

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ASHLEY DOWN INFANT SCHOOL**

Horfield, Bristol

LEA area: City of Bristol

Unique reference number: 108911

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Jones

Reporting inspector: Tony Painter  
21512

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> May 2000

Inspection number: 189651

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Olveston Road Horfield Bristol
Postcode:	BS7 9PE
Telephone number:	0117 9514664
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Wright
Date of previous inspection:	7 <sup>th</sup> October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Painter	Registered inspector	Children under five English as an additional language Mathematics Music Physical education	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed?
Paul Widdowson	Lay inspector		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?
Mike Wehrmeyer	Team inspector	English Information technology Art Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Andrew Matthews	Team inspector	Special educational needs Equal opportunities Science Geography History Religious education	How well are pupils taught?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ashley Down Infant School is a community school in an urban area close to the centre of Bristol. It is located in a Victorian building with some temporary buildings. It is around the national average size for this type of school with 184 boys and girls aged from four to seven years. A significant number of pupils join or leave the school during the year. Most pupils come from the area around the school. They come from a range of ethnic and social backgrounds and currently 12 pupils come from homes where English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free meals, at 17.9 per cent, is around the national average. The overall attainment of children entering the school is above that found nationally. There are 60 pupils on the register of special educational needs, which is above the national average. Of these pupils, one has a statement of special educational needs.

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

The school is very effective and provides good value for money. There is very good management, ably led by the headteacher with the support of the governing body. This has focused developments and allowed all staff to work together effectively to raise standards. As a result, the school has made significant improvements since the last inspection. Teaching is good and is continuing to raise the quality of pupils' achievements. Children under five receive a good introduction to school and all pupils learn effectively through the school. By the time pupils leave the school, the overall levels of attainment are above national averages.

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

- Good teaching is leading to good standards, particularly in reading, mathematics and science.
- Highly effective management leads to well-focused developments in all aspects of the school.
- Good relationships are fostered between staff, pupils and parents. These create a caring and supportive atmosphere that has led to a positive impact on learning.
- Teaching and support staff promote pupils' personal development well.
- Effective use is made of support staff to promote pupils' learning.

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

- Standards in writing could be better.

*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 October 1996. Very good progress has been made since then and there have been significant improvements in all of the identified areas for development. In particular, substantial improvements in the quality of teaching have led to improved standards in English, mathematics, science and information technology. Teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and more effectively challenge higher attaining pupils. Teachers' organisation and planning is improved and there is greater, and more effective, use of assessment information. Much of the curriculum has been successfully revised to improve the guidance for teachers. Allocations of time to subjects have been improved and there is clearer attention to ensuring smooth progress for pupils through the school. The school's provision for information technology is now improved and pupils achieve satisfactory standards.

The headteacher has been very effective in setting out a clear path towards achieving higher standards. A greater emphasis on all staff working together effectively is contributing to improvements in planning, assessment and teaching. Very good systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are helping to further raise standards. These are reflected in the greater attention paid to developing pupils' independence and awareness in their learning.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	19998	1999	1999
reading	A	C	C	A
writing	B	C	C	B
mathematics	A	A	C	A

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

Pupils make achieve well in the school and their overall attainment by the end of the Key Stage 1 is above the national averages. This represents an improvement from the results of the 1999 National Curriculum assessments, due to continuing improvements in teaching. The current Year 2 pupils have attainment in mathematics that is well above national averages. Attainment in science and reading is also above national averages. Attainment in writing is relatively weaker than pupils' overall attainment, particularly in the proportion of pupils achieving at higher levels. Some pupils are not achieving as well as they are capable. A significant number of pupils, however, achieve at higher levels of attainment in mathematics and reading. Standards in religious education are in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus. Attainment in information technology is in line with national expectations and much improved since the last inspection.

