

INSPECTION REPORT

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Leek First School

Leek

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique Reference Number: 124098

Headteacher: Mrs Janice Deane

Reporting inspector: Mr Michael Allcock

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th September 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 707774

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	First
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	4 to 9 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	East Street Leek Staffordshire ST13 6LF
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Hodkinson
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Jean McKay, Lay Inspector	Equal opportunities	Attendance Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the community
Jackie Johnson	Mathematics Information technology Art Geography	Curriculum and assessment Staffing, accommodation and learning resources Financial efficiency
Ian Tatchell	English Religious education Design and technology Physical education Special educational needs	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Leadership and management

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. They achieve good standards in science.
- Teaching is good throughout the school.
- The dedicated headteacher gives the school clear educational direction.
- Relationships are positive, both adult-pupil and amongst the pupils themselves. All staff present the pupils with good role models.
- Good procedures are in place to monitor pupils' progress and personal development and to promote good behaviour.
- Parents are very closely involved in the life of the school. High quality information is made available to them.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.
- The school works well with its local community.
- There is effective provision for pupils to enjoy extra-curricular activities.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. The library is under-resourced. It is inaccessible for part of each week, so insufficient use is made of it to promote pupils' attainment and progress in reading.
- II. Some elements of health and safety, including hazardous ill-fitting carpets and untidy storage areas, need to be addressed.
- III. The outside of the site is untended in parts and visually unappealing. Some skylights and gutters leak.
- IV. There is no safe outside play area for the under fives. They lack large play apparatus, including wheeled toys.

This is a good school. It has many more strengths than areas for development. The governors' action plan will set out how these areas identified during the inspection are to be tackled. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils in the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues from its last inspection. Standards have been raised in information technology. The school has developed appropriate policies and schemes of work to ensure that pupils cover all the programmes of study of the National Curriculum and for religious education. Care is now taken that pupils progressively acquire skills, knowledge and understanding in all subjects as they move through the school. Assessment is more carefully addressed, though there is still no common format used in all subjects. The quality of teaching is higher, so that pupils make more steady progress. The senior management team works more effectively together and co-ordination of subjects is better. The school has responded positively to new legislation. The effective procedures now in place, and the increasing role of governors, ensure that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

Standards in subjects

This table shows the standards achieved by 7-year-olds in 1998 based on the National Curriculum tests:

Performance in	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools		Key
			<i>well above average</i>	A
			<i>above average</i>	B
Reading	D	E	<i>average</i>	C
Writing	B	C	<i>below average</i>	D
Mathematics	B	B	<i>well below average</i>	E

The information shows that in the 1998 tests, when compared to all schools, pupils' standards were above average in writing and mathematics and below average in reading. When compared to similar schools, pupils' results are above average in mathematics, in line in writing but well below average in reading. Teacher assessments in 1998 of pupils' attainments in science showed above average standards, with a very high percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 grade. The 1999 results are to hand but not, as yet, any national comparative figures. These indicate an improvement in reading but show deterioration in writing. Mathematics and science are still strong, as in 1998. Inspection findings indicate that at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards in English, mathematics and information technology are broadly in line with those expected nationally. Standards in science are above expectations. Pupils' attainments in religious education meet the expected standards of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils attain high standards in music and swimming. By the age of five, children achieve the expected standards in personal and social development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and in their creative and physical development. Standards in language and literacy are below those expected.

Quality of teaching

Teaching in	Under 5	5 – 7 years	7 – 9 years
English	Good	Satisfactory	Good
Mathematics	Good	Good	Good
Science		Good	Good
Information technology		Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Religious education		Good	Good
Other subjects	Satisfactory	Good	Good

The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, it was good or better in 56 per cent of lessons. Teaching was very good in over 16 per cent of lessons. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson seen at Key Stage 2. Teaching was good overall for children under five and for both key stages.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Satisfactory overall. Good in assemblies and around the school but occasionally challenging in lessons.
Attendance	Good. A prompt start is made to the school day.
Ethos*	Good. Pupils are well motivated. Relationships are positive. There is a firm commitment to raising standards.
Leadership and management	Good. The hardworking headteacher gives clear educational direction to the school. She is well supported by an enthusiastic and caring staff. The governing body is effective. Their role in the monitoring of teaching and learning is developing appropriately.
Curriculum	Good. All subjects of the National Curriculum, including literacy and numeracy, are given due weight. The curriculum is made more relevant by well-planned topics, supported by a good range of visits and visitors.
Pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs, so that they achieve good rates of progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good. Most aspects contribute well to the overall personal development of individual pupils.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory overall. Learning resources need significant improvement in some curriculum areas.
Value for money	Sound. Unit costs are below average. Pupils enter with below average levels of attainment and make good progress overall.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- V. Children enjoy coming to school.
- VI. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school.
- VII. Teachers are accessible and helpful. Complaints are handled well.
- VIII. The headteacher and staff present pupils with good role models.
- IX. High standards are encouraged.
- X. Good behaviour and caring attitudes are effectively fostered.
- XI. The school provides parents with regular, helpful information.
- XII. The school is a safe and orderly community in which to work.

What some parents are not happy about

- XIII. The school does not keep parents
 - XIV. Some parents are not sure about the
- ot enough, especially to challenge the higher attaining.

Inspection evidence confirms the parents' positive views. Parents are provided with good levels of information and the school has effective procedures for monitoring pupils' progress. Reports are sound but lack sufficient detail on levels of attainment. Other opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress are provided. The school has not yet shared its homework policy with parents, outlining timings and expectations. This is to be undertaken shortly, following the school's own sampling of parents' views. It will be part of the contract it will have with parents. Older pupils, and the higher attaining, are given sufficiently challenging tasks to do at home, which prepare them appropriately for their middle school.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

The governors, headteacher and staff should now:

Improve the quality, quantity and range of books in the library, and make it more accessible to pupils, to further promote standards and enhance progress in reading by:

- providing sufficient books to support work in English and all other curriculum areas, and to promote study and research skills; (paras. 61, 84)
- making the library more welcoming as a place to work, without timetabled commitments for other uses, so that resources housed there are more readily available to groups and individuals; (paras. 60, 63, 84)

Review health and safety procedures to eliminate potential hazard by:

- ensuring that registers are appropriately totalled to guarantee that the school has an accurate account of those present, in case of a site emergency; (para. 45)
- providing ample, up-to-date fire exit signs on all designated ways out of the school; (para. 46)
- replacing ill-fitting carpets; (para. 46)
- assessing storage needs and making stock rooms tidier and more safe and efficient to use. (paras. 46, 60, 61, 63, 91, 112, 122)

Bring to the further attention of the local education authority the deficiencies in the accommodation, for example leaking gutters and skylights. (paras, 46, 60)

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

- providing an appropriate range of large outside play equipment, including wheeled toys for under fives. (paras. 61, 66)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1 The school is situated on the eastern side of the Staffordshire moorland town of Leek. It serves a mixed area of owner occupied and local authority housing and some isolated homes outside the town in the Bradnop area. A substantial minority of the pupils now come from north-east Leek, outside the notional catchment area of south-east Leek. There are 214 pupils on roll, about average for a first school but over 40 less than when the school was last inspected. There are more boys than girls overall but the difference is only marked in Year 4. Children start school part-time the term after their fourth birthday, many without any form of pre-school education. At the time of the inspection, 47 children on roll were under five. Attainment on entry is below average overall.

2 Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds, though socio-economic circumstances are below average overall. More than twice as many pupils are eligible for free school meals than at the last inspection. At the time of the inspection, all but one pupil were white. All pupils speak English as their first language. There are 17 pupils on the register of special educational needs, though none currently has a statement of special educational need.

3 The schools' aims and priorities are as follows:

- The school motto is: sharing, caring, challenge and support.
- The key aim is to provide high quality education for all pupils. In partnership with the parents, the school aims to develop an environment which encourages learning, is sensitive to pupils' needs and promotes self-esteem and motivation. This is achieved by the following:
 - developing a broad and balanced curriculum that includes our statutory obligations within the National Curriculum and which is accessible to all pupils whatever their needs. This curriculum will continue to review and address the quality of learning and teaching provided and the standards attained by all involved;
 - establishing a strong and supportive pastoral care system which is responsive to the social, personal and learning needs of the children;
 - promoting the partnership with parents through regular and effective home-school communication and by encouraging parents to play an important role in the life of the school and their children's education;
 - creating an ethos within the school that conveys a clear message of the moral and ethical values for which the school stands which is based on mutual respect, sensitivity, tolerance, goodwill and a sense of humour;
 - fostering attitudes of individual responsibility and self-discipline encouraged by the provision of opportunities for the children to demonstrate initiative and individual judgement;
 - enhancing the skills of all staff, teaching and non-teaching, so that all have confidence and autonomy to carry out their roles.;
 - ensuring that opportunities provided by the school are available to all, irrespective of race, religion, disability or gender;
 - ensuring that the special needs of any child are met to the extent that resources allow;
 - ensuring that issues involving behaviour are dealt with according to the process described in the school behaviour policy, clearly, fairly and consistently involving all concerned.

Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	30	23	53

3	National Curriculum Test/Task Results	Reading	Writing	Mathematics
	Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys Girls Total	20 22 42	22 22 44
	Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School National	79 80	83 81
				25 21 46 87 84

3	Teacher Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science
	Number of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	Boys Girls Total	21 22 43	22 22 44
	Percentage at NC Level 2 or above	School National	81 81	83 85
				29 21 50 94 86

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:		%
	Authorised	School 4.5
	Absence	National comparative data 5.7
	Unauthorised	School 0.5
	Absence	National comparative data 0.5

3

3 Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	0
	Permanent	0

3 Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	16
	Satisfactory or better	98
	Less than satisfactory	2

3 **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

3 **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

3 **Attainment and progress**

4 Children enter the Early Years' classes at the school with below average levels of attainment overall, as measured by the county baseline assessment procedures, across a narrow range of capabilities, although the full range is represented. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in their personal and social development, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, creative development and physical development. Progress is sound in language and literacy. They broaden and consolidate their learning in all the six areas of their curriculum, so that, by the time they are five, they have attained expected levels in all of them, except language and literacy, where it is below the nationally agreed Desirable Learning Outcomes.

