

INSPECTION REPORT

HILLSIDE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

SKELMERSDALE

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119298

Headteacher: Debra Gardiner

Reporting inspector: Eileen Parry
2615

Dates of inspection: 17-21. January.2000

Inspection number: 189083
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Junior and infant with nursery

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3-11

Gender of pupils: mixed

School address: Egerton
Tanhouse
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Lancashire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr W Fleetwood

Date of previous inspection: June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Eileen Parry	Registered inspector	Music	What sort of school is it
		Under fives	The school's results and pupils' achievements
		Art	How well is the school led and managed
			What should the school do to improve further
Alan Rolfe	Lay inspector	Equal Opportunities	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Nick Hardy	Team inspector	Religious education	
		Geography	
		Science	
Roger Sharples	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
		Physical education	
		Design and technology	
Simon Reynolds		Information and communication technology	How well are pupils taught
		English	
Alan McGregor		History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
		Mathematics	

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hillside Community Primary School is of average size with 196 pupils who attend full time and 44 who attend the nursery for part of the day. More pupils than is usual have special educational needs; 72 of them are full time and 10 are in the nursery. All of the children are white. Unemployment in the area is high and more than half of the children are entitled to free school meals. Although the school reports that there is less movement now than in previous years, it is still the case that a number of children move and return several times in their school career usually to other schools within the new town area. The school is in a large housing estate built in the 1970's to accommodate overspill from the city of Liverpool. A declining population means that one classroom is not used and others are used differently.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school which cares well for its pupils. The quality of teaching is good. The headteacher and staff work closely together to raise standards and they are given sound support by the governing body. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are below those expected nationally in English, mathematics and science but pupils are achieving at satisfactory levels from where they started. At Key Stage 1, standards are in line with the nationally expected levels and pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs do well. Personal, social and health education is given high priority and helps pupils to cope better with their life and work in school. The school costs more per pupil than do most schools and gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Results for seven year olds in the national tests at Key Stage 1 are better than for most schools in reading and writing.
- Teaching is good or better in 54 per cent of lessons and is very good in literacy lessons in both key stages.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Pupils are encouraged to have positive attitudes to work.
- Strategies for encouraging pupils to behave well are very good.
- The headteacher provides very effective leadership and is well supported by staff.
- There is a good curriculum for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 which is very effectively extended by a programme for personal and social education.
- Provision for pupils with special needs is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards are not high enough in English, mathematics and science by the time pupils leave the school.
- The school's development plan needs more detail of what has happened in the previous year to set the context, and an outline of developments which go beyond the current year.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996 and has made satisfactory improvement. Since that time standards in English, mathematics and science as measured by the national tests have risen steadily although the improvements have been more rapid for seven year olds than for eleven year olds. Regular monitoring and classroom support have produced more good, very good and outstanding teaching than was reported previously. Despite the good procedures that are in place, attendance keeps at similar levels and stubbornly remains below the average. The school has been able to provide much more support for pupils with special needs by employing more assistants instead of releasing one teacher full time. Teachers' skills in assessment have improved although there is still more to do.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	E	E	E	D
Mathematics	E	E	D	D
Science	E	E	E	E

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

Results in English and science in 1999 were well below those of schools nationally and below the average in mathematics. Compared to schools where there is a similar proportion of pupils who take free school meals, results are below average in English and mathematics and well below in science. The literacy strategy combined with good teaching is helping pupils to make better progress in English and inspection evidence suggests that attainment in lessons is around average. Work on literacy is having even more impact at Key Stage 1 where pupils do better in the reading and writing tests than is the case nationally. In mathematics, pupils in their last year at school are too slow in remembering facts and a significant minority are not sure about the value of numbers including fractions and decimals. This holds them back from reaching higher standards. The numeracy strategy has focused positively on improving oral and mental work and the school recognises the need to build on this good beginning. In science, Year 6 pupils do not recall information from earlier lessons well enough and those capable of reaching higher standards are not consistently challenged by the work they are given.

The figures from the national tests fluctuate from year to year but overall, standards are rising broadly in line with the national trend. The school has set realistic targets for pupils in Year 6 for the next year. Inspection evidence is that these will be at least reached and possibly exceeded in English but are unlikely to be reached in mathematics and science. At both key stages pupils' achievements and progress overall are satisfactory. Pupils with special needs are doing well. Not enough pupils reach the higher standards especially at Key Stage 2.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Usually good although there is a small but significant number who find difficulty in concentrating and getting on with their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory overall. The majority of pupils behave well but there are some throughout the school and more in Years 5 and 6 whose behaviour causes concern and is recognised as a special need.
Personal development and relationships	Generally good although a small number of pupils find it difficult to keep a positive approach throughout the day.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Below the national average despite the efforts the school makes to encourage better attendance.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons, good or better in 54 per cent with some of these being occasionally outstanding and unsatisfactory in 6 per cent of lessons. Whilst there was a spread of judgements in each key stage, teaching was most consistently good in reception and in classes in Years 1, 3 and 4. Teachers use a good range of strategies to ensure that pupils work hard in lessons. Almost all pupils have good attitudes to work and learn well but a small number of pupils have special needs related to behaviour. Sometimes they respond well to lessons but on other occasions, they are disruptive and affect not only their own but other pupils' learning. Pupils with special needs are well supported. In the best teaching, brighter pupils are challenged to work to their very best level but this is not consistent. The teaching of literacy and personal and social education is particularly effective and pupils make good progress. Teaching in mathematics is sound at both key stages with increasing emphasis being given to stimulating pupils' capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to mental and oral work.

The large majority of pupils are willing learners who work hard and respond well to their tasks. However, there is a small group, mainly at the end of Key Stage 2, whose concentration is more erratic and who can be disruptive despite the good efforts that teachers make to engage them in their work and to keep their interest.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is a good curriculum for infants and juniors which covers all the subjects and extra curricular activities. The curriculum for the youngest children is sound but there are some weaknesses in provision for physical development.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils make good progress because of the quality of support from assistants, the use of outside experts and the carefully matched work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal and social development is given a high priority and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good support for pupils and care for their welfare. Very good procedures for managing difficult behaviour. Good procedures for assessing pupils' work in English but not as good in other subjects.

The school welcomes any help from parents. Few help directly in classrooms but they are supportive for special events such as school concerts and for fund raising. The school has acquired funding to run special sessions and courses for small groups of parents in the last two years.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher gives a strong direction to the work of the school. Staff are becoming more skilled in management. They work well together to raise the standards that pupils achieve and the quality of education provided.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and use the headteacher's expertise to guide the school's development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. Very good evaluation of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Overall good but the library is not used well enough for children to research information.

There are sufficient teachers and a good number of support assistants. The school has spacious classrooms; some are currently as not used as classrooms but are put to use for other purposes as numbers have fallen since the school was built. Resources are sufficient for all the areas of the curriculum except for the number of computers but there are plans to increase these shortly.

The school budget is managed prudently and options are carefully considered to secure the best value for money. The school's development plan is sound but would benefit from some additional detail.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The care and attention given to their children. • That the school expects children to work hard. • The literacy and numeracy hours. • Helpful information on reports and contact when needed with teachers. • Help for children with special needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

The small group of parents who attended the meeting were entirely supportive of the school. A minor concern was whether there were sufficient supervisors for lunchtimes. The inspection team can say that there are enough supervisors for the number of children but these staff would benefit from additional training for example, on dealing with difficult behaviour. Just over a quarter of the questionnaires issued were returned. All of the parents said that the school expects children to work hard and the inspection team found this to be true. There was no strong disagreement on any of the other areas in the questionnaire but some disagreement with the statement about the school working closely with parents. The school philosophy is to welcome working with parents and one area where this shows is in the efforts made to ensure consultation with parents when a child's special needs are being considered.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Statutory test results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below the national average in English and lower than the results found in schools with a similar entitlement to free school meals. About a half of the Year 6 pupils taking the tests achieved the expected level, the same proportion as in similar schools, although none reached the higher level 5. However, this is a substantial improvement on the previous inspection, when only a quarter of the 11 year olds achieved the expected level. The steady improvement over the last four years has broadly matched the national trend. Boys' results are relatively higher than girls' at the end of both key stages, with the gap between boys and girls widening since the previous inspection.

2. Results in mathematics for eleven year olds were below average when compared with both national figures and similar schools. Figures fluctuate yearly but with the exception of 1997, there is a general upward trend. Although boys did better than girls last year the picture is very variable from year to year with no obvious pattern emerging.

3. In science, standards were well below the national average and below figures for similar schools. The performances of both boys and girls are below the national average although boys outperform girls, both in the 1999 tests and over the longer period. This is against the national trend. Higher attaining pupils are not doing as well as they should. Standards have risen steadily over the last four years in line with improvements in standards nationally and current evidence suggests that this picture will continue and that the gap will not close.

4. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in reading was well below the national average whilst those in writing were closer to, but still slightly below, average. When compared with similar schools, results were better than average and in the case of writing markedly so, largely because of the unusually high numbers of pupils achieving level 3. Results have shown a rising trend since the previous inspection and are now much closer to the national scores. In mathematics, results were below those nationally but equal to those of similar schools and in the teacher assessments for science, attainment was well below average for both the expected and the higher level. When compared to similar schools, results in science were also below average at level 2 but in line with the average for the higher level. Inspection judgements indicate that results are likely to rise closer to the national average next year.