Variations exist in the year-on-year National Curriculum test results but these relate primarily to the different groups of pupils each year. The general trend in attainment in the school is rising and this is reflected in generally improved National Curriculum test results in 2000. Effective systems are established to identify and track pupils' attainment and these are increasingly being used to set high but achievable targets for the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to their lessons, concentrate hard and enjoy their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are well behaved and considerate at all times.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships underpin all the work of the school. Pupils relate well to each other and adults.
Attendance	Good attendance with very good systems for monitoring absence and lateness.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and their positive attitudes are a significant factor in their success. Very good relationships at all levels give the school a positive atmosphere within which pupils can learn well. Pupils' personal development and independence are effectively promoted in lessons.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>aged up to 5 years</b>	<b>aged 5-7 years</b>
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The teaching in 97 per cent of lessons was satisfactory or better with only three per cent judged as unsatisfactory. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection. In over 27 per cent of lessons, the teaching was very good or better. The good quality of teaching has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Support staff play a very positive role in the good quality of teaching through good teamwork and effective action within classrooms. Children under five are taught well with good use of the areas of learning and the early stages of the National Curriculum. Children's personal development is particularly well promoted. The teaching of English is good with effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Reading is particularly well taught although there are some relative weaknesses in the teaching of writing. Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' application of their developing writing skills. They give pupils some opportunities to apply their literacy skills although the range of writing is somewhat limited. The teaching of mathematics is good and makes very good use of the National Numeracy Strategy. Teachers place an appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' mental arithmetic skills. Good attention is given to the use and application of numeracy skills in other subjects. Teaching effectively meets the needs of all pupils. Those pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported to make good progress. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language are given appropriate support to enable their access and progress through the whole curriculum.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good curriculum fully meets statutory requirements and includes an appropriate range of activities to ensure effective learning by pupils.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision enables pupils to make effective progress. They are well supported by classroom assistants. The co-ordinator does not take sufficient opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of provision.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Effective support enables pupils to have full access to the whole curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision is made, particularly in promoting pupils' social and cultural development. Effective use is made of pupils' backgrounds to promote the knowledge and understanding of all pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are very good systems to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all pupils.

The school has very effective links with parents and these have a positive effect on the work of the school. Parents are given good information but the annual reports do not contain all the required information. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned with special attention paid to the development of pupils' personal skills through "planning" lessons. In these lessons pupils choose carefully what they will do and the equipment that they will need. They effectively engage pupils in their own learning, promoting co-operation as well as independence.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good management stresses the importance of effective teamwork. Clear developments to improve the school are thoughtfully paced and effectively led by the headteacher.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good and active approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good systems of monitoring and evaluation involve headteacher, deputy, co-ordinators and governing body.
The strategic use of resources	Good use is made of all the resources available to the school.

High quality management is an important factor in the success of this school. Strong leadership from the headteacher steers the work of the school. There is very effective teamwork between governors and staff in determining the school's priorities. This gives a coherent momentum to developments that is effective in improving provision and raising standards. Monitoring is generally very effective although there is a lack of opportunities to monitor the effectiveness of special educational needs provision. The principles of best value are applied to the use of all resources. The school's accommodation is good and there are good levels of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum. The levels of teaching and non-teaching staff are good and they are used effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good teaching.</li> <li>• The school is welcoming, caring and responsive to parents.</li> <li>• Positive values and attitudes are promoted.</li> <li>• The school ensures that pupils learn about a wide range of cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links with parents.</li> <li>• A wider range of activities outside lesson times.</li> </ul>