5 When compared with national figures, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 grade or above in the 1998 National Curriculum assessments was close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 grade was well below the national average in reading, above the national average in mathematics and well above in writing. Overall, compared to all schools, the pupils' attainments in writing and mathematics were above the national average but those in reading were below. Compared with the results of schools with similar intakes, pupils' attainments were above average in mathematics, broadly in line in writing but well below average in reading. Over the three years from 1996 to 1998, standards have risen in all three areas. However, the gains made in 1997 were only maintained in writing, whereas results in both reading and mathematics declined marginally from that peak year to 1998 levels. Girls outperformed boys in all three areas, as is found nationally. Boys' standards in reading declined each year against national averages, while girls' standards improved year on year and now exceed national norms. Boys' standards in writing were more consistent against national averages but were below in each year. Girls' standards in writing improved each year, exceeding those found nationally marginally in 1997 and by a considerable degree last year. Both boys and girls outscored national averages in mathematics in the last two years, following low scores in 1996.

6 Teacher assessments show that the percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard of Level 2 in science was above the national average. The percentage of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was very high. Standards were below average for experimental and investigative science at both the expected and higher levels. However, standards were uniformly high in life and living processes, materials and their properties and physical processes, especially at the higher levels.

7 In work seen during the inspection at Key Stage 1, inspectors' judgements on attainment broadly support test findings and teacher assessments. However, this information is now considerably out-of-date as the 1999 results, though not the national comparative figures, are to hand. The year group described above are now in Year 4. The 1999 Year 2 results indicate a further rise in standards in mathematics but a small drop in standards in reading and writing and science. Correlation between test results and teacher assessments improved in 1999 compared to 1998, especially at the higher Level 3, where there was some underrating of pupils' likely performance in writing and mathematics and an unrealistic assessment of likely outcomes in reading. By the end of Key Stage 1, inspection evidence shows that pupils attain standards close to those expected in English, mathematics and information technology. Pupils' standards in science are above the expected levels. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectation of the locally agreed syllabus.

8 By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils attain above expected standards in science. Their attainments in the other core subjects of English, mathematics, information technology and religious education are in line with those expected nationally.

- 9 It is difficult to make direct comparison with the standards of attainment reported on for children under five at the time of the last inspection, as little reference was directly made to attainment and the Desirable Learning Outcomes were not then in place. However, standards appear to have been broadly maintained, despite a considerable demographic change to the intake, following changes to the actual catchment area served by the school. The 1996 inspection found that pupils' attainments in English were above those expected at both key stages, as were pupils' attainments in science at Key Stage 2. Standards in mathematics and religious education at both key stages and science at Key Stage 1 were at the expected level. However, pupils' attainments throughout the school in information technology were below those found nationally. Given the changes to the overall school population, pupils' attainments have been generally well maintained. Low overall standards in language skills on entry have caused reading to be below average in test situations but inspection findings indicate that attainment in all core subjects met or exceeded national expectations. The requirement to report on attainment in the foundation subjects of art, design and technology, geography, history, music and physical education by the end of Key Stage 1 and Year 4 has been lifted, so direct comparison cannot be made. However, improvements are seen in music, and art remains a strength.
- 10 Progress is at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons and is good or better in over 55 per cent. The provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, with a range of interesting, carefully planned activities and effective teaching, with good levels of classroom support, contributes to the overall good progress made by children under five. Sound progress is made through Key Stage 1. Progress is good for all pupils during Key Stage 2. Progress in Key Stage 1 is good in mathematics, science, art and music and is satisfactory in all other subjects. The pace of progress increases in Key Stage 2, where it is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as well as in art and music. Progress is sound in all other subjects. The pupils rapidly develop good skills in swimming, where teachers and local instructors provide ideal conditions for the acquisition of confidence and technique. Overall, this shows considerable improvement since the last inspection, when only English at both key stages and art and science at Key Stage 2 were judged good and progress in information technology was unsatisfactory at both key stages.
- 11 Pupils of all attainment levels make good progress overall in English. Teachers work hard to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills as they move through the school with questioning used effectively to evoke appropriate oral responses. Well-planned opportunities are provided for them to use role-play, express their opinions and join in discussions in many subjects. The school has used the advent of the literacy hour to raise overall interest in books. Pupils build on early skills, recognising common words in familiar texts extending the range of their reading across a variety of texts including poetry and plays. The home-school reading partnership has a beneficial effect upon pupils' progress, so that by the time they are in Year 4, standards are above the county average, from below average attainment on entry in reading. Ample opportunities are provided for pupils to refine skills in writing. Younger pupils develop early skills copying from an adult. Fluency and the correct use of sentence structure and punctuation are appropriately developed over time. Older pupils' writing is often well organised, imaginative and clear. The school has implemented the literacy hour soundly. Standards in literacy are appropriately supported by work in many curriculum areas, for example in religious education and history.
- 12 Progress is good in mathematics. The school has implemented the National Numeracy Strategy appropriately, which is having a beneficial effect on pupils' mental agility and facility with number. Work in other subjects, such as science, information technology and geography supports the progressive acquisition of numeracy skills. The quality of teaching is good, so that pupils experience a good level of well-targeted practical work promoting acquisition of key skills. Early skills in the use of numbers, acquisition of number bonds and recognition of shapes are built on progressively. Older pupils effectively improve problem solving and investigative skills, for instance in their work with money.
- 13 Pupils throughout the school make good progress in science. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator, who has helped raise levels of teachers' competence and developed a good range of supportive documentation. Teaching is effective and is planned carefully by year group

teams to contain a good level of investigative and discovery work. Key skills, for example in predicting and designing a fair test, are acquired progressively as pupils move through the school. Pupils are developing good observational skills, for instance when they work with pets brought in by a parent helper to support pupils' work on life and living processes.

14 Pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress in information technology. Younger pupils refine early skills using a mouse, keyboard or keypad so that they quickly become more independent. They acquire skills in control technology as they direct a programmable floor robot around a set course. Older pupils confidently name the different parts of a computer and develop helpful skills using CD-Roms and access the Internet to support learning in many curriculum areas.

15 Progress is satisfactory in religious education for all pupils. They develop their knowledge and understanding of key features in the holy books of major world religions, recognising that there are differences between them. Pupils are beginning to appreciate the major characteristics of religious festivals and the importance they have for believers.

16 Pupils with special education needs make good progress. They are well supported in lessons and through well-focused individual or group withdrawal work, aimed at meeting targets on their individual education plans. They reach levels of attainment which are below the levels of attainment for pupils of their age, but which still relate well to their ability level.

16 **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

17 Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to work in most classes. Their response to lessons and to all aspects of school life has a beneficial effect on their attainment and progress. Most pupils consistently show interest and enthusiasm in their work, and the support they receive from their entry into the school's Reception classes ensures that the scene is set for their future progress. Most pupils with special educational needs have positive attitudes to learning. When working individually or in a small group, with the support of a teacher or learning assistant, they show a level of confidence not always seen in the classroom situation. They persevere with challenging tasks and enjoy the sessions.

18 Behaviour is satisfactory overall, but is often good in assemblies and around the school. Most pupils settle in well at the beginning of lessons, and are attentive. They show interest in their tasks and are keen to offer ideas. They occasionally move off task if the pace set is not positive enough or the teacher's management not sufficiently effective, especially where class sizes are too large. There is no vandalism or litter. There were no exclusions in the last three academic years.

19 Relationships with peers and adults are good. All staff provide positive role models. Pupils respond well to the respect shown to them by adults. They are courteous to visitors, and show respect to each other and school staff. They co-operate well in pairs or larger groups, and the mixed ability grouping means that higher attaining pupils are given responsibility to promote the learning of lower attaining pupils. They share resources well, for example, in music lessons and when sharing the computers, and treat the school equipment respectfully.

20 The personal development of pupils is good. They are involved in a number of ways in the day-to-day running of the school, including handing out cutlery and water at lunchtime, acting as mentors to younger pupils and taking registers to the office. Many pupils show increasing initiative as they become older. For example, they often extend the interest they have developed in lessons by researching extra information at home and by bringing in books and objects of interest to add to the display or share with the class, as they did particularly well during topic work on World War Two. Older pupils are given opportunities to meet new and challenging experiences in the residential course they attend before they leave to go onto the next stage of their education. Some pupils who left the school last year wanted to show their appreciation of the school, and all it had done for them, by doing a sponsored cycle ride which raised over £100 for school funds, and which featured prominently in the local press. The local Member of Parliament recently visited the school. The

school effectively used the occasion to enhance pupils' personal development further.

21 Overall, the high standards seen in pupils' attitudes and behaviour during the last inspection have not been maintained. This is commensurate with the change in the school's population. However, their personal development and relationships in the school remain a strong feature.

21 **Attendance**

22 Figures for attendance are good. Levels of authorised absence are below the national average, while the unauthorised rate is broadly in line. The pupils arrive at school promptly and lessons commence on time. The pupils' good attendance has a positive effect on their attitudes and standards of attainment and progress. Levels of attendance are similar to those reported following the school's previous inspection.

22 **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

22 **Teaching**

23 The school has improved on the satisfactory quality of teaching reported at both key stages following its last inspection. Now, teaching is good throughout the school, with over 55 per cent of lessons judged good or better. The unsatisfactory teaching of information technology is no longer a weakness. The good features seen then, including teachers' dedication and effective planning, remain in evidence.

24 The quality of teaching is good overall. In over 97 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection it was satisfactory or better, with over 16 per cent very good. Only one lesson, observed at Key Stage 2, was unsatisfactory. Examples of good teaching were seen at both key stages, and for the under fives.

25 Teaching was never less than satisfactory for under fives in the Reception classes and was good overall. The early years co-ordinator and the two teachers who job-share in the second Reception class work very closely together. They have a secure understanding of the needs of these young children. They are well supported by a good number of well-qualified classroom assistants, who work effectively as group leaders themselves to ensure a greater adult-child contact level. There is an appropriate emphasis on structured practical activities and a high level of direct teaching to ensure early acquisition of key skills in literacy and numeracy.

26 At Key Stage 1, over 56 per cent of lessons seen were good or better and almost 19 per cent were very good. The quality of teaching at this key stage contributes significantly to the good progress pupils make. Daily assessment is a strong feature at this key stage, allowing teachers to target closely what pupils need to learn next to improve their standard of work. Overall, the teaching of English, mathematics, science, religious education and geography is good. The teaching of music is very good. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory.