5. Standards of attainment in religious education are in line to meet the expectations outlined in the Local Education Authority Agreed Syllabus for the end of each key stage. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of stories, ceremonies and celebrations from Christianity and from other faiths which is extended to a suitable level by the end of Key Stage 2. At both key stages, pupils reflect on the issues raised in lessons and relate them to their own lives.

6. Pupils do well to reach average levels in information technology. They are given a good start in reception where they are taught the vocabulary that they need to know and develop competence in using the mouse and continue to make steady progress in acquiring the skills and knowledge that they need.

7. Few lessons were seen in music, art and geography. Using other evidence in support, standards were judged to be a little below the average. However, pupils' achievements are considered satisfactory when considering the limited experiences they bring in these areas when they start at the school. In

physical education and design and technology pupils work at levels which are typical for their age. In both key stages, pupils show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding in history. Some of their writing in this subject is particularly imaginative and in Key Stage 2, quite moving accounts are written from the perspective of people living in the past.

8. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress in the school because of the good level of support they receive including that from external experts. Individual education plans are carefully written and suitable tasks are given which help them to achieve well. The personal and social education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' understanding of their actions towards each other.

9. Children who start at the nursery bring with them a differing range of skills and knowledge but overall they are not doing as well as three year olds usually do in their speech and language use, knowledge of numbers and social skills. By the time that they are five in the reception class, most children are likely to reach all of the targets for their age, to have made good progress and to have achieved well when considering what they could do at three years old. There will be a number of children who will still have difficulties with their speech and a number who have special needs. They make good progress even though they may not reach the national targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The great majority of pupils like school. Most are able to identify favourite subjects, and a significant number of pupils are involved in the wide range of extra curricular activities provided by the school. The large majority of pupils move about the school in an orderly manner, they are respectful to teachers and other adults, for example, on many occasions pupils were observed holding doors open for adults. The majority of pupils, including many with special educational needs, show a keen interest in their lessons, they concentrate for appropriate periods of time and enter into classroom discussions in a constructive manner. Most pupils are keen to show and discuss their work and many show an obvious pride in what they do.

11. The overall standard of behaviour is satisfactory, most pupils are well behaved in classrooms and in the dining room, however there is some boisterous behaviour in the playground. The majority of pupils are aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour, they have a good knowledge of the school's welfare and discipline policy, and are involved in drawing up classroom rules. Pupils respond well to the school's system of rewards and sanctions and they readily accept the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to poor behaviour. There is a small but significant number of pupils, many of whom have special needs related to emotional and behavioural difficulties that are recognised in statements and individual education plans, who do not always behave well. A number of these pupils, mainly in Year 5, demonstrate poor attitudes to learning and exhibit challenging and disruptive behaviour. Whilst teachers use the school's behavioural strategies very well, the attitudes and behaviour of these pupils sometimes affect lessons adversely and this is detrimental to other pupils' learning. A significant amount of teaching time is sometimes taken up by the immediate need to resolve the problems and conflicts they present. Two pupils have been subject to fixed term exclusion during the current academic year, both as a result of poor behaviour. The school's procedures for exclusion meet statutory requirements and the use of exclusion has been appropriate in the circumstances. The majority of the parents believe the school is successful in promoting good behaviour whilst accepting there are a small number of pupils who are difficult and on occasions behave poorly.

12. Generally, pupils play and work well together, and support each other when working in pairs or small groups. Pupils in all year groups show a willingness to take additional responsibilities, undertaking a range of duties as classroom monitors, including putting out equipment before lessons

and tidying up after lessons. Older pupils assist the staff to supervise younger pupils in the infant playground at lunchtimes. However, pupils rarely use their own initiative, almost all additional activities undertaken by pupils are teacher initiated.

13. The large majority of pupils form constructive relationships with adults in the school and respond well to teaching and to responsibility. However, a small number find positive relationships more difficult to establish. They seldom reflect on the impact of their actions on other people, but can do so when directed, for example during circle time when they are encouraged to listen to and respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others.

14. Bullying is an occasional problem, but the school has clear strategies to react quickly and positively to any instances. Pupils are aware of the help available to them should they be subject to bullying and say that they would not hesitate to seek assistance in such circumstances. The personal, social and health education programme is a strength in tackling such issues.

15. Attendance levels are below the national average. A small number of pupils miss school regularly contributing to unsatisfactory progress in their learning. Very few pupils have full attendance records and this, combined with the significant level of late arrivals in the morning, makes progress slower than it could be for many pupils. Registration is completed morning and afternoon and meets statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. The quality of teaching is good. The teaching of children under 5 and in Key Stage 1 is sound, with good and sometimes very good teaching in the Reception and Year 1 classes. In Key Stage 2 it is good overall, with very good lessons being seen in all year groups, but particularly in Years 3 and 4. During the inspection, 94% of the teaching was at least satisfactory, with over half of the lessons being good or better. Three lessons were excellent and a further 9 very good. Unsatisfactory teaching was only seen in isolated cases in each key stage and was associated with the occasional management of pupils' behavioural difficulties and the inexperience of one staff member.

17. Teaching has improved substantially since the previous inspection, when one sixth of lessons were unsatisfactory. This is a result of a determination to raise standards based on the systematic monitoring of teaching to identify strengths and weaknesses. The literacy hour has been successfully introduced throughout Key Stages 1 and 2 and, along with the more recent implementation of the national numeracy strategy, has played a significant role in raising expectations and improving teachers' confidence in using a good range of teaching strategies.

18. The skills of literacy are taught well across the curriculum. Numeracy skills are taught soundly in Key Stage 1. The numeracy strategy is beginning to improve teaching in Key Stage 2, but it remains unsatisfactory in providing techniques for pupils to instantly recall number facts and calculate in their heads.

19. In religious education teaching was predominantly good with a range from satisfactory to very good. Teaching in information technology was similar with, in the best lessons in both key stages, some very effective direct teaching of specific vocabulary and skills. Few lessons were seen in history, music or design technology but what was seen was at least satisfactory. In art, teaching at Key Stage 2 was good with a good emphasis on teaching skills and vocabulary and at Key Stage 1, the one lesson seen was satisfactory.

20. The quality of teaching of children under five in the nursery and reception classes is sound overall, with some important strengths in reception. Story-telling and role play are used effectively in the nursery to capture children's interest and involvement. As a result, children enjoy their work and learn to co-operate and appreciate the needs of others. As with older pupils, consistent approaches are used in controlling and managing behaviour and children respond positively by doing what they are asked, wasting little time and working hard during lessons. Support staff are used well. In reception the emphasis on language development is helping children to communicate, preparing them well for the early stages of the national curriculum. Insufficient emphasis is given to the development of fine hand control through creative work as opposed to formal exercises for example in pencil control and, in the nursery, outdoor activity is not well enough organised to allow staff to develop skills rather than to supervise for safety. In the nursery and some Key Stage 1 classes, too many activities are sometimes planned at once so that pupils do not concentrate as well as they might.

21. The planning in Key Stages 1 and 2, identifies clear objectives or targets for each lesson. This helps the great majority of pupils to make good progress in acquiring and applying new skills and information. In the best lessons, the objectives are shared with the pupils who are then able to judge how well they are doing and, sometimes, how they can improve further. Classes are managed effectively and almost all pupils respond to this consistency by trying hard and working at a good pace, even when not being directly supervised by an adult. Support staff are well-briefed and, apart from occasional instances during whole-class lessons, deployed very effectively in directly supporting pupils. This contributes particularly to the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs who almost always participate fully in the work of the class. In the nursery, planning is thorough but uses too many different forms for coherence. Planning in reception is based on the desirable learning outcomes for the under fives but also takes good account of the national curriculum.

22. The teaching of literacy and of personal and social education is consistently good. During the daily literacy hour, pupils understand what they are doing and develop their skills well. The teaching has a good pace and is clearly focused on pupils' needs whilst being challenging and, on occasion, inspirational. In one excellent lesson, for example, pupils were stretched to think of lively descriptions such as "His awkward tubular legs trundled on". In circle times, teachers use a good range of techniques that encourage pupils to contribute and take turns, contributing substantially to their personal and social development.

23. In most lessons the work is closely matched to the needs of different groups, although in some, for example in mathematics and science, the brighter pupils are capable of more difficult work. Some teachers are very successfully differentiating the tasks, not only when pupils work independently, but also in whole-class sessions. For example in a Year 1 literacy lesson, a range of well-designed worksheets was used to present all pupils, including the most able, with suitably challenging activities.

24. Throughout the school, but most notably in Key Stage 2, teachers ask questions very skilfully to remind pupils of previous lessons; to check that they have understood and to get them to think more deeply about their learning. In most classes, for example in Years 1 and 3, the questions are often directed accurately at different groups of pupils so that everyone is involved at an appropriate level. As a result, most pupils apply a good degree of intellectual effort to their work.

25. Staff know their pupils well and relationships between adults and children are good. Even when one or two pupils behave inappropriately, staff remain calm and consistent in their handling of the situation. The assessment of what pupils have learned lacks rigour in most subjects and, as a consequence, teachers do not have all the information needed to fine-tune subsequent lessons. However, detailed marking is carried out regularly, usually providing pupils with clear feedback about what they have done well and what they can improve on next time.

26. The school places priority on the provision of homework to reinforce and extend what is learned in class. As a result, pupils become familiar with the demands of working at home, not only in reading, but in other aspects of English and other subjects. Homework is integrated well with classwork and contributes well to the consolidation of pupils' skills and understanding.

