples against a good range of criteria such as appearance, hardness, weight and response to a mild acid such as vinegar. The strength in this type of work is the methodical way in which the pupils' set out their results. The majority is increasingly adept at designing their own investigations. For instance, some of the work to test how light travels and behaves when reflected by different sorts of mirrors shows a logical approach. The pupils' written accounts set out clearly what they did, why, and what they discovered. Effective use is made of drawings, diagrams and charts.
85. The pupils talk enthusiastically about their work in science and show a good ability to discuss what they have learnt. However, there are aspects their work in Years 4, 5 and 6 that could be improved. For instance, there are occasions when some of the work in exercise books is scruffily presented and the marking fails to draw attention to fact that the pupil has previously worked more neatly.

## ART AND DESIGN AND DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

86. Throughout the school the classroom walls abound with plentiful examples of the good quality work produced by the children in these two subjects. Both are taught regularly, but the school's commitment to creative activity is reflected in the way that once or twice a year the whole school gets the chance to work with either an artist or another visiting professional to develop work in the arts. This represents a huge improvement since the last inspection when the school was judged to offer far too few such opportunities.
87. The major strength of the current work lies in the effective way that the pupils are taught to master simple skills and techniques from an early age. For instance, the work based on the landscape at the Stiperstones shows a wonderful progression of artistic techniques from each class of the school. The youngest pupils constructed a fabric collage of the hillside made up of simple individual block print designs of plants and flowers. They printed neatly and in carefully chosen colour range, so that when their individual prints were arranged and combined into one piece of work the visual impact was considerable.
88. Years 2, 3 and 4 focussed upon a range of individual leaf designs. From their working drawings they too designed a simple block print, but extended their work through the extremely effective use of embroidery, combining a variety of threads, sequins and buttons. The oldest pupils in Years 5 and 6 produced some outstanding charcoal landscapes. These pieces show that the children have successfully mastered a very good range of techniques for layering charcoal in a variety of ways. For instance they confidently lay down side stick washes of grey followed by darker hatching and stippling to provide a texture and depth to their work. Many pupils are developing a good ability to convey the perspective of what they see.
89. The reason why the pupils produce such good quality work is because they are well taught. The teachers plan interesting 'real life' projects. For instance the Year 2, 3, 4 class is currently designing and making tiles for a splash back for their classroom sink. The teacher has made very good use of the expertise of a local potter and together they have shown the children how to roll out clay to an even thickness using battens and how to make use of a tile mould. The pupils' technical language is being extended and they talk confidently about the tiles drying to a 'leather hard' state. The design process is proving effective because the teacher has got the class to agree to a single theme. Encouraging pairs to design panels of four tiles has further extended the pupils' work. This has led to some deep thought and careful measurement as the children strive to find imaginative ways of linking their designs. They all speak enthusiastically about their work and have a good understanding of what they are trying to achieve. For instance, when asked about the small range of colours within their design, one pair pointed out the chart of glaze colours available to them and explained that using too many colours on a small tile would not work very well.
90. The recent design and technology work in Years 4, 5 and 6 has involved making slippers and the construction of buggies powered by electric motors. The pupils' preliminary drawings contain good detail of their initial ideas and build effectively to provide a clear outline of how they will proceed through lists, instructions and labelled drawings. Although no direct teaching was observed, the quality of the work displayed was good. The pupils talk positively about what they have achieved and show good commitment in attempting to overcome difficulties in realising their designs. For example, two boys worked patiently to stop their wheels rubbing against the bodywork of their vehicle, and two girls carefully dismantled their circuitry in order to re-arrange the location of their motor. A further strength is the good quality of the finishing touches provided by the pupils. For instance, many of the slippers were personalised with names or careful embroidery.



91. The school has recently purchased a computer program to support the pupils' work in design. During the inspection the Year 6 pupils were observed making good progress in learning how the program works as they began their early designs for a machine to move stone slabs.