27 There was a wider range of teaching quality seen at Key Stage 2, though it is good overall, with over 61 per cent judged good or better. The one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in a very large class, where some challenging pupil behaviour was not being sufficiently well managed. Key Stage 2 teachers display a wider range of organisational strategies to inspire and motivate pupils and some sensitive, thoughtful teaching is seen. Overall, the quality of teaching is good in English, mathematics, science, religious education, geography and music. The teaching of swimming is a particular strength. In all other subjects, where sufficient lessons were seen to make a judgement, teaching was satisfactory.

28 Teachers at both key stages have a secure knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum programmes of study and, in the best examples of planning, closely reference their work to them. Good teaching is seen in English and mathematics, as the school has soundly thought out strategies for literacy and numeracy and is managing their implementation well in a period of considerable change of personnel. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' behaviour and of the commitment they should make to ensure appropriate standards are reached. Older pupils are given additional responsibility and undertake personal research at home, effectively promoting their personal development and the progress they make in several subjects, including history. Teachers plan effectively and consistently across the key stages. Those teaching pupils in the same year group in different classes, work together to ensure that a broadly similar provision is made for their pupils. However, in some lessons insufficient distinction is made between work intended for pupils of differing levels of attainment in mixed age classes. Learning objectives are clear and shared effectively with pupils, often by reinforcement during the plenary session with which many lessons end. Lessons contain a wide range of challenging and varied activities. Practical tasks and experimental work, as in Years 3 and 4 science lessons, are a strong feature. A good level of well-planned oral work, from Reception onwards, effectively promotes pupils' speaking and listening and social skills.

29 Most teachers are good managers, so that discipline is relaxed, promoting a positive classroom ethos and good pupil-teacher relationships. There are challenging pupils in most classes, and when discipline is not secure, behaviour in lessons soon deteriorates. Pace overall is brisk, even in the longer lessons now characterising literacy and numeracy. Learning support assistants are well deployed, so that their time is not wasted during the necessarily lengthy introductions to some lessons. Learning resources, though sometimes past their prime, are used well. Staff and parents are generous in the provision of many of their own artefacts, especially to support the motivational displays around the school and in classrooms. Teachers use probing questions to assess and extend pupils' level of understanding, particularly at Key Stage 1. Homework is appropriately used to support work, mainly in literacy, for the younger pupils. Older pupils are given a wider range of homework, which is sufficiently challenging, and prepares them effectively for their middle school.

30 The standard of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The special educational needs co-ordinator and additional literacy support assistants either withdraw special needs pupils or support pupils in class. Lessons are well planned, resources are effectively used and sessions move at a brisk pace so that much is achieved. Tasks are challenging and are closely matched to the ability of the pupils. Staff build up a good relationship with these pupils and by gentle encouragement take every opportunity to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding. In classes, pupils with special educational needs receive additional support and individual work where appropriate.

30 **The curriculum and assessment**

31 The school has made good progress in addressing recommendations made in the 1996 report. School policies and schemes of work are now in place in almost all subjects although those for design and technology are in an early stage of development. Assessment procedures are now satisfactory. The school's curriculum is now good overall.

32 The curriculum is appropriately balanced and broadly based. The time allocated to English, mathematics and science is above national averages and consequently less time is devoted to foundation subjects. The effective use of a two-year topic programme in each key stage however, ensures that these are covered satisfactorily and in a manner that is motivating to the pupils. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The governing body has made the decision that sex education is not to be part of the formal curriculum and teachers deal with any queries as, and if, they occur. There is a scheme of work for personal and social education, and this is addressed through circle time, although this was not evident on all timetables during the week of the inspection. The results of this are evident however, in the sound behaviour and good quality of relationships in the school. There is a clear

policy on substance misuse. The curriculum is made relevant to young learners by the well-planned topics, which integrate many of the subjects. Visits to places of interest like High Ash Farm, and visitors who come into school to share their interest and expertise, effectively enhance the curriculum. A recent visit by an African dancer is a good example of this. A good range of extra-curricular activities, for example, chess, recorders, football and dance, supplements curriculum provision. These are well supported by the pupils.

33 Provision and planning for children under five is good and prepares them effectively for the National Curriculum. Planning provides clear and specific purposes for all activities, which is appropriately linked to soundly organised on-going assessment. Appropriate use is made of the detailed information obtained to adjust both the focus of activities and individual provision. This enables children under five to build securely on previous learning and contributes significantly to the good progress they make.

34 The school effectively provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils in most areas of the curriculum. A suitable range of tasks, well matched to the differing levels of attainment of the pupils, is provided in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. However, specific tasks or extension activities for the higher attaining pupils are limited in the other subjects. This is particularly evident in the mixed age classes. Class sizes vary from twenty-two to thirty-five. The homework policy does not ensure that the learning of pupils in the same year, but from different classes, is similarly supported.

35 The curriculum makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. Since the previous inspection, the school's provision for these pupils has been developed to provide clear individual education plans for all pupils with special educational needs. Procedures for identifying and supporting pupils from an early age are now established and planning is good. Individual education plans are produced by the school's special educational needs co-ordinator in conjunction with teachers and parents.

36 Planning for the progressive acquisition of skills, understanding and knowledge as pupils move through the school is good. Teachers in the same year and key stage meet regularly to discuss planning with respect to pupil progress and the integration of programmes of study with topics. Continuity between the key stages is also adequately addressed. The headteacher monitors planning documents but the opportunity for subject co-ordinators to regularly support colleagues and monitor teaching is limited.

37 Systems for assessing pupils' attainment are satisfactory. Baseline testing is well established for the under fives. All pupils undertake the standard assessment tasks at the end of Key Stage 1, and pupils in Years 3 and 4 take non-statutory tests in English and mathematics. Reading tests are undertaken in Years 2, 3 and 4. The school analyses the results in order to ensure that tasks are matched to pupils' needs. Assessments in all subjects and pupils' personal development are recorded and helpfully passed on to the appropriate middle school but these lack detailed structure. Opportunities for assessment are not formally documented in planning, although effective teachers evaluate above and below average progress at the end of each teaching session. A standard format for recording assessment in the various subjects is used. However, there is no common agreement as to the level of detail needed to inform future planning or the next teacher. A bank of pupils' work is in the process of being built up and this includes annotated work at three levels of attainment for each subject across the age range. This will provide useful reference, particularly for the less experienced teachers. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection.

37 **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

38 Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. It is particularly well catered for through assemblies that meet the statutory requirements and are an important feature of school life. In assemblies, pupils are given

regular opportunities to reflect on themes such as friendship and sharing. A quiet, respectful atmosphere is created in all assemblies, whether for the whole school or a key stage. They are well planned and contain a good balance of moral, social and religious themes. Prayers are said appropriately and most assemblies have a hymn. In religious education, beliefs are explored, especially in relation to other religions, and this adds significantly to pupils' spiritual development. Opportunities for spiritual development and reflection are evident in other subjects, particularly art, science and music, as well as thinking times at the end of some lessons. For example, pupils are frequently asked during lessons, to consider the feelings of others, for example Year 2 discussed the way Ethiopians might pray to their gods and created a prayer of thanks for their harvest.

- 39 Provision for moral development is good. Pupils develop an appropriate awareness of the principles of right and wrong from an early age. There is a clear and helpful behaviour policy that provides useful guidance for staff. It is consistently implemented throughout the school. Teachers and support staff set good examples and teach pupils to appreciate what is right and wrong effectively. They take time to explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable and suggest how it might be improved. Good behaviour and attitudes are constantly acknowledged and rewarded appropriately. Each class discusses and agrees its class rules with the teacher. These are clearly displayed in the classroom and pupils are fully aware of them. They are reviewed at the beginning of each term to effectively reinforce them. Through personal and social education, pupils have the chance to discuss moral issues and to develop appropriate attitudes and values.
- 40 The school makes good provision for the social development of its pupils from a very early age. Pupils are taught to share, help one another and to show consideration for others. Pupils are expected to be polite to one another, as well as adults in the school. Pupils moving into the school, including those who have special educational needs, adapt very well to changes in friendship patterns and a new school environment. Because of the welcome they receive, they are well integrated into the school. Regular opportunities are provided in lessons for pupils to work together in pairs or small groups. For example, a very good instance of collaborative working was seen in Year 4, where pupils had to work together on a brainstorming task to consider whom they might ask for guidance. There are many opportunities to take responsibility for example, putting out physical education equipment, helping in assembly, and older pupils looking after the younger ones in the playground. Pupils are encouraged to support others; for example, they donated all their harvest food to senior citizens in the community during inspection week. Through the parent-teacher association, opportunities for socialising, such as the termly coffee breaks are provided. There are many examples where pupils show consideration for one another and develop an understanding of good citizenship.
- 41 Overall the pupils receive satisfactory opportunities for cultural development, mainly through the curriculum and also through their involvement in the community. Pupils take part in the Leek Carnival and sing carols at the local hospital and to senior citizens. Pupils listen to a good range of music and read poems and other literature in English. They study the work of well-known artists and have visits from local musicians and artists. Pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 were recently visited by the African Ark Company who taught them about African dance and costume. In history, pupils learn about their own cultural heritage. In geography, pupils learn about contrasting areas of Britain and those in other countries. Through religious education they become aware of different faiths and their traditions for example, festivals of light such as Divali have been studied. Year 4 pupils are beginning a helpful pen-friend correspondence with pupils from a school near London, with a high ethnic population, to further extend their understanding of life in a culturally diverse society.
- 42 Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been successfully sustained since the last inspection. Areas of concern, including pupils' underdeveloped awareness of the multi-cultural diversity of society, are beginning to be addressed effectively.

42 **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

- 43 The support and guidance the school provides for pupils is good. This aspect remains a positive

feature of the school's work, as at the time of its last inspection. Effective procedures are in place for monitoring pupils' academic progress. Pupils are usually given work that is well matched to their needs, and assessment arrangements are sound. The school has good arrangements to ensure that pupils' progress is assessed carefully, and both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are successfully implemented. Pupils with special educational needs are closely monitored and the information gained has a positive impact on their standards. They receive good support within the school, from teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and fellow pupils. Systems are in place to enable pupils to cope with difficult situations. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and regular reviews take place. Specialist support from a variety of external agencies is sought when needed and used effectively. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good. Evidence from the parents' meeting and from results of the questionnaire, indicates that parents believe that the school has a positive effect on their children's behaviour and on their personal development. Inspection evidence confirms this. A good system exists for admitting children into the Reception class, and also for preparing pupils for their entry into middle school education.