The team agrees with the positive points raised by parents but inspection evidence does not support their concerns. Links with parents are strong and the school is very welcoming, as recognised and commented upon by the majority of parents. Effective information is given and good opportunities exist for parents to be involved in the life of the school. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is similar to that found in most infant schools.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The 1999 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum assessment test results show attainment that is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in reading and mathematics there are significant numbers of pupils achieving at the higher Level 3. This pattern is not evident in the relatively weaker results for writing. This is shown when the school's results are compared with those of similar schools. In reading and mathematics, the school's results are well above the average for similar schools. The results for writing are not as high, although they are still above the similar schools' average. The 1999 teacher assessments of attainment in science overall in Year 2 show lower than average numbers of pupils achieving the Level 2 benchmark, although the proportion of those pupils achieving Level 3 is higher than the national average.
2. The school's results in the equivalent tests for 2000 are pleasing and show considerable improvements, particularly in mathematics. Some of this improvement relates to the strengths in the present group of pupils. Much, however, reflects the improvements made by the school, particularly in the quality of teaching and the provision for literacy and numeracy. The overall trend in the school's results has been generally in line with national trends. Variations in the year on year results primarily relate to the strengths of the different groups of pupils involved. The most recent results and the inspection's examination of the work of pupils in the school suggest that pupils' overall attainment is above national averages and is rising.
3. Children enter the reception classes with a range of attainment that overall is a little above the national expectations. They make good gains as children under five and, by the time they enter compulsory education, they are performing at levels above those found nationally. They have particular strengths in their language, mathematical and personal and social skills. Many children exceed the levels of attainment described in the Desirable Learning Outcomes<sup>1</sup>. Teachers and nursery nurses work very effectively together to promote children's personal and social skills. Very good relationships encourage children to behave well and learn the established routines of the classes. Children apply themselves well and often concentrate for long periods. They gain greater understanding of the feelings of others and respect for children of other cultures. Good gains are made in language skills and children quickly gain an understanding of how books work. They listen carefully and talk with widening vocabulary about stories and their lives. Many make a good start in reading. Children make good progress in their mathematical understanding. They count and recognise numbers well when playing games. Many develop skills of addition and subtraction. They use an increasing range of mathematical language when talking about shapes and other aspects of mathematics. Children make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the world, with increasing understanding of features of living things. They talk about their observations and begin to recognise changes over time. Children make appropriate gains in their creative and physical development. They paint and draw in a good range of media and join together to sing songs. There is currently no secure outdoor area for children's physical play. To address this weakness, teachers make effective use of the school hall to hold physical education lessons. These have appropriate activities that offer sufficient challenge to children under five and promote sound progress.
4. Standards in English overall, by the end of the key stage, are above national averages with

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<sup>1</sup> Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education – SCAA/DfEE. These are goals for children's learning by the time they begin compulsory education at the age of five. They mainly refer to literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills.

strengths in reading where a high proportion of pupils achieves well. Pupils are particularly good at reading with lively expression. They distinguish between fiction and non-fiction with good understanding of how to find appropriate books. Pupils make good gains in their reading skills through the school. The range of words they recognise increases well and they develop good understanding of sounds. They use these well when working out longer words. Standards in speaking and listening are above national expectations. Good opportunities are given in “planning” lessons<sup>2</sup> and circle time for pupils to listen carefully to teacher and other pupils. They learn to pay good attention and express themselves clearly. They use their speaking skills well in dramatic productions. Standards in writing, while around the national average, are relatively lower than other aspects of English. Most pupils are competent at putting their thoughts on paper but do not achieve all the elements of composition that would put them securely into the higher levels of attainment. Pupils do not consistently apply their developing vocabulary, spelling and handwriting skills to all their writing. Pupils have some good opportunities to use their writing and other literacy skills in other subjects although the range is somewhat limited.