## **GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND MUSIC**

92. The previous inspection found standards in geography and history to be satisfactory. There was no overall judgement in relation to music. As a result of improved planning, the quality of work in history has improved. Standards in geography remain satisfactory but there are emerging strengths, for example, in the pupils' understanding of why and how places are similar to and also different from each other, such as Wistanstow and Telford.
93. In geography, the younger pupils recognise some of the aspects of their local area and know what the buildings are used for. For example, they have visited their community shop and developed an understanding of the important services it provides for the village. They have also visited a Victorian schoolroom and role played scenes from school life in the past to develop their sense of change over time. They use photographs and other evidence to develop their understanding that historical evidence can be obtained from a range of sources.
94. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have a well-developed understanding of a wider range of places and of some of their distinguishing features. They know that the way land is used has a significant impact on the production of food and goods for export. They study a wide range of maps, atlases and globes to locate countries where, for example, clothing is produced for export to this country. By the age of eleven, the pupils' historical knowledge is above average. They can provide details of what they remember about how this country has been invaded and settled, for example, by the Vikings. They know about some of the exploits of the Ancient Greeks and Tudor seafarers. They can independently select a range of sources from which to draw information, including books, artefacts and information located on the Internet. Their awareness of key historical questions is well established and they are accustomed to using these when they search for historical evidence. They are becoming increasingly adept at applying their historical skills when approaching a range of topics. This is because in the teaching there is an emphasis on developing these skills.
95. The planning of work in geography and history takes increasing account of the way learning builds upon what has gone before. An example is the way the pupils' map reading skills develop from interpreting simple maps and plans in Key Stage 1 to using more detailed maps such as those in atlases and those produced for ordinance survey purposes. The teaching of history is particularly effective in Key Stage 2 because the teachers' deep interest in the subject inspires and motivates the pupils to be curious about the past. The use of recently produced national guidance for the teaching of geography and history is having a positive impact on the further development of teaching and learning in these two subjects.
96. In music, pupils regularly experience activities in listening, appraising, performing and composing. This ensures that they reach the expected standards. At both key stages the pupils sing satisfactorily in tune. The older pupils develop their singing skills sufficiently to produce effective performances in public. From an early age, the pupils become familiar with the sounds made by a range of untuned percussion instruments, progressing to guitar and recorder playing and the use of simple drum kits and keyboards. Opportunities to play regularly in assemblies, for special festivals and productions, are very valuable ways of developing the pupils' confidence in performance. The teachers ensure that the pupils hear music from different countries and different periods of history. Often, this supports other work such as the studies of World War II or the Ancient Egypt.

97. The curriculum plans for the teaching of music are satisfactory and provide for a range of activities. However, the teaching and learning intentions for individual lessons are not always precise enough. The overall coherence of the planning needs to be reviewed to ensure that the pupils' learning progresses steadily from one year group to the next. This would enhance the enthusiastic teaching that takes place in individual lessons.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

98. At the time of the last inspection several shortcomings were identified in the school's provision for this subject. However, the recent upgrading of the school's equipment through a grant from the National Grid for Learning [NGFL] means that the school's provision is now on a far firmer footing than previously.
99. At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school, the vast majority of the pupils are achieving the expected levels and a few with particular interest in the subject exceed them. Throughout the school, the pupils make regular use of word processing to compose and present their work attractively. By the age of eleven the pupils' preferences for different fonts and type sizes are being used to good effect in their stories and poems. In their work in history and geography they make effective use of information and data stored on CD Rom encyclopaedias. In design and technology a few are beginning to use computers in their early drawings for a model of a machine that will move 'slabs of stone.'
100. There has been significant improvement in the way the school teaches the pupils how to use computers as a means of controlling movement. There are displays of work showing that the Key Stage 2 pupils in Years 5 and 6 have been working successfully with the program 'Logo' in the construction of geometric shapes. During the inspection, pairs of pupils made good use of their knowledge of turns and angles to add further to this work. Elsewhere pupils were observed using programmable electronic toys. These younger pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 responded very positively to the teacher's challenge to program the toy for a sequence of movements that would complete a square. The lessons worked well because the teacher had a clear plan of attack. Once she had checked that the pupils remembered the key features of the equipment and established the rules for safe working she encouraged them to use trial and error to control the toy's movements. Once they were confident she introduced her specific task. They pupils showed very good levels of co-operation and a willingness to listen to each other's ideas and opinions so that the challenge was soon completed successfully. A significant feature of this work was the way that boys worked quite happily with the girls, even when they were in a significant minority. At no time did either gender dominate either the discussion or use of equipment.
101. Taken overall, the teachers have a sound working knowledge of computers, but will benefit from the proposed training offered through a grant from the New Opportunities Fund [NOF]. Nevertheless, it is evident from the observations made during the inspection that the teachers do not allow any of their own uncertainties prevent the pupils from having full access to the improved facilities. At the moment, a new set of educational software is being trialled eagerly by the pupils in Years 4-6. Each morning a good number arrive at school early in order to load and try out the new programs. They talk enthusiastically about the mental mathematics activities and quizzes about music and show good levels of technical competence as they navigate their way through the different instructions, commands and menus. The teacher introducing the new design program knew a little about what it has to offer, but was appropriately delighted as some of the higher-attaining pupils uncovered facilities and techniques that added considerably to the scope of their design work. They were then shared with the rest of the class.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