44 The school has good procedures in place for promoting good behaviour in the classroom and around the school. Expectations of good behaviour are known to pupils, parents and all staff in the school. The school policies are backed by a system of rewards and sanctions, which are implemented consistently whenever necessary. A reward assembly is held weekly for presentation of certificates for good work, behaviour and sporting achievement. The monitoring of pupils with behavioural problems is particularly good. It benefits from the close liaison maintained with parents.

45 There are satisfactory procedures for monitoring attendance, and absences and lateness are recorded appropriately. However, some registers are not totalled. This is unsatisfactory, because the school cannot know exactly how many pupils are present at any one time in case of an emergency. The education welfare officer offers good support and is used to investigate any instances of unexplained absence. This is helpfully outlined in detail in the school's prospectus. The overall good attendance rates are helping the continuity of pupils' learning and hence their progress.

46 Procedures for child protection and the promotion of pupils' well-being, health and safety are sound overall. There are good systems for first aid and child protection. The school kitchens, playgrounds and the school itself are clean. However, many parents believe the shabby, peeling exterior paintwork does not do justice to the quality of education their children receive in the school. Some of the fire exit signs are out-of-date and some exits are not signed. The leaking skylights, which have been the matter of a considerable amount of correspondence between the school and the local education authority, are still causing problems after recent repair work. Leaking gutters cause problems with large puddles forming in the playground. Many carpets in the school are in a hazardous condition, through being either very badly worn or wrinkled. The two resource rooms have insufficient shelving for the tidy storage of items and are unsafe to teachers and pupils because of obstacles on the floor. The safety of pupils whilst on school trips, and on visits to the local swimming pool, is well monitored and recorded. Security concerns, highlighted in the last report, have been conscientiously addressed by the school governors.

46 **Partnership with parents and the community**

47 The school's partnership with parents and the community is a strength of the school. It has built further upon the already high standards reported following the 1996 inspection. Traditionally, the school has played an important part in the life of the town, and many parents are ex-pupils. The school provides good information to parents. The school's prospectus has just been re-written, and the governors' annual report is also being updated. The annual report to parents provides an appropriate section for targets for pupils' future progress. They are satisfactory but do not give sufficient information relating to levels of attainment. Good relations are established as pupils enter the school in the Reception classes. There are regular parents' evenings, at which parents discuss progress and targets. In addition, there are open days promoted by the governing body, and also curriculum evenings to raise parents' awareness of what is being taught in school. The school has recently gone onto the Internet, so parents can access information at any time. Parents of children

with special educational needs are kept well informed and are consulted at each stage of the special educational needs Code of Practice. Teachers also work closely with parents of children with behavioural problems. Parents are directly involved and informed at all stages of their children's assessment and review. Contact is maintained at other times on an informal basis. Parents have ready access to class teachers, who have good communications with the special educational needs co-ordinator. This maintains a steady flow of information.

48 Parents are very closely involved in all aspects of their children's learning. All parents belong to the Parent Teacher Association, which raises funds for equipment to help pupils, and also to fund school trips. Parents are very supportive of the school and make a valuable contribution to learning in a number of ways; for instance, by their help in lessons involving information technology, art, reading, cookery, environmental studies and sporting events. Pupils take reading diaries home every night, and parents are punctilious in their comments and in their generous support for other homework their children are set. Both at their meeting and in their questionnaires, parents reported that they found the school keen to encourage involvement, and inspection evidence supports this.

49 The quality of liaison with the community is good. There are regular musical evenings, social occasions and religious festivals to which members of the community are invited. There are regular visits to local places of interest for environmental work, and also to the theatre. The school has good links with the local nursery, other first schools and partner middle and upper schools. The school regularly takes part in local events such as the Leek Carnival, and also contributes to many charities such as the Marie Curie Foundation, and to Red Nose Day. All of these links have a beneficial effect on children's learning and understanding of their place in the community.

49 **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

49 **Leadership and management**

50 The overall leadership and management of the school are good. The dedicated and hardworking headteacher gives good educational direction. She has a clear grasp of the school's needs in order to direct aims and targets. The quality of her leadership is very good and pupils, staff, governors and parents hold her in high regard. She is well supported by an enthusiastic and conscientious staff. All staff work to a common purpose and commitment to raise standards. Support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development are good. The senior management team works well and has had a major impact on the co-ordination and development of most subjects, a significant improvement since the last inspection. Relationships are good.

51 The governing body is an effective group with a wide range of expertise relevant to their roles. They are ably led by a supportive chair of governors, who has a clear understanding of the role played by governors in raising standards and monitoring progress towards the priorities established for school improvement. The governing body is well organised into sub-committees, with an involvement both in school activities as well as in more strategic matters such as the school development plan, budget setting, curriculum matters, staffing and premises development. The school's governing body is involved in curriculum matters through the curriculum committee. Governors have recently agreed to 'shadow' subjects in order to develop their own understanding and to give more effective support to curriculum co-ordinators.

52 Co-ordinators are effective and conscientious in carrying out their responsibilities. The role of the co-ordinator has developed systematically since the last inspection. This is particularly evident in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and information technology. Co-ordinators for other subjects have suitable opportunities to monitor plans and scrutinise standards by observing pupils' work, but little time to monitor the quality of teaching in their subjects. The school has identified this as an important next stage of the co-ordinators' role to be further developed. The special educational needs co-ordinator is effective and provides good leadership in the provision for all pupils with special educational needs. The area of special educational needs is well managed.

Any pupil who is giving cause for concern is assessed and suitable action taken if necessary. All assessments and reviews are carried out accurately and regularly. The special educational needs co-ordinator effectively manages the day-to-day organisation of pupils with the involvement of class teachers and support assistants. The governing body plays an important role in supporting the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Clear reference is made to the school's provision for special educational needs in its annual report to parents.

53 The implementation of the school's aims, policies and values, which are clearly stated in several documents for parents, is good overall. All statutory requirements of the governing body are met, apart from some minor omissions in the governors' annual report, which have been noted and brought to the attention of the school. All staff work hard to ensure consistency, which has had a positive impact on the ethos established across the school.

54 The school's planning for development and its monitoring and evaluation of agreed priorities are sound overall. The school development plan includes suitable priorities and outlines clear desired outcomes for measuring progress towards its targets. It is currently limited to a time scale of one year and there is insufficient detail and planning for longer-term initiatives. There are good opportunities for evaluating the impact of action taken, for example since the last inspection, progress towards targets has been tracked in some detail and evidence collected to support the school's own evaluation of improvements. This has provided a continued basis for refining and developing further targets previously identified, along with more recently added priorities.

55 There is a good ethos, based on the sound attitudes that pupils show towards their work, the purposeful atmosphere created throughout the school and the clear emphasis on raising standards. All staff work hard to establish an effective working environment and pupils establish good work routines from an early age.

56 Since the last inspection, the school has made a vigorous and systematic response to all the key issues. Priority has been given to raising standards and maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour against a background of a change in school population. The curriculum that previously lacked suitable and comprehensive planning has been improved and sound assessment procedures have been developed and agreed with the middle and other feeder schools within the partnership. The school has made good progress in the area of information technology. The scheme of work is well devised and standards that were seen to be unsatisfactory have improved. Strengths previously identified have been sustained and further developed.

57 The school's capacity for further improvement is good. The headteacher and staff are in a good position to maintain and improve standards further. There is a clear sense of direction with well-established systems and procedures to bring about further improvement.

57

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

58 The school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. The school is adequately staffed with appropriately qualified teachers to meet the needs of the primary curriculum. Most teachers have considerable experience, with recent appointments providing a balance of younger, less experienced staff. Responsibility for subject management does not completely match subject specialisms but, where there is a mismatch, experience, attendance at relevant courses and the individual interest of teachers ensure that all areas are covered at least satisfactorily. The individual strengths of teachers are well used and the use of a well qualified music teacher, providing specialist music teaching across the age range, is effective at this point in the school's development. The headteacher supplements the teaching of her colleagues effectively and has good contact with each class for one session every week. There is a sound match of support staff to meet the needs of the school. The number of support staff is above the national average for this size of school. Their qualifications and experience, including those who support pupils with special educational needs, satisfactorily matches the needs of the school curriculum. The use of class room assistants and the

newly appointed additional literacy support assistants is effective in meeting the educational needs of the school's special needs pupils. All staff work well together effectively enhancing educational provision. The school administrators are effective in their support of the school. The caretaker, lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff and the crossing patrol warden also contribute well to school life.

59 The school's induction process is satisfactory and supportive for new staff, enabling them to be quickly assimilated into the life of the school. Arrangements for the professional development of staff are good and the dissemination of information gained on in-service training is generally covered satisfactorily. This has improved since the last inspection. The professional training of staff is linked to the school's needs, as laid out in the development plan and sometimes also to support individual needs and interests. This is effective in supporting the aims of the school, as shown by the enhanced provision for information technology. Staff appraisal is completed appropriately and the focus is related to the needs of the school.

60 The adequacy of the school's accommodation for the effective delivery of the first school curriculum varies but is satisfactory overall. The school occupies a site in a built-up area and does not have an adjacent playing field. The outside paintwork of the building is in a poor state of repair and the roof lights and a flat roof are not watertight. The play areas around the school are a stark contrast to the stimulating environment found inside the school. The school is aware of this and has set up a grounds committee, which imaginatively includes pupils, in order to improve the external environment. They have made a good start, with the provision of some planters and the 'senses hut'. There is no secure outside play area for the under fives. The site is secure, as the school has responded positively to criticisms in its last report. The classrooms provide a pleasant working atmosphere. They are of adequate size and have water and sink facilities. The school benefits from some specialist accommodation in the form of a music room. There is no specialist room for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs. Withdrawal support for these pupils takes place in the library, severely restricting its use as a resource area for other pupils. The library area looks uninviting compared with the classrooms. The two main central storage areas are not well organised and the space is poorly used. They do not provide a good model for the pupils. The school makes effective use of the corridors as display areas for pupils' work. The school is a satisfactory learning environment for the pupils.