5. Pupils’ attainment in mathematics is well above national averages by the end of Key Stage 1. Many pupils achieve at the higher levels of attainment. Pupils make very good gains in their mental arithmetic skills and have many useful opportunities to apply these skills. They develop good understanding and recall of number bonds and use these accurately in their computations. They gain good skills in expressing their mathematical thinking and this enables them to make good gains in knowledge and understanding. Pupils apply their developing numeracy skills effectively within the curriculum through activities such as estimating, measuring and drawing graphs.
6. Standards in science are above national expectations although there are continuing weaknesses in pupils’ understanding of physical processes. Pupils make good gains in their understanding of investigations and their development of associated skills. They recognise and use elements of fair testing. They have good knowledge of different parts of a plant and the need for a healthy diet. Pupils think carefully about physical problems, such as rolling cars down a ramp. However, a significant minority is unclear about the forces of gravity and friction in their investigations. Pupils use research skills well when finding information from books.
7. Provision for information technology has improved since the last inspection and pupils make satisfactory progress through the school. Pupils make sound gains through appropriately organised opportunities to use the computer. These are often effectively linked with pupils’ work in other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils’ levels of attainment, by the end of the key stage, are in line with national expectations. They are particularly good at word processing using the keyboard to enter text at an appropriate rate. They use the mouse and basic editing skills competently to improve their work. Year 2 pupils use a database program to store information from their science experiments.
8. By the age of seven, pupils’ attainment in religious education is in line with that described in the locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils develop a good understanding of Christian beliefs and values. They have growing knowledge of some other world faiths. Pupils compare prayer and worship in Christianity with other faiths such as Islam. Pupils understand the significance of holy buildings and books. In circle time lessons, pupils share experiences and feelings. They make significant gains in understanding when, for example, pupils talk about the significance of prayer to them, as non-Christians.
9. Pupils achieve standards in all the other subjects of the curriculum that are in line with national expectations. In art, pupils make good progress in gaining an appropriate repertoire

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<sup>2</sup> In these lessons pupils choose carefully what they will do and the equipment that they will need. The lessons effectively engage pupils in their own learning, promoting co-operation as well as independence.

of skills. They develop skills, for example, in working with clay and using colour. They improve their observational drawings and make effective use of the computer to create pictures. Pupils make sound progress in design and technology, through activities that are generally well linked to other areas of the curriculum. They develop appropriate designs using increasingly complex materials and techniques. They apply literacy skills well in their evaluations of their work. Satisfactory progress is made in geography and history. Pupils gain good understanding of map skills and develop their knowledge of other countries. They have a good understanding of the past and how life has changed. Pupils make satisfactory progress in music, particularly when it is linked to one of the regular productions. A number of pupils make significant gains in their confidence when taking solo parts. Progress in physical education is sound and pupils achieve standards that are in line with national expectations. They move with increasing control and imagination, using apparatus with appropriate levels of care.

10. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender, background or ethnicity. The school takes effective action to monitor pupils' results to act if necessary. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported to make good progress. They achieve levels of attainment that are in line with their abilities. Pupils' Individual Education Plans set out clearly pupils' needs and appropriate strategies to employ. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language are effectively supported to have full access to the curriculum. This ensures that they achieve in line with their capabilities. Most quickly become independent learners.

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

11. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have positive attitudes towards school that have a significant impact on their good learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school and find the work interesting and challenging.
12. In lessons they listen attentively and concentrate on the tasks they are given. There is a sense of fun and enjoyment in most lessons. Pupils share resources willingly and work independently and collaboratively in pairs and in small groups. Pupils are articulate and readily engage in discussion. They answer questions enthusiastically, which enables teachers to assess what they know and understand. There is a very good response to the French club, which is organised at lunchtime, and over forty pupils regularly attend.
13. Behaviour is good. In lessons pupils settle quickly and although noise levels sometimes are a little high, the conversations are usually work related. During playtime, pupils are lively and boisterous but there is no evidence of rough or aggressive behaviour and the quieter children are well supported to ensure that there is no isolation or harassment. Pupils from different ethnic minorities play well with the other children. At lunchtime, pupils are orderly and well mannered and there is a good social atmosphere. Pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and are aware of the school's code of conduct. They are involved in establishing their own classroom rules and consider the impact of their actions on their class mates and develop good respect for the feelings, views and beliefs of others.
14. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults in the school are very good. Pupils are happy to approach staff with any problems or concerns they may have. The high priority that the school places on developing relationships and pupils' personal skills produces good results. Circle time lessons have recently been introduced into the curriculum and are used very effectively to support personal and social development. The concept of working with a partner is introduced very early. The success was evident in a reception class parachute game used to learn each other's names and identify a specific pupil as their partner.