102. The school strives valiantly to ensure that the children receive as much as possible of the National Curriculum programmes of study for physical education. As a result, the pupils have reasonable opportunities for games, swimming and dance, but their work in gymnastics is limited by the lack of a hall with the appropriate equipment.
103. Two good lessons were observed that were taught in the village hall. One of country-dance, the other of floor work in gymnastics. The teacher's knowledge of country-dance is very good and as a result she sets high expectations for the children's performance that they strive hard to live up to. No time is wasted as the pupils start the lesson with a familiar dance to warm up before moving on to polish their knowledge of 'The shoemaker's Dance.' The teacher's explanations are clear and she demonstrates movements and linking passages effectively. When numbers are unbalanced she joins in to dance with the children. All this gives the pupils confidence and adds considerably to their enjoyment. As a result both boys and girls are making good gains and by the end of Key Stage 1 are exceeding the expected levels.
104. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils can co-ordinate a sequence of movements to link three different balances. Their work builds carefully upon the previous lesson and the quality of their performance improves because the teacher is careful to ensure regular opportunities for the children to evaluate each other's work. No time is wasted and the positive relationships between teacher and pupils contribute strongly to the success of the lesson.
105. The pupils' very good behaviour means that the walk from school to village hall is managed safely and efficiently. The high levels of responsibility shown by the pupils were also regularly observed at lunchtime break as they participate in a programme of games and activities that take place in the tiny playground. The strength of this system is the way that the pupils have managed to ensure a broad range of activities so that boys and girls of all ages play safely and happily together.
106. After school clubs include 'Top Sport' as well as regular competitive sports matches against other local small schools. Weekend sports fixtures and rallies also feature in the school calendar and the commitment and support of many parents contributes strongly to the school's ability to ensure that as many pupils as possible benefit from such events.
107. There has been considerable debate about the time and cost of providing swimming at the school. However, the current arrangements ensure that all pupils receive swimming tuition for one term each year, so that by the time they leave school all can swim a minimum of 25 metres with many swimming much further?

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

108. It was possible to observe only one lesson in religious education in Key Stage 2. From a scrutiny of past work, the teachers' planning and other records, it is evident that the pupils' attainment matches the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is in line with the findings of the previous inspection. Improvements in planning now ensure that the needs of mixed age classes are catered for through a rolling programme of work that includes Christianity and aspects of other important religions. For example, the topic of journeys such as those related in Bible stories and the concept of pilgrimage are undertaken with increasing complexity as the pupils move on in Key Stage 2. It also includes examples from a variety of other faiths.

109. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils develop a sound knowledge of some important events in the Christian calendar. They recognise some of the events leading to Easter and the Resurrection. The youngest pupils are aware of some of the symbols associated with Christmas and Diwali. They know that different religions, such as Sikhism and Hinduism, have special observances connected with food and dress and that the symbols representing these religions are different from those of Christianity. The teaching of religious education underpins the school's value system in relation to fostering the pupils' moral development. The pupils in Key Stage 1, for example, have discussed the requirements of a Christian journey through life. Older pupils have examined some of the moral issues linked to stewardship of the environment. They generally show a high level of interest in the topics taught.
110. The planning of work and the one lesson seen indicate that the teaching is of satisfactory quality. A variety of activities are provided ranging from discussion to role-play and written recording at both key stages. A good attempt is being made to broaden the curriculum in order to include important features of world faiths. This is supported by displays of artefacts and books representing Christianity, Sikhism and Hinduism. Some of the topics could well be dealt with in greater depth, drawing more frequently on recently produced national guidelines.
111. The resources have been improved. The use of the local church for special services is valued by the school. In the past, pupils have visited places of worship in urban areas, an experience that is valued by parents and pupils alike. Assessment of the pupils' progress is informal at present and needs to be considered in greater depth once a review of the current curriculum and the revision of the local syllabus have taken place.