61 Resources overall are unsatisfactory, sometimes in range but generally in condition, many being old and unstimulating. The provision of books, materials and equipment in classrooms is adequate. Provision for the under fives is generally sound, although there is a lack of outside play apparatus and wheeled toys, which restricts opportunities for play and so impacts on children's physical development. Classroom based resources to support learning in English are satisfactory and in some areas, good. However, the condition of the supply of reading books in the library is variable, as during the last inspection. The resources in mathematics and information technology have been built up since the last inspection and are just adequate, although teachers find it difficult to move computers from one end of the school to the other, because of a short flight of stairs. The quality of hardware is variable but Year 4 pupils use a computer suite at a local comprehensive school once a week, enhancing facilities in this area appropriately and providing useful induction into secondary schooling. The resources for physical education are satisfactory. However, some apparatus is inappropriate for the age range of pupils, is not deemed safe and is waiting to be removed. A local pool is well used for swimming lessons. The resources for religious education are limited and for history are unsatisfactory as there are insufficient artefacts. Resources for science and the other subject areas are barely satisfactory. There is a good range of resources available to support the work of pupils with special educational needs. The allocation of the budget for the provision of resources has been reduced this year. All resources kept in the central storage areas are poorly organised.

61 **The efficiency of the school**

62 The school's financial management is sound. The budget is appropriately planned by the headteacher in consultation with the finance sub-committee of the governing body. The school's

development plan is limited strategically by only covering one year but is well detailed and appropriately includes costings. Financial outgoings are kept strictly within prescribed limits, while still being responsive to the immediate needs of the school. The amount of money being carried forward to the next year is reduced and is now only a small percentage. Since the last inspection there have been significant developments, for example in the area of information and communication technology. The number of pupils on roll has dropped, so the amount of money allowed for the provision of resources has been cut to maintain staffing levels, which are still in line with national averages. The number of hours worked by the two administrative assistants is less than the national average. However, day-to-day financial management is sound, as they have clearly defined roles and work as an effective team. The school is responding to most suggestions made in a recent audit. However, the governing body still does not receive financial information on a sufficiently regular basis to fulfil its role as being a 'critical friend' with respect to financial management. Proposed expenditure is appropriately investigated by the headteacher. However, no formal review of the results of spending, with a view to investigating value for money, nor an evaluation of the effectiveness of spending decisions in terms of the quality of education or the provision of a balanced curriculum, are evident.

- 63 Staffing levels are satisfactory. Classroom teachers are used efficiently and the headteacher has a regular teaching commitment each day. The specialist music teacher is very well used to teach classes throughout the school, however she is not used to enhance the teaching skills of other staff. The number of support staff is above average but they are well used to promote the progress of the younger pupils and those with special educational needs. Support in the mixed age classes is limited. Pupils whose Key Stage 1 national test results give concern are given extra support by the local education authority. Funds available for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactorily used to appoint a part-time special needs teacher, who is also the special needs co-ordinator. Staff are well deployed to meet the particular learning needs of groups and individual pupils with special educational needs. The good support they give to pupils impacts well on their attainment and overall progress. Detailed job descriptions ensure that there is clear delegation, clarification of roles and appropriate use of expertise. Most of the accommodation is satisfactorily used. However, the library is regularly used for the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, which severely inhibits its use for its main function by both them and other pupils. The specialist music facility is also used for Year 3 and 4 assemblies, but is empty for much of the time. The outside playground area has only recently been developed and the storage rooms do not represent efficient use of space. Resources are used satisfactorily overall. The central storage facilities are not well organised, however, making access to some items difficult. Poor storage in some instances is adversely affecting the quality of some resources. The movement of large items of equipment about the school is difficult because of a short staircase.
- 64 Taking account of the pupils' attainment on entry, the good progress over time and its effects on standards achieved, the low unit costs per pupil compared with national averages, the school provides sound value for money. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

64 **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

64 **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE**

65 Children enter the Reception classes the term after their fourth birthday, on a part-time basis. There has been some reorganisation of local provision for children under five, which has left the school uniquely without a nursery. An enterprising public-private partnership arrangement with two local nurseries may resolve this by the time of the next entry in January 2000. Otherwise, when the current part-time pupils start full-time next term, there will be insufficient room for the Spring intake. At the time of the inspection, all but four children in the two Reception classes were under five. The well-developed baseline assessment procedure shows that children's attainment on entry is below both the national and county averages. Provision is good, so that children have a positive start to their school career. All children, including those with special educational needs, make good progress overall, so that by the time they are five most will achieve the nationally agreed Desirable Learning Outcomes in all aspects except language and literacy, where attainment remains below that expected.

66 Children make good progress in their *personal and social development*. The school's supportive ethos and caring staff ensure that children feel secure and happy. Good quality teaching is a strong feature in this aspect of the school's work, leading to varied and well-structured opportunities for children to choose their activities and plan, work and co-operate with each other in class. However, the lack of a safe outside play environment and sufficient large apparatus, including wheeled toys, inhibits the progress they are able to make in this area and in their physical development. Some of the younger, part-time children can become excited and interrupt their teacher but most behave well, responding willingly to adult instructions. They concentrate and remain on task when not the focus of adult supervision, for instance when working on the computer or in the role-play area.

67 Children make sound progress in *language and literacy*. The school recognises that many children have weak language skills, so works hard at early intervention and support. Teaching is sensitively structured to allow many opportunities for speaking and listening, along with early acquisition of basic skills in reading and writing. The school used a modified version of the literacy hour successfully; this includes whole-class work, sharing big books, guided and independent tasks and a final whole-class session. Higher attaining children dictate simple sentences to adults, and follow their scribing accurately. One writes and also reads independently, recognising simple words in familiar contexts and all enjoy sharing books. Most understand that words have meanings and use the pictures to join in telling the story of 'The Hungry Caterpillar', turning the pages carefully and orientating the pages correctly when helping the teacher read to the class. All children take a book home every night and parents are active partners in the home-school reading record. They listen, all but the youngest attentive during story times or when being given instructions. Some lower attaining pupils use immature speech patterns and often answer with a single word or short phrase, the limited vocabulary they have on entry still inhibiting fluent discussion.

68 Children make good progress in *mathematics*, so that by the time they are five they attain expected levels for their age. Many count to ten and recognise and name common shapes, sorting them into sets of triangles or non-triangles. Numeracy skills are appropriately developed. The teachers effectively structure the activities so that key mathematical concepts are regularly met and reinforced, for example on the computer, in structured play with sand, in singing and counting games.

69 Children achieve standards in line with those expected in their *knowledge and understanding of the world*, showing good progress over their time in Reception. The curriculum provides appropriate experiences to support a growing awareness of their expanding world. Adult led sessions, involving sensitive questioning to stimulate discussion and extend vocabulary, rapidly promote understanding of how fruits differ, in terms of peel and methods of germination, while carefully preparing fruit for a salad. Higher attaining children explain that the different colours of the apples are due to their variety. Most recognise the common fruits included in their ingredients. Good progress is made in early scientific understanding. Children are aware that some changes are irreversible; this was

effectively described by one child as 'not getting the fruit back into the skin'. Children develop an awareness of the properties of sand but no water play was in evidence during the inspection. They use skills of cutting and joining, carefully using a hole-punch when threading a set of cardboard fruit together. They have access to a suitable variety of construction materials, though some commercial kits are showing clear signs of wear. However, children use them well to explore how things work. Children have regular opportunities to develop early information technology skills, which staff effectively structure to support the current topic and to promote children's literacy and numeracy skills.

- 70 The school makes good all-round provision for pupils' *physical development*. Gross motor skills are effectively promoted in the hall during movement lessons and fine motor skills and hand-eye co-ordination refined in activities in the classrooms. Children make good progress and attain expected standards. However, the lack of appropriate outside large play equipment, including wheeled toys, prevents progress from being even better. They travel safely and imaginatively on various parts of their bodies on floor and apparatus. Some younger part-timers need support with hopping but most are confident performers. The staff effectively promote the safety and health aspects of the work, stressing the need to change for vigorous activity and include both a warm-up and cooling-down period. Children handle scissors, paint-brushes, pencils and crayons and use them appropriately in the good range of art and design activities on offer.
- 71 The children's *creative development* is in line with that expected. They make good progress in well-structured whole-class, group and individual activities. Younger left-handers are helped by staff and learn how to use adapted scissors. Imaginative use of resources promotes skills in naming colours, when working with a range of paper and card to create model 'fruit'. Teachers encourage observation skills appropriately in painting and three-dimensional work. Children are encouraged to use their imagination in carefully planned work in story telling, writing and role-play. A wide range of songs is enjoyed and un-pitched instruments are effectively used to support both creative development and fine motor control.
- 72 The quality of teaching is good overall. It is based on a thorough understanding of the needs of children under five and how they learn. Teaching is good in language and literacy, mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. It is sound in all other areas. Learning support staff are wholly involved and help the teachers promote good levels of progress for the young learners in their charge. Planning is thorough, based on Desirable Learning Outcomes in the medium term, and translated into very detailed daily planning to ensure all learning objectives are clear and achievable. Time is used well, with discreet but purposeful management ensuring lesson flow and continuity of learning. All staff monitor activities carefully, using every opportunity to reinforce appropriate language and develop concepts in all areas of learning.
- 73 The school offers a broad, well balanced curriculum for under fives. Assessment is appropriately used to show progress whenever it occurs and is carefully recorded for each child. Termly assessment for all children is referenced to the Desirable Learning Outcomes. Good progress has been made since the school's last inspection, particularly in the key area of planning the programmes of work to be undertaken by children under five. This effectively supports the smooth transition into the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, whether during the Reception year or later for younger pupils or those who are not ready.

THE CORE SUBJECTS

73 English

- 74 The pupils' attainments in speaking and listening are broadly in line with those expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 1. The 1998 National Curriculum tests and assessments at Key Stage 1 show the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 is broadly in line with the national average in both reading and writing, although attainment at Level 3 was well below the national average for

reading and well above for writing. Results for the 1999 assessment tests indicate that there has been an improvement in the number of pupils achieving Level 3 and that results at Level 2 remain similar for reading, but have fallen in writing. Results of standardised reading tests show an improvement in standards by Year 4 pupils, which are above the county averages. This results from the school setting targets for the improvement in the development of skills at both key stages. The strategies employed are having a positive impact on pupils' work. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 4, pupils' attainments in English meet national expectations. Over the last three years, standards of reading and writing were below national averages at the end of Key Stage 1, writing only marginally. Writing standards improved to exceed the average in 1998. Girls outperformed boys in both subjects. Boys' standards in reading dropped in each of the last three years against national averages, while girls' improved. Boys' standards in writing were more consistent but still below national averages, while girls' were above in the last two years. In comparison with all schools, pupils' attainments in reading were below the national average, while those in writing were above. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' attainments in reading were well below average and in writing, they were average.