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

27. Since the last inspection, the school has carefully considered the issues raised in the report related to this section and acted effectively upon them. Improvements include: provision for information technology which now meets statutory requirements and further improvements in English and design and technology; substantial improvements in the quality of planning, particularly learning objectives for lessons; significant improvements in provision for pupils' cultural development; important advances in personal, social and health education for pupils including further developments in circle time.

28. The school provides a broad and generally balanced curriculum and meets requirements to cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The school has successfully introduced the National Literacy Strategy into the curriculum, and more recently the National Numeracy Strategy. All pupils have access to the whole curriculum, although the length of teaching time for the infants is in excess of national guidelines. Personal, social and health education is very well provided for and includes elements of sex and drug education linked in with other subjects of the curriculum such as science. Documentation for individual elements is of good quality but could usefully be drawn together into an overall policy for personal, social and health education to reflect the high quality of provision being made including that of circle time. Similarly, an overall policy for the curriculum of the school could usefully be drawn together which would also support the work planned by the school on curriculum mapping. The school generally provides good quality of access and opportunity for pupils. Those with special educational needs are very well provided for throughout the school. Their individual education plans are carefully prepared, well implemented and reviewed and these pupils are fully integrated into their classes and the life and work of the school. Pupils with higher abilities generally have appropriate access to the curriculum, but sometimes they could be extended further, as for aspects of mathematics and English, including speaking and listening. On a few notable occasions, higher attaining pupils are provided with challenging opportunities as seen, for example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where such pupils were stretched well and made significant progress.

29. The curriculum for the children under five is sound and in general prepares them well for the next stage of learning. It covers all of the recommended content. In the nursery, provision is made for children's physical play outside but this is not well enough organised to make best use of a restricted space. Some of the activities for helping children to get better control of pencils in nursery and reception classes are too formal for children who have had very little previous experience. Planning in the nursery is thorough but some information is recorded in ways which are a little confusing. Sessions are currently running at less than the recommended two and a half hours.

30. Pupils in Year 6 are appropriately prepared for their next stage of education and good links and constructive relationships have been established with the local secondary school and other schools in the area, including the special school.

31. The quality of planning at all levels has been significantly improved since the last inspection. In particular, considerable attention has been given to improving the quality of learning objectives for lessons and other planning, to good effect, especially in literacy and in numeracy. However, it is

recognised by the school that this is part of a developing process, especially with mathematics where a common approach to medium term planning needs to be agreed now and further refinements made in the precision of short term and other planning to enhance the good progress already being made in a short period of time since the introduction of the numeracy strategy into the school's curriculum in September 1999. Further attention also needs to be given to the match of work and tasks in some cases, for example, related to provision for mixed age classes and higher ability pupils. Planning is rigorously monitored by the headteacher who provides valuable feedback for colleagues and is increasingly involving co-ordinators in this process as part of their developing role. An expanding and useful emphasis is being given to the targeting of work to enhance individual and collective achievement, although it is also appreciated that more remains to be done. There is an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities and homework provision. Good use is made of visits, other community links and the many visitors to the school to enrich the curriculum, pupils' learning and their personal development.

32. Overall, the school makes good provision for the spiritual, moral and cultural development of its pupils and very good provision for their social development. Cultural aspects of the curriculum have been substantially improved since the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report; many strengths are now evident, such as the Japanese exchange, but it is also appreciated that further aspects could usefully be developed. There are a number of examples of a strong emphasis on spirituality in subjects; one outstanding instance was the thoughts of pupils in their prayers as part of religious education. More opportunities are now provided for pupils to take a more active part in collective acts of worship. A comprehensive diary of assemblies is kept providing valuable information for planning, and appropriate links are made with work in lessons. Collective acts of worship meet requirements and include some valuable opportunities for reflection, although these could still be expanded further on occasions. Pupils' moral development is supported well through the reasoned approach to promoting good behaviour, which encourages pupils to consider the consequences of their actions and to understand the differences between right and wrong, with very good use being made of circle time in this respect. The school's curriculum also provides many opportunities for pupils to confront, consider and discuss moral issues. For example in history, studies of the plight of working children and the poor in Victorian Britain and comparisons made with today. Through their work in personal, social and health education, pupils consider a range of issues such as bullying and relationships. Social education is a strength of the school with numerous examples of very good practice, many of which have already been alluded to, as part of circle time and the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. However, social education is strongly represented in every aspect of the school's work, is actively supported by all of the staff working closely together and benefits every pupil in the school through the wide range and variety of imaginative learning opportunities provided.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school provides a safe working environment in which pupils feel secure and happy. Staff know their pupils well and relationships both inside and outside the classroom are good. Pupils are confident that they can approach teachers should they have any problems with their school work or personal difficulties, and that appropriate support and guidance would be given.

34. Procedures for assessing risks are good, for example teachers' planning identifies any potential risks within lessons such as those in physical education and teachers do take action when problems such as too much noise for safety occur. The health and safety policy meets statutory requirements. Inspections are carried out on a regular basis and the results of these inspections are properly recorded.

35. There are good procedures for child protection which are based on the Area Child Protection Procedures. The designated teacher has received appropriate training and has a good understanding of

the principles of child protection. All members of staff have in the past received training in the possible signs and symptoms of child abuse, and the appropriate action to take should they suspect that a child has been subject to abuse. However, there is a need to ensure that staff receive regular in-service training to maintain and update their knowledge and understanding of these procedures.

36. The school has good procedures for promoting regular and punctual attendance which include reminders to parents. The attendance policy has a system of awards. The school works closely with the educational welfare officer, who writes to parents and makes home visits when necessary. In extreme cases legal proceedings have been instigated against parents of pupils with very poor attendance records.

37. There is a very effective programme for pupils' Personal, Social and Health Education and pupils have received good guidance on issues to do with sex education, substance abuse and health. The school recently gained a regional Health Promoting Schools award.

38. There are very good procedures to promote good behaviour and to prevent and eliminate all forms of harassment including bullying, including policies relating to welfare and discipline, equal opportunities and anti-bullying. Teachers apply the school's behavioural strategies well, use the rewards and sanctions in a consistent manner and generally are successful in minimising disruptive and poor behaviour. The anti-bullying policy makes clear that bullying will not be tolerated. Discussion is a regular feature of class "circle time" which helps to reinforce the message to pupils that bullying is unacceptable. The school records all incidents and when necessary involves parents in modifying unacceptable behaviour.

39. The school is developing its approach to assessing pupils' work and progress and there is evidence of improved practice since the previous inspection. Within English, which has had the strongest emphasis for development in the past two years, there is very good assessment at the end of each key stage and pupils' work is marked very well with constructive comments and individual targets for improvement. The school's analysis of assessment information, including data from tests, is excellent. Targets set for the last year have been met and are likely to be met for the next year and possibly exceeded judging from the work done by current Year 6 pupils. In mathematics and science, practice in assessment is not at the same quality as that in English but is satisfactory. Marking is more inconsistent in its advice on how pupils can move forward. Analysis of assessment data is thorough. In other subjects, assessment is weaker and co-ordinators are aware that practice needs to be improved.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school has maintained a good partnership with parents. It recognises the important role that parents play in the education of their children and encourages them to play an active role. A relatively small number of parents assist in classrooms and accompany pupils on school trips. Parents in the nursery run an "activity" bag club which enables parents to borrow a small pack of educational games to play with their children at home. Although few help in school, response is good when there is a special event. For example, there have been many offers of help to raise funds to take all of the juniors to visit the Millennium Dome. There is an informal Friends of the School organisation that organises social events to raise money for school funds. The overwhelming majority of parents have expressed their satisfaction with the school and the standards they achieve.

41. The school provides good quality information about its activities. The brochure provides a wide range of useful information when pupils start and additional information is provided by regular newsletters and letters relating to specific events. There are well established induction procedures for children to start at the nursery and infant school which gives parents the opportunity to meet teachers

and receive advice on how they can assist their children's learning at home. The Parents Information Group runs a series of one day courses for parents on a variety of subjects such as first aid and crime prevention, a programme of ten courses are planned to commence in the near future. This is organised by one of the staff and her release is funded by a grant from an external source. This provides good opportunities for staff and parents to meet purposefully and to establish good relationships.

42. Parents receive an annual report on their child's progress and say that they find this helpful. Reports meet statutory requirements and give parents a good insight into their children's strengths and weaknesses. Parents are invited to two Parents' Evenings, and one open day, which are well supported.

43. The school has very good arrangements to involve parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs in the development and monitoring of their children's individual educational plans. Flexible arrangements are made so that all attend review meetings.

44. Generally, parents support the recently introduced Home-School Agreement and the school homework policy, in particularly the Home-School Reading Scheme, which has a positive effect on pupils' reading skills.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The headteacher provides very good leadership and she is well supported by staff. Standards are rising although this is more evident in Key Stage 1 at present than at Key Stage 2. The monitoring of teaching and learning is developing well and can be illustrated in the fact that teaching weaknesses identified in the previous inspection were not evident this time and the quality of teaching was better. The headteacher is well aware of strengths and weaknesses through her comprehensive programme of classroom visits and consideration of planning. Co-ordinators are developing effective skills in monitoring. The depth of detail in their files reflects the school's curriculum emphasis. For example, the English co-ordinator's monitoring file is very detailed and of good quality. There is evidence of the effectiveness of leadership in the improved teaching and improved standards. Less work has been done in foundation subjects but a good base has been created for future development.

46. The headteacher and staff reflect critically on what they can do to improve learning and are deeply concerned about finding effective ways to provide for the growing number of pupils with special needs and particularly for those whose learning is affected by poor behaviour. A strong commitment is made to meeting pupils' needs through the provision of extra support assistants, the wide ranging and well co-ordinated use of outside expertise and the careful matching of work in lessons.

47. The school development plan is a sound working document which sets out the priorities for the year but has weaknesses in that it has inadequate written reflection of the work of the previous year and does not take account of the longer term. Staff's development needs are carefully analysed and matched to prevailing priorities. Appraisal is slightly behind the timescales but has been carried out effectively so far. Governors support the staff and have a sound sense of what is happening. They meet their statutory requirements.

48. The school has a newly qualified teacher in the nursery. She has an induction tutor who provides personal support and encouragement and the required observations are being made in line with recommended timescales. The school believes it is meeting the recommendations for reduced teaching loads for newly qualified teachers because the nursery operates for less time per session than usual, two and a quarter hours instead of two and a half but the inspection team's view is that this is inadequate. In addition, the shorter time for nursery children restricts what they can do and therefore limits their progress.

49. The school has more classrooms than needed for the current numbers of pupils on roll. Whilst space is usually used well, an exception to this is the library which is not well enough organised in terms of furniture and use to promote pupils' research and independent study skills.

50. None of the staff nor governors have had any training in best value principles therefore knowledge about the concept is limited. In practice however, the principles have been applied in a number of situations such as when the staff were choosing new schemes and comparing not only the educational value but where they could get the best deal financially. Premises costs have been scrutinised and the school has decided to deal with these directly rather than through the Local Education Authority's scheme. Whilst the headteacher is clearly aware of the calculated risk taken and the need to accumulate funds for emergencies, it is less certain that the governors appreciate this. Only on occasions have the views of pupils and parents been sought and rarely on curriculum matters.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. In order to improve the standards that pupils reach and the quality of their education, the headteacher, staff and governors should

(1) Improve the standards that pupils reach:-

i) In English by:-

- sustaining the current approaches within and outside the literacy hour;
- improving the standards achieved by brighter pupils in Key Stage 2;
- providing a more systematically planned programme for developing listening and particularly speaking through the school;
- developing the library to enhance pupils' independent learning and research skills.

Paragraphs 68-81

ii) In mathematics by:-

- building on the recent introduction of numeracy strategy;
- improving the quality and range of strategies for mental and oral mathematics;
- developing the quality and consistency of medium term planning related to the numeracy strategy and defining learning objectives more precisely;
- ensuring that work is more rigorously matched to pupils' prior attainment especially in mixed age classes and for the more able pupils;
- monitoring and recording pupils' work more fully to ensure effective continuity and progression.

Paragraphs 82-85

iii) in science by:-

- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in science;

- developing a suitable and manageable system of assessment which enables teachers to check pupils' knowledge and understanding;
- monitoring pupils' work so that targets for improvement can be developed at school, class and individual level.

Paragraphs 86-95

(2) Developing management further by:-

- recording the outcomes of review as part of the school development plan;
- extending the plan to cover a period longer than one year;
- continuing to increase the role that co-ordinators have in management;
- developing a knowledge of best value principles and practice with staff and governors.

Paragraphs 45-50

Further less important issues for development can be found in paragraphs: 15; 29; 48; 50

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	13	37	40	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	22	196
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	112

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	61

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	5.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		99	13	14

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	12	11
	Girls	8	9	9
	Total	20	21	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	74 (64)	78 (73)	74 (71)
	National	82 (81)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	12	11	10
	Girls	9	10	9
	Total	21	21	19
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78	78 (71)	70 (63)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	20	12

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	12	12
	Girls	3	2	3
	Total	15	14	15
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (43)	44 (30)	47 (46)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	12	15	14
	Girls	3	4	4
	Total	15	19	18
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	47 (50)	59 (56)	56 (46)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	196
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6
Average class size	24.5

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	17
Total aggregate hours worked per week	300

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	61

Number of pupils per FTE adult	5.4
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	457,385
Total expenditure	447,766
Expenditure per pupil	1,881
Balance brought forward from previous year	40,285
Balance carried forward to next year	49,904

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	214
Number of questionnaires returned	62

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	27	6	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	37	3	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	48	8	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	42	8	0	6
The teaching is good.	58	35	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	42	13	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	6	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	40	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	44	40	15	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	52	35	13	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	44	10	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	44	10	0	2

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

Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage

52. At the time of the inspection, all of the children in the nursery and 12 of the 24 children who were in the reception class were still under five. By the time that they are five in the reception class, most children are likely to reach all of the targets for their age. There will be a number of children who will still have difficulties with their speech and a number who have special needs. They make good progress even though they may not reach the national targets. The nursery teacher is newly qualified and had only been in post for a few months at the time of the inspection and one of the nursery nurses is also new. The nursery team is still finding its feet and this needs to be taken into account as the judgements about the nursery would suggest that provision is not as good as at the previous inspection.

Personal and social development.

53. Most children come to the nursery confidently but where they are insecure, parents can stay until children feel comfortable otherwise staff respond quickly by taking care of the tearful. Children are reasonably able to care for themselves by dressing themselves and dealing with personal hygiene but will ask for help if they need it. Some three year olds have limited awareness of other children and their play and will go directly to what they want to do even if it means walking across carpet toys but by the time they are five, they are much more aware of others. Levels of concentration on directed tasks improve from a poor baseline at three years old and are at least satisfactory by the time that children are five in reception. In their own play nursery children are capable of keeping to one activity for a sufficiently long time.

54. Adults in both nursery and reception are consistently calm and encouraging in their approach to children. Teaching is good. Good manners are developed well through snack time in the nursery when children are reminded to say please and thank you and praised when this is done spontaneously. Good behaviour is praised and all staff continuously remind children of what is or is not acceptable so that by the time they are five in reception, children are calmer and more responsible in their actions.

55. There is good provision for learning about people and their beliefs and customs in both classes with evidence in the planning showing that different celebrations for religions such as Christianity and Islam are introduced through play and through creative work. Toys and books reflect positive images of differences.

Language and literacy

56. Attainment when children start in the nursery at three years old is particularly low in this area. Many children have unclear speech or, where they speak clearly and confidently, have a limited range of vocabulary. This shows in all areas of their learning, for example, limited knowledge of numbers, shapes, days of the week, names and concepts of everyday things. Teaching overall in this area is satisfactory with some good features balanced by some that are less effective. There are good opportunities for children to talk about what they have done or about something that interests them and all staff encourage talk throughout the day as they work with the children.

57. Children in the nursery quickly learn to recognise their names as they find them at the beginning of the session. Staff help them to learn the initial letters and sounds. Most children know

how to hold books correctly and follow the pictures in order but some have obviously not held many books and are not even sure which is the back or front and where to start. By four years old, children are much better informed about books. All of them enjoy stories and some very good story reading was mimicked later with all the actions which shows that the children concerned had listened very carefully and modelled themselves on the teacher with great accuracy. By five years old children have progressed to early stages of reading where they can tell stories from pictures and are beginning to recognise some words.

58. Most of the three year olds have great difficulty in holding pencils and they are not ready for some of the tasks where they copy over their own names. Examples of independent writing show that nursery children experiment, become better able to control the pencil and are beginning to make separate shapes to represent letters although not necessarily any that are letters. In reception, they can write their own names and are beginning to form letters more securely.

Mathematics.

59. By the time they are five in reception, most of the children will have reached the learning targets for their age. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory. There is a good mix of whole class and individual work based on the numeracy strategy and learning through play for example, using money and tills in the shop. Most children know a selection of coin values, count forward and backwards to 10 and are beginning to count in 2's forwards and backwards. They can name shapes and make simple sequence patterns. They have made good progress over time when taking into account what three year olds are able to do now.

60. In the nursery, staff split the three and four year olds into two different groups in order to provide more focused attention to their different needs. The three year olds were very restless and did not cope well with the length of time on a group activity. Counting skills are very limited. Few of them count objects beyond three with any accuracy and most of them are unable to watch attentively whilst one of them counts the objects. They can match shapes on puzzles but do not always know any of the names. They manage better with counting rhymes where they are all involved. Four year olds can name triangles, circles and squares but have difficulty in counting how many sides each has. They can sort by shape or colour but have a tendency to focus first on colour. Most of them can say the numbers up to 5 accurately and some are confident up to 10 and beyond. Their counting skills are more secure with objects to 3 and some are confident counting up to 5 objects. As well as the focussed sessions, staff develop mathematical concepts effectively within other learning, for example, language related to capacity as they play with sand and water or to the measurement of length as they solve problems in building bridges with stickle bricks and making wheeled toys which may or may not go under.

Knowledge and understanding of the world.

61. Planning shows that all the strands of knowledge and understanding are given sufficient emphasis, although not all strands were seen during the inspection. Teaching overall is satisfactory. At the beginning of each session, nursery children discuss the days of the week and the weather. Attention spans are very limited for many of the children especially the three year olds and the adult leading the session has to work hard to maintain concentration. Whilst children know the names of the days of the week, they do not remember which day it was yesterday nor are they familiar with the order so that they guess rather than use knowledge.

62. Information technology skills are developed well in both classes. In the nursery one to one attention makes sure children become confident with the computer and learn to use the mouse. They produce beautiful little story books together which the children enjoy. In reception, very good, direct teaching to the whole class is developing a good vocabulary so that children hear and learn to use words such as 'monitor', 'double click' 'click on', 'icon'. Therefore children who are under five are achieving well beyond their learning targets in this part of knowledge and understanding.