75 Pupils listen attentively to the teachers, take turns in discussions and follow instructions. This is evident when they answer questions and in their conversations with each other and with adults. The teachers are working hard to develop speaking and listening skills throughout the school. Well-structured opportunities are provided for pupils to participate in assemblies, role-play and school productions. Teachers' effective questioning extends pupils' understanding and the quality of spoken responses.

76 By the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, standards in reading are in line with national expectations. There is evidence that standards are improving, particularly in the Key Stage 2 classes, due to school target setting and the impact of the literacy hour. Many younger pupils use the term 'title' and 'author' and are beginning to recognise familiar words. In Year 2, some higher attaining pupils use a wider range of skills when reading. They use phonic knowledge, read ahead for meaning and can talk about characters and what might happen next. Pupils are reading a mixture of fiction and non-fiction, which includes scheme books and books selected from the library. By Year 4, average attaining pupils read with developing accuracy from a range of reading material which includes scheme books, poetry, plays and library books. They give meaningful accounts of what they have read. Pupils produce clear and informative reviews of books they have read. Across the key stages limited opportunities were observed for the development of skills in the retrieval of information from a variety of texts, for example, comprehension activities on texts, reading and interpreting instructions accurately and researching information in non-fiction books or from computers. Older pupils understand the classification system in the library. All pupils take books home and parents regularly hear pupils read and comment on the progress of their children.

77 The pupils' attainments in writing at both key stages are in line with the national expectation. Younger pupils at Key Stage 4, copy from an adult's writing or begin to communicate meaning to the reader through early writing skills, and older pupils' writing shows developing fluency and the correct use of sentence structure and punctuation. By Year 4, writing is often imaginative, well organised and clear. Spelling and basic grammatical sentence structure is usually correct. The pupils use word banks, dictionaries and other resources effectively to extend their writing further. The pupils write for different purposes and audiences, including letters and plays. Some write their own stories, but the range is limited. Older pupils are given opportunities to write to pen pals at another school and produce plays based on nursery rhymes, which successfully addresses the issue of writing for a range of purposes, highlighted in the last inspection report. Opportunities are also given for the use of information technology, such as word processing. The reduction of the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 in the end of Key Stage 1 writing test is due to a marked variation in that year group.

78 The pupils learn to spell common words correctly and develop their knowledge of letter blends and word families during 'word level work' of the National Literacy Hour. This is used effectively by pupils in their day-to-day work. The pupils practise their handwriting regularly and they transfer the

skills learned to their written work. Standards in handwriting are in line with expectations nationally.

79 Progress in English is sound at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The progress of pupils with special needs is good. Progress is linked to the growth of pupils' independence and interest in books since the introduction of the literacy hour. This interest was evident in a Year 2 lesson when pupils were keen to recognise examples of time sequence words. This progress continued in a very successful Year 4 lesson on facts and opinions when the pupils were able to sort statements of fact from those of opinion, following whole-class discussion.

80 Classroom assistants and parent helpers make a significant contribution to the good overall progress pupils make during the daily literacy session. They provide effective support in reading and writing and pupils make sound or better progress, including those pupils who have been selected for additional literacy support and those with special educational needs. Progress in reading is also supported by regular opportunities for pupils to read at home with their parents.

81 The pupils' attitudes to English are sound overall and are often good. They enjoy their work in the literacy hour and show enthusiasm for the additional literacy support sessions. They listen attentively to the teacher; contribute to discussions and most concentrate on the work. Pupils enjoy discussing their reading books and whether they are fact or fiction. They settle down to work in group tasks and most work hard and behave well.

82 The quality of teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching seen. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. This is a significant improvement upon the last inspection. Where teaching is good or better, the framework of the National Literacy Strategy is established, well resourced and managed smoothly and briskly. Teachers question pupils thoroughly to check their understanding and have high expectations in terms of work and behaviour. They use the guided reading or writing session to carry out focused work with groups of pupils, while other groups work independently or with support from a classroom assistant. At the end of the session, teachers appropriately check pupils' understanding and progress through a whole-class plenary session.

83 The requirements of the National Curriculum for English are being met and teachers base their planning on the detailed scheme of work that the National Literacy Strategy provides. There are appropriate systems of assessment in place that are soundly used to plan future learning, including day-to-day marking and half termly assessments of pupils' achievements. The information provided by an analysis of pupils' performance at the end of Key Stage 1 National Curriculum tests, optional national tests and standardised reading tests is increasingly being used to plan future work.

84 Most classes have access to a book corner although writing areas are not a feature, due largely to a lack of space. Most of the book corners are tidy and attractive and contain many new books. However, the school library is unsatisfactory. It is in need of refurbishment and is underused as a resource to support pupils' learning, as for much of the time it is devoted to use as a special needs teaching base. Many books are in an unsatisfactory condition. The library does not effectively promote the value of books for study and research skills.

85 The co-ordinator has only recently taken on the role following the retirement of the previous post holder. However, she has a clear understanding of the priorities and areas for further development and offers good leadership. There has been a good level of support given to all staff in the introduction and implementation of the literacy hour. Work in other subjects, such as religious education and history contribute soundly to pupils' literacy skills.

85 **Mathematics**

86 The 1998 national test results indicate that at the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' results are above the

national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 or above is in line with the national average. However, the percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 or above is above the national average. Results in 1999 indicate that standards have been broadly maintained at both the expected and higher levels. Results over the last three years indicate that standards are close to the national average but above the average in comparison with pupils from similar schools. Over the last two years, both boys and girls outscored the national average, following very low scores in 1996.

- 87 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 1, most pupils have a good knowledge of the appropriate language of mathematics. They can add and subtract numbers up to ten with accuracy and identify numbers between ten and a hundred, understanding the relative sizes of these. They understand simple fractions and name the common two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional solids. Higher attaining pupils at the beginning of Year 2 understand place value of numbers up to one hundred and use this effectively, extending number bonds of ten to number bonds of multiples of ten up to one hundred. At the end of Year 4, attainment is in line with that expected nationally. By this time most pupils show an understanding of place value up to one thousand, use decimal notation and multiply and divide whole numbers appropriately. Higher attaining pupils at the beginning of Year 4 round off numbers in hundreds to the nearest ten and use this to help them to add larger numbers mentally. Their knowledge of shape is secure and pupils understand the simple properties of plane shapes and solids. Pupils handle data appropriately and represent it in bar charts. For example, in Year 4, pupils, with support, use an appropriate chart and graph program to input holiday data into a computer. Pupils use and understand the basic vocabulary related to probability. Numeracy skills satisfactorily support learning across the curriculum. Other subjects, including science and geography, make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' numeracy skills. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection
- 88 Progress overall is good and has improved since the last inspection. At Key Stage 1 progress in lessons is at least satisfactory, usually good. Pupils in Year 1 gain experience of numbers up to ten and develop their knowledge and understanding of number bonds, for example in a lesson where pupils of average attainment work on the number bonds of seven. Lower attaining pupils count numbers of objects up to ten and match this with written numbers. Progress in lessons in Key Stage 2 is good overall. Pupils in Year 3 add together small amounts of money and are beginning to develop an understanding of how to represent larger amounts using the £ sign and a decimal point. Pupils gain experience of problem solving and investigative work. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, as a result of staff development in this area. However, the linking of investigations to early experience of algebra is underdeveloped for higher attaining pupils. In the early years of Key Stage 1, pupils' recording of mathematics does not match their understanding and is below expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their individual abilities in both key stages and attain appropriately. The use of information technology to support progress in the subject is developing satisfactorily.
- 89 Pupil response ranges from unsatisfactory to very good but is good overall. Most pupils listen carefully to instructions and follow them appropriately. Many are keen to answer questions in class discussions. They settle down well to written work and are responsible with equipment. Relationships between pupils are good, as are relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils collaborate well with each other during group work and behaviour is generally good.
- 90 The quality of teaching overall is good. At Key Stage 1 it is at least satisfactory, usually good or better. At Key Stage 2, it is good overall, but with one unsatisfactory lesson seen during the inspection. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, this is linked with lack of effective pupil management strategies and an over-large class size. Where teaching is good, planning is sound and learning objectives are clear, teachers' expositions are clear and concise, questioning is perceptive and the tasks set are challenging and appropriate for the variety of abilities represented in the particular class. All teachers use praise appropriately. The quality of marking of pupils' work is variable and sometimes there is little evidence of constructive comments to aid the pupils' further development. Homework is used satisfactorily to support learning.

91 The co-ordinator offers effective leadership in mathematics. The curriculum complies with national guidelines and all attainment targets are addressed. The school has made sound provision for the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. Its helpful features, including a structured period of mental arithmetic at the beginning of each lesson to improve pupils' agility and facility with numbers and a plenary session to reinforce key learning objectives, are used well by most teachers. Planned tasks generally show evidence of appropriate match for the needs of pupils with differing abilities. The development of pupils' mental strategies is addressed soundly overall, although there is a lack of emphasis on techniques in some lessons. Pupil assessment is satisfactorily covered through national and non-statutory tests, and the school regularly monitors the results of these. This has improved since the last inspection. Pupils' records are kept and these are updated appropriately. Staffing is appropriate for the effective delivery of the curriculum. The recently appointed co-ordinator is an effective practitioner and looks forward eagerly to this new challenge. Accommodation is adequate and resources are satisfactory overall, although the organisation of centralised resources is poor, the stockroom being very untidy.

91 **Science**

92 The school has maintained high standards of pupil attainment in the subject since the last inspection. A detailed policy and comprehensive scheme of work have resulted in considerable improvements in planning. Teachers now use a more focused approach to science, with investigative work more rigorous, less play-oriented. Their subject knowledge is more secure.

93 The 1998 teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that the percentage of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 2 or above in science was above average. The percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was very high. No national comparative data for 1999 is available yet but actual percentages are very similar. These results are broadly confirmed by inspection evidence. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainments in science are above those expected. Most pupils are aware how to conduct a fair test, and why it is necessary. Year 1 pupils describe the properties of objects they use in experimental work, sorting materials, by touch, into hard and soft sets. Year 2 pupils frame a set of questions to use when a visitor brings cats, guinea pigs and a budgerigar into a science lesson. They test hypotheses and outcomes in a range of ways. Higher attaining pupils produce extended written pieces to record their experimental findings, while average and lower attaining pupils are more dependent on standard recording sheets provided by the teacher. Many have good recall of scientific facts, particularly in the area of life processes and living things. They have well developed observational skills.