63. During the inspection, children in the nursery learned about light and shadow. The teacher had to work hard on relevant vocabulary because this is a weakness in the children's knowledge. Nevertheless they were eager to respond and showed greater understanding about shadows at the end of the activity. The reception class were learning about the conditions that bulbs and seeds need to grow and were working within both the desirable learning outcomes and the national curriculum. Detailed planning for the whole activity and more specific planning for the activity that each adult led, meant that all three adults who were working in the class were very well informed and had challenging tasks and learning to deliver. Children's learning was particularly good in that they were setting up simple experiments which would show how seeds respond to different conditions and they were encouraged to predict the results as well as learning specific words such as bulb, roots and shoots.

Creative development

64. When the children start at the nursery at three years old, a considerable number have had very little experience of using pencils, crayons and paints. This shows in the difficulty they have in holding pencils to copy writing or use brushes for painting. Their work is at very early stages of skill, for example, paintings are more concerned with the pleasure of seeing the paint appear on the paper than in controlling the shapes made. Some of the activities these pupils are given are inappropriate for their stage of development, for example, they are not ready to do formal letter shaping exercises and they need much more creative exploration of writing and mark making tools. Four year olds and those in the reception class show increasing skills in this area, for example as they paint faces, the shapes become more realistic and the features more detailed but they too would benefit from more ways of developing their fine control of pencils through creative means than through formal exercises. Paint is usually ready mixed so that children are not learning to mix their own and, although a choice of collage materials is put out on the table tops, there is no clear organisation which would encourage wider, independent selection.

65. Children in the nursery enjoy imaginative play in the cafes and home corners. Their play is well developed when an adult guides them and develops their talk but because of the size of the nursery and the number of play areas, it is possible for children to play in isolation when they often do not play as profitably. By the time they are in reception, children are confidently taking on roles such as being the shopkeeper and modelling shopping language.

Physical development

66. The nursery provides many opportunities for children to develop hand and eye co-ordination as they play with small toys and construction materials. They have satisfactory control of tools as they mould and roll play dough although one pupil with special needs was more aware of the hammering potential of rolling pins. Rather than roll the dough, he flattened it. Three year olds have weak control of pencils and crayons for writing and drawing. Four year olds are better and control is satisfactory by the time children are five in reception.

67. Although, children in the nursery have typical skills for their age in using the outdoor play equipment for riding bikes or climbing on frames, the small space is a restriction which needs rethinking. The staff have little opportunity to help children to develop skills as they spend their time supervising to sort out minor collisions and teaching is therefore unsatisfactory. There are usually too many children for effective play to take place. Nursery children are taken into the hall once a week for dance. Some of them get over excited by working together as a whole group and do not follow instructions as well as they are able to do.

ENGLISH

68. Statutory test results in 1999 at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below the national average and lower than the results found in schools with a similar entitlement to free school meals. About a half of the Year 6 pupils taking the tests achieved the expected level, the same proportion as in similar schools, although none reached the higher level 5. However, this is a substantial improvement on the previous inspection, when only a quarter of the 11 year olds achieved the expected level. The steady improvement over the last four years has broadly matched the national trend. Boys' results are relatively higher than girls' at the end of both key stages, with the gap between boys and girls widening since the previous inspection.

69. At the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999, the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level in reading was well below the national average whilst those in writing were closer to, but still slightly below, average. When compared with similar schools, results were better than average and in the case of writing markedly so, largely because of the unusually high numbers of pupils achieving level 3. Results have shown a rising trend since the previous inspection and are now much closer to the national scores.

70. The findings of the inspection indicate that in most lessons and in their exercise books, pupils demonstrate standards in line with national expectations. This reflects the school's enthusiastic adoption of the national literacy strategy, which is raising expectations about what pupils can achieve in reading and writing. Overall, whilst still below average, pupils are achieving well, given the low starting point for many when they start school. Year 6 pupils are on course to meet the school's targets, although the number likely to achieve the higher level 5 continues to be very low. The current gap between the attainment of boys and girls does not appear to be significant.

71. A major strength in both key stages is the wide range of reading and writing materials covered. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are familiar with modern and traditional stories and higher attaining pupils are beginning to vary their writing styles successfully. By the age of 7 most pupils can read accurately and with meaning. They have a sound range of strategies for reading unfamiliar words. In writing some are beginning to join their letters, but this is not consistent. Almost all, including many lower attaining pupils, can make a sensible attempt at spelling new words. Most use capital letters and full stops appropriately and higher attaining pupils begin to use a wider range of punctuation, adding interest and meaning in both their writing and reading. Good progress is made through Key Stage 1 in pupils' independent writing. Many seven year olds are confident in writing a simple account and some brighter pupils are beginning to use more complex sentences, choosing words carefully for their effect, for example when describing "a very dry and dusty day". Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

72. In Key Stage 2 the range of reading and writing continues to expand well and by the age of 11 many pupils can talk knowledgeably about different genres such as myths and legends. They can write in different styles, for example when they are setting out instructions or compiling lists, although there are insufficient opportunities for them to write for different audiences. Writing that presents an

argument or compares different viewpoints is rarely evident, although the school has recognised this as a weakness. Most pupils achieve satisfactory skills in handwriting, spelling and punctuation, although inconsistencies in the teaching of handwriting result in slower progress for some pupils in developing a fluent joined style. Sometimes, pupils take insufficient care with spelling, although most have a satisfactory understanding of phonetic rules. Almost all pupils can use a word processing program on the computer to copy or edit their writing, although the number of computers available restricts pupils' access.

73. The school has identified the need to increase opportunities for older pupils to write at greater length than is possible in the daily literacy hour. The extended writing lessons are carefully planned with clear objectives and pupils make good progress in planning their own stories. For example in one Year 5/6 class, most pupils successfully composed their own fables with about half the class making the writing lively and thoughtful by choosing their words for effect. Subjects such as geography and history contribute well to pupils' literacy skills, particularly in writing.

74. Many pupils can read expressively by the age of 11. Whilst some become enthusiastic readers with favourite authors, for a significant number reading is increasingly restricted to the work they do at school. This limits the progress they make, particularly where there are also few opportunities for independent research. A number of Year 3/4 pupils receive additional support for literacy. This is very well planned and they are making very good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because the work is usually very carefully targeted – such as in the Year 1 class – and classroom assistants provide effective support.

75. Pupils' attainment in speaking and listening when they start school is below expectations. Almost all learn to listen attentively to adults, particularly on the frequent occasions when teachers' introductions to lessons are crisp and lively. Personal and social education, including circle times, offers good opportunities for pupils to listen to each other and to speak about their feelings. However, because the planning for speaking and listening is often informal, many pupils make unsatisfactory progress in more extended talking, such as expressing opinions, debating or planning a short presentation for their classmates.

76. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and it contributes well to their personal and social development. They behave well in English lessons because expectations are high and the pace is brisk. Texts and reading books are chosen from a wide range of cultures, helping pupils to appreciate and respect people's values and beliefs. In their writing, pupils sometimes consider different viewpoints, but generally do not debate or examine an argument in any depth.

77. The teaching of English is very good in both key stages. More than 90% of the teaching observed was good or better, with over a third of lessons being very good and one excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, largely because of the successful introduction of the national literacy strategy and the school's continuing determination to raise standards.

78. Lessons are very well planned and resourced including, for example in the reception classroom, eye-catching displays that pupils can use in their reading and writing. Lesson objectives are clear and usually shared with the pupils, helping them to focus on what is important in the lesson. Individual targets are often set out in work books and pupil records, providing pupils with clear steps in their learning. Teachers and support staff have very good subject knowledge, including the teaching of basic skills, resulting in pupils acquiring secure phonic skills. Because of excellent monitoring, common gaps are identified and covered in the teaching. For example, some teachers in Key Stage 1 were focusing on rhyming during the inspection and, in Key Stage 2, pupils were being encouraged to use adjectives and

adverbs to improve their writing. As a result, pupils became more confident and aware of these important elements of the subject.

79. A key strength in the literacy hour is the use of questioning by teachers, particularly at the start and end of lessons. In an outstanding Year 3 lesson looking at Aesop's Fables, questions were directed effectively towards different groups of pupils, urging them think much more deeply about their work as well as making the lesson exciting and enjoyable. All teachers demonstrate good questioning skills as part of an effective repertoire of teaching strategies, ensuring pupils are engaged in their learning and work at a good pace. Teachers use appropriate vocabulary, although most pupils are reluctant to adopt unfamiliar words themselves when talking about their work.

80. Teachers in both key stages mark the exercise books regularly, adding precise comments that help identify strengths and weaknesses. Most teachers demonstrate a very good handwriting model for the pupils in their marking. Standard assessments, such as baseline and national curriculum testing, are used very well as a basis for curriculum development. However, the ongoing assessment and evaluation of individual lessons is not yet systematic enough. Homework is well-planned to encourage good links with parents. The management and control of pupils, a minority of whom can, at times, present very challenging behaviour, is systematic and effective. In one Year 5/6 class, for example, the good pace of the literacy lesson, combined with clear strategies for rewarding good behaviour, ensured that pupils made good progress in comparing writing from different time periods.

81. The subject has been a school priority for the last two years. Training and development associated with the introduction of the literacy hour have been very effectively managed, improving the quality of teaching and progression through the school. A major factor is the excellent monitoring programme, including detailed analysis of assessment results and classroom observations, that has identified strengths and weaknesses and focused resources for continuing improvement. Curriculum leadership is very good and the development programme has made good use of external support as well as the skills of existing staff. Training for the introduction of additional literacy support and for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised and managed. Resources are now good, although the spacious library has not been fully developed as a base for independent research.