94 By the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, attainment is still above expected levels. They have developed good predictive skills, which they test when investigating the way air pressure slows down a moving object in Years 3 and 4. The majority know that to test a hypothesis fairly, only one parameter must be changed. In their work on forces, it can be the height from which they drop experimental samples, or what they drop, but not both. Higher attaining Year 4 pupils devise an ingenious method of releasing two samples from exactly the same height at the same time, to ensure that they are fair testing.

95 Children make a good start in science in Reception classes, where lessons promoting their knowledge and understanding of the world prepare them effectively for the National Curriculum programmes of study. Pupils of all levels of attainment, both boys and girls, make good progress throughout the school. In the best lessons at both key stages, teachers prepare work that is well matched to the pupils' age and ability. Practical, investigative activity stimulates pupils' interest in the subject and the focused discovery learning promoted ensures good progress in the development of key skills and understanding. Sensitive grouping in some lessons ensures that the scientific ideal of sharing ideas is reached and that pupils of varying levels of attainment co-operate appropriately, to the benefit of all. Mathematical and information technology skills are helpfully employed to produce charts, graphs and tables. Communication skills, both oral and written, are developed as pupils move through the school.

- 96 Pupils show good attitudes to science. They collaborate effectively in pairs and groups, sharing tasks fairly and respecting one another's ideas. In most lessons, they listen carefully to the teacher and each other. Where the teacher's classroom management skills are less well developed, or class sizes too high for practical tasks to be easily carried out, behaviour deteriorates and experimental work is conducted in too noisy an environment for effective learning to take place.
- 97 The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan effectively together in year group teams, to ensure broadly similar provision for pupils during the two-year cycle of work. Limited resources are effectively used, and lesson pace is well maintained, especially when unchecked by interruptions for disciplinary purposes. Lessons are well organised, as in Year 4, when the class was divided so that half were engaged in an active experiment, while the other half wrote up their results and drew conclusions, maximising space and allowing direct teacher interaction. Marking is used effectively to extend pupils' understanding and set informal targets at Key Stage 2. In the best lessons, teachers bring the pupils together to share findings and evaluate progress, effectively reiterating lesson purposes.
- 98 The subject is very well led by the co-ordinator, who has effectively improved her personal qualifications in science and led or organised helpful training sessions for her colleagues. She is firmly committed to extend pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by the work they undertake in science. The immediate environment is under-used, especially since the pool was vandalised. However, the subject is supported by visits to the local reservoir and residential and day visits to High Ash Farm, looking at change over time. Assessment is sound, with recording usefully shared with the partner middle school. A portfolio of pupils' completed work is being developed, though it is limited to work in only one attainment target and not yet annotated or moderated to ensure accuracy of assessment throughout the school.
- 98 **Information Technology**
- 99 Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with national expectations. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils understand that instructions can be given to the computer via the mouse, keyboard or keypad. Year 2 pupils direct a roamer to move between different animals in a zoo plan, and use the mouse to shade in areas on a drawing. They accurately word process short poems and prepare simple drawings to include on Christmas cards. Attainment at the end of Year 4 is in line with national expectations. Pupils use the keyboard confidently. They use a variety of different fonts, for example when creating a program for a play and designing wallpaper patterns. With support, they access web sites and use these for research, for example when investigating rainforests, and represent data related to holidays on a graph. Attainment has improved substantially since the last inspection.
- 100 Progress at Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. Keyboard skills are improved in Year 1 and pupils, with support, access a main menu. In Years 3 and 4, progress is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 3 know the names of different parts of the computer and use CD-Roms to support learning in areas of the curriculum, for example in mathematics. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Progress overall has improved since the last inspection.
- 101 Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject, work hard at the tasks set and show enjoyment at their success. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and adults are good. The secure working atmosphere engendered encourages pupils to approach assignments with confidence. Equipment is handled carefully and pupil behaviour is good.
- 102 The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teachers generally have sound subject knowledge and communicate this clearly to the pupils. In good lessons, planning is sound and sessions include a good range of activities, which are well matched to the needs of most pupils. Questioning of pupils is clear and effective, highlighting relevant points to assist learning. Pupils are well managed overall with firmness and encouragement. Little evidence of specific tasks targeted to support the learning needs of higher attaining pupils is evident. The quality of teaching has improved since the last

inspection.

- 103 The information technology curriculum is broad and balanced and the subject is well co-ordinated. A scheme of work and a policy document are now in place. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Support staff are well deployed and there is very effective parent help. Resources have been much improved. However, although they are adequate for the delivery of the curriculum, this is only achieved by moving around of hardware via a short staircase. The quality of the hardware varies from poor to good. Strong links with a local secondary school however, enable the older pupils to visit each week and make use of the facilities there. Opportunities are missed to applaud pupils' success and little of their work in information technology is displayed around the school. The school has its own web site and overall information technology adequately supports learning in other areas of the curriculum.

Religious Education

- 104 At the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time the pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, their attainments in religious education meet the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. From the few lessons seen, scrutiny of work and records, and discussion with pupils and staff, pupils of all ages and prior attainment make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time. The pupils with special educational needs make sound progress when they are given additional help from their teacher or support staff.
- 105 By the end of Year 4, pupils know the key features of stories from the Holy Books. They know that there are different types of religious beliefs. Pupils are less secure in their knowledge of the founders of religions, religious symbols and places of worship, but they know the relevant points of stories and can recall the next part when prompted. Some pupils can recall the key features of religious festivals and can explain why they are important. Most pupils understand that religious beliefs affect people's lives and how they live. Religious education is supported by the well-planned themes for assemblies. Collective worship is used as a time when pupils explore meanings behind religious stories, with time for praise, reflection and prayer. Links with the local church are strong, with direct involvement by the clergy.
- 106 Pupils of all ages have good attitudes to religious education and this helps them to make satisfactory progress in both key stages. They are interested in their work, listen carefully to their teachers and to each other and are respectful of the views and values of other people.
- 107 The limited amount of teaching observed was good at both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they are teaching. They describe and explain clearly and give a range of suitable examples to help pupils to understand. They have high expectations of how pupils will behave and participate in lessons. This is particularly noticeable in the oral work where pupils are encouraged to use the correct terminology and explain their answers. During a lesson on prayer, Year 2 pupils were encouraged to think how the people of Ethiopia would thank their gods for the harvest. Very skilful questioning enabled pupils to make perceptive contributions to a group prayer, recorded and played back on the class dictaphone. In one lesson in Key Stage 2, the teacher encouraged pupils to consider whom we ask for guidance, and discussed the advice given by parents. Very skilful questioning and the development of pupils' ideas made this a very successful lesson. Teachers encourage pupils to think about moral aspects and issues of right and wrong.
- 108 The school has recently revised its policy on religious education and produced a scheme of work in line with the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus, to ensure the progressive acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding by pupils as they move through the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, an improved assessment strategy for religious education is still an area for further development. Additional guidelines to support the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus have been received by the school, and the newly appointed co-ordinator has the opportunity to attend a course to discuss the new advice. However, there have been no recent opportunities for staff to

attend courses. There are occasional visits to the parish church, but opportunities are missed to extend the range of visits and include visitors from other faiths. There are limited resources and artefacts to support the pupils' work in religious education.

OTHER SUBJECTS

108 Art

109 Only one lesson of art was observed during the inspection, so judgements are also based on interviews with pupils and staff and a scrutiny of a good range of completed work. No judgement on the quality of the teaching of art is possible.

110 Pupils make good progress and art continues to be a strong feature in the school. Pupils in Year 1 create very effective daisies using appropriately coloured crepe paper. Pupils learn about the work of a variety of artists and experience working in the style of particular ones. Year 2 pupils skilfully produce Japanese cat pictures in one such lesson. Progress in art is well enhanced by topic work. Year 2 pupils create a patchwork textile wall hanging during their 'Grandma' topic and Years 3 and 4 produce colourful collages of air balloons as part of their work linked to 'The Fantastic Flying Journey'. An impressive variety of effects are achieved through experimentation, the combination of washing-up liquid and paint being particularly appropriate on the air balloons. Observational skills develop throughout. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils effectively use their developing creative talents outside the classroom and regularly produce items for craft fairs during lunch times. Progress has improved since the last inspection.

111 Pupils clearly enjoy art and talk with pleasure about their lessons. During the lesson observed, most pupils displayed a good attitude towards their work and behaved well.

112 The art curriculum is broad and suitably balanced. A published scheme of work has been bought since the last inspection and the new subject co-ordinator has plans to supplement this. Pupils' development is assessed but this is through a general statement rather than in a common whole-school format. The accommodation and resources are satisfactory but the central storage rooms are poorly organised.

112 Design and technology

113 Design and technology continues to play an important part in the school's curriculum. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Progress is satisfactory overall. Pupils experience a relevant range of activities, often closely linked to work in other subjects. They work with a broad range of materials, including textiles, food and resistant materials, such as card, plastic and wood and malleable materials like clay and papier-mâché. They make sound progress in the development of designing and making skills and are making use of their skills to produce designs for the new outdoor murals and a senses hut. Pupils develop a sound understanding of the materials and are becoming skilled at using them to produce a variety of items displayed in and around the school.

114 Only one lesson in design and technology was observed in Key Stage 1. Discussions with pupils and examination of their work indicate that progress is satisfactory. Animal homes produced at the beginning of Key Stage 1, using construction kits, show good attention to detail. Pupils develop a sound understanding of the design process, for example when describing how they assemble different parts. Pupils in Year 2 make masks as part of their work on Africa. Using a variety of tools, they cut and shape card to produce their masks and learn how to follow a list of instructions, supporting their work in English.

115 Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2, but discussion with pupils and examination of completed work indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress and undertake a range of activities linked to

other subjects and develop the ability to work collaboratively. Their designing becomes more sophisticated as they move through the key stage. Evaluations of work become more considered, pupils begin to analyse what has or has not worked well. Year 3 pupils make air raid shelters out of reclaimed materials as part of their work on World War Two in history. Year 4 pupils work well together to design and make an interesting quiz game for younger pupils. They make quiz games with electrical circuits from detailed designs and instructions.

116 In the lessons observed, pupils showed interest and perseverance with the activities. They worked well together sharing ideas, materials and tools and supported one another. Most pupils handled tools safely and were careful not to waste resources. Pupils clearly enjoy practical activities and show pride in their achievements.