MATHEMATICS

82. Standards of attainment in mathematics are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1 but below at the end of Key Stage 2. The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests for seven year olds, whilst below average in relation to national figures, were broadly in line with similar schools. Attainment rose in 1999 from a dip the previous year at the end of the infants but did not quite reach levels attained in the two years prior to that. Equivalent results for eleven year olds were below average when compared with both national figures and similar schools. In Key Stage 2 test results fluctuate yearly but with the exception of 1997, there is a general upward trend. Although boys did better than girls last year in both key stages, in the juniors especially, the picture is very variable from year with no obvious pattern emerging. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make sound progress and achieve appropriate levels of achievement. Since September 1999, the school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy into the curriculum; it is taking good advantage of the range of strategies and approaches and has focused positively on raising standards of oral and mental work together with aspects of using and applying mathematics. However, the school also recognises that much still remains to be done from these valuable but early beginnings.

83. Most pupils by the time they are seven, are able to use appropriate recall of a range of basic number facts to ten and some can work with larger numbers to twenty, although others are less secure. Many pupils are able to count forwards and backwards using small numbers, complete simple

sequences and some, but not all, know about odd and even numbers. Most know the mathematical names of many two and some three dimensional shapes, use a generally appropriate range of mathematical language and vocabulary and are beginning to use standard units, such as those relating to length, time, weight and capacity. Many are able to communicate findings using simple bar graphs and charts, although some pupils work more accurately than others. By the age of eleven some pupils, but by no means all, are able to use mental recall appropriately and are beginning to estimate answers using a developing range of strategies such as rounding and doubling, with increasing precision, although it is recognised that much more remains to be done in this area. Some pupils have a sound understanding of place value and an appropriate grasp of decimals and fractions, however, a significant minority are less competent. Some pupils can use appropriately, simple graphs, diagrams and arrays of data and are using an increasing range of mathematical language and vocabulary. Many pupils can find the areas and perimeters of simple regular shapes and can recognise different angles and measure them although, as in other aspects, some pupils were working at a lower level of task than that to be expected, especially some older pupils in mixed age classes and some pupils capable of reaching higher levels of attainment.

84. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are sound, overall, and on a number of occasions these are good or better. Many pupils enjoy the activities, especially stimulating mental and oral work, work hard, listen attentively and see the subject as important. The majority take pride in their successes, care in the presentation of their work and collaborate appropriately together, given the opportunity. On isolated occasions, a minority of pupils show more limited behaviour and attentiveness. In several lessons pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good or outstanding and parallel the quality of teaching and learning. Such lessons are characterised by high quality direct teaching of the class and targeted groups, very well structured and organised lessons with rapid pace and very clear learning objectives. Here there are interesting, well matched and challenging tasks for all of the pupils, highly stimulating presentations with excellent use of questions and knowledge of the subject by the teacher. In such lessons, the quality of pupils' learning is very high and a great deal is achieved in a single lesson, building directly on pupils' previous learning and these lessons are closely linked to the National Curriculum and take full advantage of National Numeracy Strategies.

85. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is sound in both key stages. Teachers are increasingly effectively drawing upon national approaches and strategies to support their planning and organisation. Strong emphasis is being placed on stimulating and challenging oral and mental work, using and applying mathematics and other key aspects such as the quality of direct teaching and targeted group work. The quality of planning has clearly improved recently, including that of learning objectives, but there are still some weaknesses particularly in relation to the precision of learning objectives, the more effective use of assessment information in teachers' planning and the improved use of a common format for medium term planning. Increasing attention is being given to the match of work for different age groups and other groupings within classes. Although there were several notable exceptions, further attention needs to be given in some cases, to really extend higher attaining pupils, those with the potential to reach expected levels, and to provide more astutely matched tasks in mixed age classes. There is some evidence that, even at this early stage, substantial improvements are being made in teaching and learning. Often this is reflected in the real commitment of the staff, the very positive responses of an increasing number of pupils and their evident success and achievement in some lessons and tasks. Useful strategies for monitoring and evaluation are being developed but are currently limited. The co-ordinator is giving a strong, informed and clear lead in developments. Arrangements for staff training are being developed, linked with the introduction of the national strategy. The school is generally soundly resourced for the subject, although more practical classroom resources will be needed to keep pace with developments taking place. The school is strongly committed to the development of mathematics and recognises the importance of improving continuity progression for pupils. All the staff are working hard to raise the quality of teaching and learning, together with

standards of achievement. Even at this early stage there is clear evidence that significant improvements are beginning to take place.

SCIENCE

86. In the 1999 teacher assessments for Key Stage 1, the number of pupils achieving the national expectation at level 2 was well below average with the number of pupils achieving the higher level 3 also being below average. When compared to other similar schools results were also below average at level 2 but for those achieving level 3, results were in line with the average. In the national tests for eleven year olds, the number of pupils achieving level 4 and the higher level 5 was well below the national average. There is a similar picture when standards are compared with other similar schools although the number of pupils achieving level 5 becomes broadly average. The performances of both boys and girls are below the national average although boys do better than girls, both in the 1999 tests and over the longer period. This is against the national trend. Standards have risen steadily over the last four years in line with improvements in standards nationally. Inspection judgements indicate that results are likely to rise in Key Stage 1 to closer to the national average while results at Key Stage 2 are likely to remain below national levels. There is evidence to suggest that higher attaining pupils, especially towards the upper end of Key Stage 2 should be achieving better.

87. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have a clear understanding of those things that are, or have been, alive and those that have not including man made materials. They have investigated sound and are able to use appropriate vocabulary to describe why sounds grow louder or fainter carrying out experiments to judge this. Pupils are developing their understanding of electricity and can make circuits to light bulbs, providing sound explanations as to why this happens. In a well planned and delivered lesson pupils investigated forces seeing which materials stretched and twisted and which returned to their original shape. They developed a wide range of vocabulary to describe what they observed and began to make predictions as to what might happen.

88. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the location and use of the major organs of the body. They know about and can describe the life cycle of humans and also recognise the importance of a healthy life style including a good diet and exercise. Pupils carry out experiments to test pulse rates both at rest and after exercise in an appropriate link between mathematics and science. Through an investigation into the safe storage of food pupils learn about the harmful effect of microbes and are able to predict what will happen if certain conditions exist. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in using and reading instruments such as force meters when they found the force required to move a weight up different slopes measuring this in Newtons. In a good lesson in Year 3 pupils experimented with different materials to discover which of them had the greatest insulation properties and developed sound skills in using and reading thermometers.

86. Pupils are beginning to understand how to use known information in order to make predictions and what constitutes a fair test. Pupils record their results with reasonable accuracy and show a sound understanding of their current work. However, their recall of previous work is more limited. In the lessons observed there were no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

87. The rates that pupils learn new skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of science is satisfactory. While most pupils work hard concentrating well to complete the tasks set, a small minority of pupils especially amongst older pupils in Key Stage 2, behave inappropriately reducing the effectiveness of the learning of the others. Most pupils develop an appropriate vocabulary which they use in discussions and in their written work. They have a satisfactory understanding of the elements covered so far in the science programme of study and their investigational skills are appropriately developed. During both key stages higher attaining pupils do not

always make the progress that might be expected as extension work is not always planned for those pupils who work at a higher level. This is particularly the case in classes with mixed age groups where pupils often study the same topic at the same level. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good and sometimes very good progress in lessons and in many instances making similar gains in their knowledge and understanding as others in the class. There is little evidence of pupils using information technology skills to gather data and information in their investigations.

88. The school has an appropriate programme of study in science following the Lancashire authority scheme. Teachers' planning is satisfactory and covers all the areas of the curriculum, paying appropriate attention to the development of pupils' investigational and experimental skills. However the school has not set targets for the improvement of standards in science and a system of assessing the levels of skill, knowledge and understanding has not yet been developed.

89. Pupils' attitudes to science are good. Most enjoy their lessons, follow instructions carefully and often work constructively together in small groups. Pupils, especially those in Key Stage 1 and younger pupils in Key Stage 2 concentrate on their work well and are keen to carry out investigations and find out information. However, there is a small minority of pupils who behave inappropriately and disrupt the work of others.

90. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but ranged from excellent to unsatisfactory. The excellent teaching is characterised by clear explanations of what pupils are expected to learn in the lesson, good quality questioning to challenge and extend pupils' thinking and the provision of interesting tasks. Most teachers encourage and develop the correct use of vocabulary. Where teaching is weaker, introductions are too long and time to carry out investigations and record results is limited. Teachers' lesson plans usually contain sufficient detail on what is to be learned but does not always provide tasks to extend the more able pupils. Insufficient opportunities exist for higher attaining pupils to plan and carry out their own investigations.

91. Subject leadership is satisfactory and the co-ordinator has received appropriate training to support the development of the subject. Careful attention has been given to the analysis of previous national testing to identify areas for improvement but this is not sufficiently shared with others to raise standards. The co-ordinator recognises the need to develop clear manageable assessment procedures to better inform teachers' planning. Resources for science are satisfactory and used appropriately to enhance pupils learning in the subject.

ART

92. Four lessons of art were seen in Key Stage 2 and only one in Key Stage 1. Evidence from work on display was also taken into account. Using this information, standards are overall a little below those expected. However, pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress and some will achieve well when considering that they begin their school life with little experience of any kind of mark making.

93. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is either good or very good. In different ways, teachers convey their personal enthusiasms to engage pupils' interest successfully and to ensure that pupils try hard and take pride in their work. There is good use of technical vocabulary such as warp, weft and shuttle in weaving or pointillisme when demonstrating and encouraging pupils to experiment with different techniques in painting. In Years 5 and 6, effective questioning and good use of pupils' efforts to show the developing work encourage pupils to improve their pencil shading patterns. Some of the work on the walls is at lower levels than that seen in lessons for example in colour experiments which do not show sufficient progression from similar experiments in earlier years. Knowledge about artists is

promoted with examples of pupils' work in copying famous paintings by artists such as Picasso, Monet or Renoir.

94. At Key Stage 1, the teaching is satisfactory. Calm and positive relationships help pupils to listen attentively and to discuss their choices. Whilst pupils are given a balance between direction and choice in the techniques and patterns to be used, there are missed opportunities for pupils to mix their own colours. Throughout the school, the predominant medium used is ready mixed paint with little opportunity for pupils to use other forms such as powder.

95. Pupils with special needs take a full part in lessons and quite often achieve good results, for example in designing habitats which will camouflage a particular animal.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96. During the inspection little evidence was gained from observing lessons, owing to timetable limitations. The majority of evidence was obtained from reading the relevant documentation, photographs, looking at examples of pupils' work and talking to the pupils.

97. In the previous inspection, achievement and progress in Key Stage 2 was unsatisfactory. Through a more detailed and co-ordinated approach towards the planning and recording of activities taught in each class and the increase in the range of materials and tools, the achievement and progress is now satisfactory.

98. Between the ages of seven and eleven, there is evidence in the increase of the complexity of the designing and making capability of the pupils. In Year 1 they use felt and glue to make simple finger puppets and in Year 2 are designing and making musical shakers, giving consideration to the type of sound they wish to create through the properties of different materials. Following completion of the shakers, pupils are encouraged to assess the final product with regard to the sound it produces.

99. In Year 6 pupils have made a millennium bag and they can discuss the reasons why they used certain types of fabric and the problems they encountered, for example the strength of material required to make a bag that will hold a mobile phone. They experimented with various fastenings, such as, velcro and loops and buttons and evaluated their findings.

100. Across both key stages there are examples of designs incorporating control mechanisms which show increasing levels of skills such as the calendars which have a cardboard bird with a moving beak operated by a drawstring to models of fairground machines incorporating a system of cogs and pulleys. Similarly there is progression in the development of food technology. In Year 2 pupils made sandwiches for a picnic and in Year 6 they designed and made a non-alcoholic Caribbean cocktail as part of a geography topic on St. Lucia. They had to design the glass in which the drink would be served.

101. The schemes of work are well structured and are cross-referenced with other subjects and topics. For example, in a Year 4 science lesson the production of model lighthouses involves the pupils in designing electrical circuits to make the light flash and in history they model replica Roman clay pots. The co-ordinator is keen to develop a portfolio of pupils' work and to link this with a method for record keeping. Resources are satisfactory and there is a range of materials and tools kept on the corridor so pupils can gain easy access when they are involved in a project.

GEOGRAPHY

102. The standard achieved in geography is below the national expectation in both key stages. Few geography lessons were seen during the inspection but pupils' previous work was examined, teachers' planning scrutinised and discussions held with pupils. By the age of eleven pupils have acquired a basic knowledge of places, the weather and how river systems work. They are able to carry out simple geographical enquiries and apply some skills and techniques using knowledge gained from other areas of the curriculum, such as science, English and mathematics. Pupils have acquired some limited mapping skills such as the use of a compass. There is too much variation between classes in the quality and quantity of work dependent on the amount of time devoted to the subject and the teachers' knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the subject. There are no significant variations between pupils of different genders or backgrounds. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, especially when they are receiving support.

103. In Key Stage 1 pupils study types of housing and are beginning to recognise and name the different types. They develop a sense of direction and begin to use an appropriate vocabulary to describe where they are going. A story format is used well to encourage younger children to recognise direction and this was well developed with the youngest pupils. An appreciation of the weather was developed well in a good lesson in which suitable descriptive vocabulary was used. More able pupils recorded the weather using drawings and writing. In this lesson pupils progressed well acquiring skills and knowledge. This is not always so especially when the challenge is limited or similar work is repeated by an older age group. In Key Stage 2 pupils learn about maps and develop an appreciation of the use of aerial photography and how this relates to what is on the ground. Pupils demonstrate limited understanding of compass direction. They understand how river systems develop but have poor recall of the vocabulary to describe this. In a link with the science curriculum, pupils have studied the rotation of the Earth round the Sun but few associate this with the change in seasons. Pupils have limited knowledge of the main oceans of the world and most do not know the names of all the continents. There is no evidence of information technology being used to improve pupils' knowledge in this area or of pupils using computers to draw graphs relating to rainfall or temperature. Pupils have studied the contrasting location of St Lucia but have little recall of the similarities and differences between their own local environment and the contrasting area. There is some evidence of pupils' involvement in field work, increasing their knowledge of the use of compass skills in orienteering and carrying out a river study.

104. Most pupils have a positive attitude to their work. They concentrate well and when given the opportunity co-operate effectively in their learning. They respond satisfactorily to teachers' questioning and enjoy opportunities to examine maps and photographs. A small minority of pupils misbehave in lessons and sometimes reduce the learning opportunities for other more motivated pupils.

105. The quality of teaching in the few lessons seen is satisfactory overall with some being good. Planning lays out aims for lessons but does not always contain sufficient specific detail on the skills pupils are to learn. Classroom organisation and management of pupils is good despite the small number of less well behaved pupils. Not all teachers set tasks that offer sufficient challenge to the range of pupils in the class for example setting the same task for the most and least able pupils.

106. The school has an outline scheme of work to guide teachers' planning which is in line with the National Curriculum programme of study. Too little time is allocated for teaching the geography curriculum which results in lower standards than might otherwise be expected. Assessment of geography knowledge is unsatisfactory. The monitoring role of the co-ordinator remains to be fully developed.

HISTORY

107. During the inspection only one lesson was seen in history, but a range of evidence was available from pupils' work, teachers' planning, records, work on display and discussions with pupils. On the basis of this evidence, appropriate opportunities are being provided for pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the subject, related to the National Curriculum. Pupils achieve standards which are in line with national expectations, overall, in both key stages.

108. By the age of seven, pupils can talk about changes in their lives and those of their family and have some awareness of how their lives are different from those of their parents and grandparents when they were young. They can describe differences in everyday life and objects from more distant times beyond their own lives and know about some notable past events, such as the Great Fire of London and the Gunpowder Plot, and people such as Florence Nightingale and Samuel Pepys and are aware about historical changes. Many pupils show an understanding of the order of events leading up to the Great Fire of London, starting from the fire in a bakery, represented in a time line and their writing. They also understood some of the reasons why the fire spread so rapidly at that time and about changes made since then to avoid such disasters happening again. In the lesson seen which focused on Florence Nightingale, seven year olds showed the ability to put events into chronological sequence with a clear understanding of conditions in hospitals at that time, drawn from a range of historical evidence. Many pupils were able to describe what Florence Nightingale did to make changes and why and how these changes which she made have had a major effect on medical approaches and practices in hospitals today. In the work on Samuel Pepys, many pupils showed an early understanding of what life must have been like for different people at that time, made contrasts with the present day and began to see the value of eyewitness accounts, records and other historical evidence available.

109. By the age of eleven, pupils know a range of facts about people and events from the history of Britain and are beginning to develop a concept of the distant past and can describe important features of past societies and periods, such as ways of life, beliefs and achievements. In their work on Victorian Britain, pupils have studied the lives of people at different levels of society in Victorian times and the ways in which they were affected by events and changes, such as those in education, industry and transport. Similarly, in the work carried out on the Romans, pupils showed a detailed understanding of what life must have been like at that time for different people, key events, why they invaded and settled in Britain and the effects they had on our way of life. Most pupils show a real empathy for people in the past, notably demonstrated in pupils' writing and drawings about the life of children and families in rich and poor homes in Victorian Britain and also through their vivid letters, reports and writing in another class studying the Romans, for example, some of the moving letters written by pupils in the role of soldiers and others writing home and military style reports. Many pupils are able to distinguish between different accounts, identify conditions, causes and correct sequences of events, and some are developing an appropriate understanding about the use of evidence and issues such as the validity of evidence and some effects of value judgements.

110. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject, and some clearly enjoy the work, take pride in their achievements and work hard. Pupils readily talk about the work they have done and often show a good recall of detail, especially where it relates to visits made and practical use of artefacts and other sources of evidence. The quality of teaching and learning is sound overall; on occasions they are good. In the best teaching and learning, a range of first hand experiences, using artefacts and other sources of evidence are effectively combined with good quality direct teaching, challenging tasks to ensure stimulating opportunities and significant learning about the subject. On occasions, however, some pupils make insufficient progress when the work is less demanding, for example, when there is an over-reliance on work sheets which are insufficiently matched to pupils' ages and abilities.

111. The school recognises that there is a need to review and develop further the provision for history from the sound base already established and this is being built into the school's planning and appropriately linked to the recently introduced national schemes and approaches. The co-ordinator has

a keen interest in the subject and is providing a strong and informed lead, not least through her own work in the classroom, as seen for example, in the evidence of the high quality work on the Romans. Attention has been given to improving the range of artefacts, documentary evidence and other useful resources, although it is also recognised that further additions will be needed to support the developing curriculum changes. Similarly, some valuable monitoring of planning takes place.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

112. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are broadly in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages. A detailed scheme of work has recently been adopted giving pupils experience across all strands of the subject. There are some gaps, due mainly to lack of resources and insufficient training for teachers. The school has clear plans to address these weaknesses, as central funding becomes available later in the year. However, standards have improved since the previous inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory and pupils are now making sound progress through the school. ICT contributes well to pupils' learning within some subjects such as mathematics, English, art and music, although its use for accessing information, for example in history and geography, is more limited.

113. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils can operate the main functions on the computer. They can move and click the "mouse" to carry out a sequence of tasks confidently, although many find controlling the movement of the cursor quite difficult. They use the keyboard to type in short passages of writing which brighter pupils can edit and amend to correct spellings or punctuation. Most pupils know how to print and save their work. Almost all seven year olds are confident when using a tape recorder. Achievement and progress are good at the start of the key stage when, for example, they learn how to load a program from a compact disc, understanding appropriate terms such as "double click" with the "mouse".

114. By the age of 11 pupils can employ a good range of programs to support their learning in different subjects. For example, they use an art program to create their own pictures in the "pointillist" style and a music program to compose simple sequences. Older pupils learn to write and illustrate a book for infants, using icons to create their own pictures. Brighter pupils can change the format and typeface in their text, although most are quite hesitant on the keyboard. This slows their work. They have some experience of using the internet and software to access information, but this is limited and most pupils are not confident in framing questions that the computer can help them answer. Generally, pupils have insufficient opportunity in using the computer to pursue their own research.

115. Pupils enjoy using information technology, showing interest and working hard when it is their turn. There is sometimes a real sense of anticipation and excitement, for example when younger pupils watch their text being printed out successfully. They work well with their partners and usually take turns sensibly. In some instances pupils help their less confident friends, contributing to social development by forming constructive relationships with peers. Whilst responding well to the expectation that they will work independently on a set task, pupils only rarely show initiative in their use of information technology.

116. Teaching is sound, with good, and sometimes very good lessons in both key stages. Some teachers lack confidence and experience in aspects of the subject, but they are supported by a clear scheme of work and by the informal assistance of the co-ordinator. An important strength of the teaching is the regular timetabling of specific ICT lessons. These are well-planned to teach new skills and vocabulary and to introduce work to be undertaken over the week. Instructions are clear and pupils are sensitively chosen to demonstrate to the class, thus raising their self-confidence. Some classes use simple, but effective, methods to record which pupils have completed the set work. Pupils' exercise

books and the classroom displays do not fully reflect their ICT skills, although staff use the computer well themselves to label and illustrate many displays in the classroom environment. Assessment is identified in planning, but its use is underdeveloped in focusing the learning for different groups of pupils. As a result some, including the higher attaining pupils, are not always working at an appropriately demanding level.

117. The subject is effectively led and managed. Most development since the previous inspection has been informal, largely because other whole-school priorities have emerged. For example, much staff training has been in teachers' own time when new programs have been purchased or the scheme of work introduced. Consequently, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, but there is a continuing need for staff development and for more systematic monitoring if standards are to be raised further. A detailed audit of resources and skills has been undertaken in preparation for the school's bid under the National Grid for Learning scheme. This will provide access to the internet and the purchase of additional hardware, such as a digital camera, along with substantial staff training through the New Opportunities Fund. Currently, resources are unsatisfactory, although the school continues to make good use of outdated computers for some parts of the syllabus.

MUSIC

118. Only two lessons in music were seen, one in each key stage. Recorder lessons, assemblies and work using computers gave a very limited evidence base. Based on these observations, standards in Key Stage 1 are at expected levels in rhythm work and in singing. Pupils in Key Stage 2 can sing with enthusiasm in assemblies and are reaching acceptable standards in singing in the mixed age classes in Years 5 and 6. Because of the teacher's patience, humour and different strategies for singing for example, splitting a folk song into call and response using different tables and groups of individuals, singing did improve within the lesson. Pupils in the Year 5 and 6 class have learned the names of different instruments of the orchestra and some try to identify particular instruments as they listen to extracts of music. Some pupils display little interest in listening to music which is reflected in the way that they pick up answer cards to describe texture as thick and thin without even looking at the words to see which is which. Others try hard, think before they act and make gains in their understanding of texture.

119. Two girls learning to play the recorder, have good standards in their ability to read music, great enthusiasm and are delighted to be able to show what they can do. A larger number are just beginning to play recorders. The school has no tradition of instrumental lessons but there are arrangements in hand to begin this quite soon.

120. Whilst the teaching seen was at least satisfactory in terms of subject knowledge and control, the co-ordinator's monitoring file records that some staff feel insecure in the subject and that professional development is rightly recognised as a need.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121. As at the last inspection, attainment in physical education is in line with national expectations at the end of both key stages and progress is satisfactory overall.

122. In a Year 2 games lesson pupils are beginning to develop the ability at bouncing a ball with accuracy and maintaining control of the ball when they move around the hall. They can pass the ball to a partner using the correct strength and speed. More able pupils can perform these skills with smaller sized balls. In a dance lesson pupils are able to name the type of country dance and perform the correct movements to interpret the music.

123. By the age of eleven the more able pupils are developing the skills of the backstroke in swimming lessons and the non-swimmers are confident in the water when wearing armbands. Pupils take part in a range of award schemes for swimming activities. In gymnastics pupils use imagination to create different sequences involving a roll and a balance and can transfer these sequences onto the large apparatus and perform 'mirror' movements with a partner.

124. On the whole pupils concentrate well and listen to instructions, but in a Year 5/6 lesson, activities on the apparatus had to be abandoned owing to the pupils being inattentive and therefore putting their safety at risk. Pupils are able to work well together both in pairs and in larger groups. They apply good physical effort and are enthusiastic to attempt new activities. Pupils are appropriately dressed for lessons and enter and leave the halls in a disciplined and orderly manner.

125. Teaching is good overall. Where teaching is effective the lessons begin with a warm up session and the pupils are made aware of the reasons for this activity. Pupils' demonstrations are used to good effect, but only in a swimming lesson, where they are told to stretch their legs and toes when performing front crawl leg kick, is the quality of movement emphasised. Lessons are well structured and activities are planned to allow all the pupils to participate. In the unsatisfactory lesson there was too much time spent on explanation leaving too little time for pupil activity and instructions are given when pupils are not listening.

126. There are draft schemes of work in place and they give clear guidance on the progression of activities throughout the school. The two co-ordinators work well together and have precise ideas of where they wish to develop the curriculum. They see the opportunity for staff to watch good lessons as a priority area for development. Staff have attended training courses for the Top Play and Top Sport programmes and further training is planned.

127. Pupils are offered a range of extra-curricular activities, such as, netball, aerobics and football and a residential stay at a local centre offers an opportunity for them to experience hill walking and orienteering. A link with a local special school is well used to extend the choice of activities, for example, handball, at the same time as promoting social links.

128. The school benefits from having separate halls for both key stages and good levels of appropriate equipment.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

129. Standards of attainment in religious education are in line to meet the expectations outlined in the Local Education Authority Agreed Syllabus for the end of each key stage. This represents a fall when compared with the judgement in the last inspection. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils can relate to stories from the Bible dealing for example with Christmas and Easter. They have also experienced some stories from Islam and looked at traditions from other countries for example St Lucia from Sweden and Christingle. Pupils also have opportunities to express their feelings in discussions and in writing about, for example "who loves them". This was skilfully linked to class themes on sharing and friendship and pupils reflected on how we knew this. Language skills are well developed in these sessions and pupils develop an understanding of moral principles such as right from wrong.

130. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of Christianity, Hinduism and Judaism. They develop an understanding of the power of prayer and there are many examples in which pupils express their deep feelings through prayers they have written, some of them being quite moving and personal. Pupils gain further insight into the traditions of world faiths, for example, in a

lesson about the feast of the Passover. The teacher skilfully extended pupils' understanding of symbolism as well as including aspects of food technology and geography. Pupils demonstrate sound understanding of the deities from other religions, for example Rama and Sita, Shiva and Krishna. Older pupils think carefully about the creation stories from different religions traditions and make a personal response. At both key stages, pupils reflect on the issues raised in lessons and relate them to their own lives.

131. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other world religions and in understanding about feelings, responsibilities, rules and identity. Their class books show them steadily building up knowledge about religion and developing a response to what they have learned. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the support they receive. The subject makes an appropriate contribution to pupils' literacy skills as well as art, geography and design and technology. Information technology skills are not well developed through religious education. Work on world religions gives pupils insight into cultures other than their own. School assemblies play a part in the development of pupils' views and ideas on religion. In some of these pupils have time to reflect on the questions posed. Currently the school has not developed an annual programme of religious themes for their school assemblies.

132. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are good. Most pupils are thoughtful, listen carefully and contribute ideas to the discussions. A small minority contribute little and reduce the effectiveness of the learning by their unsatisfactory behaviour. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some examples of good and very good teaching. In the best lessons teachers are enthusiastic and present lessons in an interesting and stimulating manner. There is a good balance between learning about religions and learning from them. The scheme of work, based on the locally agreed syllabus is good and well used by most staff to provide an interesting and stimulating approach to the subject. Currently there is no permanent subject co-ordinator and this combined with a concentration on improvements in other curriculum areas has lowered the profile of the subject. A school wide system of assessing what pupils know in religious education still awaits development. However teachers ensure that pupils receive a well balanced religious education experience. Resources are satisfactory and include a good range of artefacts.