117 Based on the limited number of lessons seen, the quality of teaching seen is satisfactory. Teachers have a secure understanding of the subject and plan interesting and appropriate activities. They demonstrate skills and encourage pupils to make informed decisions for themselves. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of behaviour and the quality of work expected.

118 The subject is led by a knowledgeable co-ordinator who works closely with colleagues to ensure that pupils' experience in the subject is well supported, interesting and related to work in other subjects. The school's design and technology policy and list of skills and concepts for each year group provide a framework for teachers' lesson planning. However, the school recognises the need to develop a scheme of work to take account of the recent curriculum changes. The school is adequately resourced for design and technology and makes good use of reclaimed materials .

118

Geography

119 The pupils' progress in geography is satisfactory. At the beginning of Key Stage 1, pupils develop an understanding of the use of symbols to represent features on a plan. Pupils in Year 1 cut out shapes to represent pieces of furniture and stick them in position on a sheet of paper representing their classroom. This offers an effective introduction to maps for the younger pupils. Older pupils examine more complex plans and design a zoo, carefully considering the sizes of enclosures required for each animal and the routes around them. Pupils use globes to locate continents and begin to build up knowledge of their wildlife. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are familiar with their own environment and through visits and written communication, contrast this with Blackshaw Moor. In Years 3 and 4, pupils continue to make sound progress in their knowledge and understanding of geography and in the development of geographical skills. While studying rainforests, the pupils in Year 3 are introduced to CD-Roms as aids to research. Year 4 pupils use the Internet confidently to research this topic. Field trips support learning effectively and the Year 4 visit to High Ash Farm, as well as satisfactorily developing the pupils' knowledge and understanding of settlements, also stimulates work in other curriculum areas. The skilful use of topic based work and the use of information technology effectively support learning across the whole age range in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress overall. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

120 The pupils' attitude to work is good. They enjoy their lessons and have a sense of curiosity about the world around them. They concentrate on the work set and many are keen to answer questions in class discussions, generally making sensible and informed suggestions when they do so. They take care with written work and diagrams but some pupils are reticent about discussing their understanding of the topic in hand. Relationships in the classroom are good and most pupils work well together when required. Pupil behaviour is usually good.

121 The quality of teaching across the two key stages is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and their planning is sound. Lessons are well organised and proceed at an appropriate pace, showing a good balance of teacher input and pupil activity. Good use is made of pupil input, and praise of effort is an integral part of all lessons. Teachers' questioning of pupils is perceptive and

their day-to-day assessment is satisfactory.

122 The school places an appropriate emphasis on geography and the curriculum content is appropriately broad and balanced. The assessment of pupils' learning is recorded but in limited detail. Resources have been supplemented since the last inspection and are adequate, although sometimes not stimulating. The centrally based storage area is poorly organised.

122

History

123 Due to the way the school topic cycle is organised, it was not possible to see any history lessons during the inspection. However, evidence was taken from a detailed scrutiny of pupils' completed work and teachers' planning and discussions with staff. The school has maintained its provision for the subject since the last inspection. Displays remain a strong feature of its work but the key issue to complete documentation has been met only in part, as national initiatives to review the history curriculum, including guidance on planning, have caused the school to delay their own revisions.

124 Pupils make sound progress at both key stages. The cross-curricular topics make history more relevant to the pupils. Pupils' work is well supported by a good range of visits they make, including one to a local museum by Year 1 pupils resulting in them setting up a class museum of their own, refining chronological thinking. Visitors to the school include professional story tellers dressed as Vikings, who ran a workshop for older pupils, improving their understanding of how Vikings lived and why they behaved as they did.

125 Pupils display positive attitudes to the subject. Books are well kept and most work is completed and neatly presented. A good range of illustrative material, tables and charts is carefully coloured to support the text and improve its visual impact. Older pupils in Year 4 respond positively to homework set by completing small research tasks in their work on 'the sixties' during the history study unit 'Britain since the 1930s'.

126 As no direct teaching of history was seen, it is not possible to assess accurately the quality of teaching. However, it is clear from pupils' books and other completed pieces of work that a good range of activities are provided in each year group, well referenced to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Key Stage 2 teachers work accurately and promote pupils' progress by helpfully diagnostic comments, indicating to pupils what they must do to improve their work.

127 The newly appointed co-ordinator has made a detailed analysis of the needs of the subject. She recognises that a common recording format will be a helpful improvement. A portfolio of completed work and photographic evidence is being developed to support assessment over the longer term. Resources are scanty, both in the library and in the history store, which is inaccessible during lesson times in a Reception classroom. Artefacts are few in number but the teachers, parents and local teachers' centre augment them with their own to facilitate displays, as in a major display on Britain during the Second World War, sited right in the middle of the entrance which strongly promoted history to all the school's community.

127

Music

- 128 Provision for music is good. Substantial improvement has been made since the last inspection in providing effective documentation to allow detailed planning of what pupils should learn. Pupils attain higher standards in music and the quality of teaching is better.
- 129 Progress throughout the school is good. All pupils sing in unison in hymn practices and assemblies. Diction is clear and confidence is shown in two-part hymns. Key Stage 1 pupils make steady progress in singing, improving breathing, dynamics and pitch when accompanied by piano or guitar in lessons directed at refining skills. They make rapid progress in performing and composing; recognising from their experimental work the range their pitched and un-pitched instruments have, as they seek inventive ways to play them. At Key Stage 2, pupils also make significant progress in well taught lessons, using a rhythm square to clap a pattern, while adding a two-part rap to extend their vocal facility. They join the teacher in composing a class rap about one of the pupils. Information technology is effectively used to record finished performances with a video camera.
- 130 Pupils' attitudes to music are very good. They behave very well in lessons; showing great enjoyment of both singing and creative music making, with instruments and everyday objects, like plastic bags and combs. They show positive relationships in assemblies and lessons, with the result that extra-curricular musical activities are very popular, as adults and pupils get on very well and enjoy their time together.
- 131 The quality of teaching is very good. The very well qualified music co-ordinator, a gifted performer on a wide range of instruments, teaches most lessons. She has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and level of commitment and manages classes throughout the school very competently, in exciting lessons of brisk pace. Skills are directly taught and reinforced in concluding sessions to effectively underline key learning objectives. Probing questioning and pupils' individual performances are well used to judge attainment and understanding.
- 132 The co-ordinator has made a great impact on music in the school. Most pupils are turned on to the subject, so that choir, recorders and instrumental lessons are very popular and class lessons greatly enjoyed. The specialist music room is adequately resourced. The co-ordinator provides additional resources of her own and has very ambitious plans for further improvements, though this is inhibited by the lack of an earmarked music budget. The way the school uses its specialist teacher and dedicated music room is highly efficient. This has led to many opportunities for pupils to enjoy a wide range of cultural and social experiences in and out of school.

132 Physical education

132

- 133 Only one lesson in Key Stage 1 and a Year 3 swimming lesson were seen during the inspection, as most physical education lessons were not timetabled to take place during the inspection. The following judgements are based on the teachers' planning and discussions with teachers and pupils, plus evidence from those lessons seen.

- 134 The pupils' progress in physical education is satisfactory overall. Pupils practise and improve basic skills in gymnastics, dance, athletics and games. Provision for swimming is good and all pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to learn how to swim. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the physical education programme and make sound progress.

- 135 Year 1, pupils are developing good control of their bodies. When working on apparatus, they perform simple skills of travelling, climbing, jumping and pulling. They work safely and control the linking of actions. Pupils are actively engaged in improving their level of skill and performance.

- 136 Overall, pupils have good attitudes towards physical education. They show interest and enthusiasm.

The majority of pupils listen well and respond quickly and appropriately. The concentration and listening skills of Year 3 pupils at the swimming pool is a major factor in the rapid progress observed in lessons.

137 Year 1 pupils change into suitable dress for gymnastics, appropriately working barefoot in the hall. They are aware of the need for safe practice when working on the apparatus and quickly respond to the teachers' instructions. They are keen to participate and improve their performance.

138 The subject is well managed and efficiently co-ordinated by a recently appointed teacher, who has a very good knowledge of the subject and has been effective in putting into place a scheme of work with helpful learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Monitoring and evaluation is carried out by the co-ordinator, through some lesson observations and discussions with teachers. Extra-curricular activities include netball and football skill sessions held after school. Resources are adequate and well stored, however some large fixed equipment has been judged unsafe to use and so is redundant. A small budget allocation allows the co-ordinator to replace some items of equipment and extend the range available. The physical education curriculum has been appropriately developed since the last inspection. The school has plans to develop the subject further.

INSPECTION DATA**PART C:****INSPECTION EVIDENCE****SUMMARY OF**

- 139 The inspection was carried out by a team of four inspectors, who spent the equivalent of 12 days in school, over a four day period. The team observed 44 lessons or parts of lessons. Daily assemblies, registration sessions and extra-curricular activities were attended. In addition to lessons, time was spent talking to pupils about their work, hearing them read and reviewing their completed work and displays across the school. Pupils' behaviour in the playground, in the hall and around the school was observed. This amounted to a total of over 43 hours.
- 140 Discussions were held with the chair and other members of the governing body. All team members interviewed the headteacher and other members of staff who have responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school's work. Discussions were held with support staff, parents and volunteer helpers. The inspection team scrutinised minutes of governors' meetings and analysed school documentation, policies, schemes of work and the school development plan. Attendance registers, financial statements, the pupils' records and individual education plans, and teachers' planning notes were inspected.
- 141 Two members of the team conducted a meeting attended by 12 parents before the inspection. An analysis was made of the 52 questionnaires returned by parents and guardians.

141
INDICATORS

DATA AND

141 **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
YR – Y4	214	0	17	40

141 **Teachers and classes**

141 **Qualified teachers (YR – Y4)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	9.30
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	23.01

141 **Education support staff (YR – Y4)**

Total number of education support staff:	5
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	80

Average class size:	26.8
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141 **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
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Total Income	338.137
Total Expenditure	348.703
Expenditure per pupil	1516.10
Balance brought forward from previous year	15410
Balance carried forward to next year	4844

Number of questionnaires sent out: 214

Number of questionnaires returned: 52

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	29	63	4	4	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	42	52	2	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	14	67	17	2	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	19	63	12	4	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	33	50	7	10	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	38	48	12	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	25	56	15	4	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	25	54	15	6	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	31	60	9	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	33	46	19	2	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	44	50	4	2	0