15. Pupils' personal development is very good. Each class appoints a special person every day who is responsible for helping the class teacher. Each class also has successful "planning" lessons where pupils choose activities, discuss what they will need, assign tasks within the group and then work collaboratively on these tasks, selecting equipment as they go. Pupils are also consulted about issues that effect the school and they have been very much involved in choosing playground equipment and designing a new school logo.
16. Attendance at the school is good and is slightly above the national average with a low rate of unauthorised absence. The majority of pupils come to school on time. Good attendance and punctuality have a positive impact on attainment and progress.

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

17. The quality of teaching is good and has improved significantly since the last inspection. Only one lesson out of more than thirty observed was unsatisfactory and more than seventy percent of lessons were good or better: of these, over twenty percent were very good and occasionally excellent. The high level of very good and excellent teaching was especially evident in reception and Year 1 and has a significantly positive effect on these pupils' learning.
18. In the reception classes, the teaching is good overall, with one third of the lessons being very good or better. The two teachers and nursery nurses know their children very well and have a very good understanding of the areas of learning for the under-fives. Children understand the classroom routines well and this, together with the good quality teamwork and high expectation of the children, makes a significant contribution to their learning. The teaching of all areas of learning is good and particularly good in literacy where the teachers' very good subject knowledge and questioning leads to rapid progress in their learning. Well-matched activities help children to make good progress in numeracy. Good opportunities for pupils to explain how they work out problems lead to fast acquisition of skills. In other subjects, careful planning ensures that all areas of learning are developed appropriately. Learning is exciting for these children; for example, they were intrigued by Ridley, the young golden Labrador who was just about to start training as a guide dog. As a result of his visit, children were motivated to ask a series of very perceptive questions to learn more about his basic training. Children are secure and behave well in lessons. Occasionally the learning for some children is hampered when a small minority of children shouts out answers that are accepted by the teacher.
19. The quality of the teaching of literacy is good overall and varies from excellent to unsatisfactory. Most teachers set challenging work for pupils of all abilities and, as a result, pupils make good progress overall. The school's teaching of English as an additional language is effective and ensures these pupils are able to be fully involved in all aspects of the curriculum. The teaching of reading is particularly good and, by the age of seven, many pupils have high levels of reading skills. Regular reading homework effectively reinforces the development of pupils' reading. Pupils' writing skills are not taught so well, although teachers pay good attention to the teaching of basic skills. Too little emphasis, however, is placed on ensuring that pupils use these skills in all their writing and expectations are too low. Teachers make some efforts to give pupils opportunities to write beyond literacy lessons. However, the range of opportunities to apply writing skills across the curriculum is somewhat limited. Teachers do not make sufficient efforts to teach writing skills such as planning, settings, imagery and characterisation.

20. The National Numeracy Strategy has been very successfully introduced and is leading to high standards. Teachers place great importance on the development and application of pupils' mental arithmetic skills. This is having a very positive effect on standards, particularly amongst higher attaining pupils. Teachers use questioning well and challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers build well on pupils' responses and the marking of pupils' work is closely reflected in teachers' subsequent planning. As a result of these strengths, pupils' attainment in mathematics is rising through the school.
21. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and work hard to meet their needs. This is particularly evident in the consistently good teaching for pupils with special educational needs. The work is carefully planned and appropriately challenging. It leads to pupils making good progress towards the targets set for them in their good quality Individual Education Plans. Instrumental in this good progress is the very good support that pupils receive from the learning support assistants who work closely with the class teachers. The teachers give good opportunities for the assistants to plan elements of the work for the special educational needs pupils. However, in the Year 2 classes, too much responsibility is given to the learning support assistant and there is not enough monitoring of the progress of these pupils by the teachers. Most of the support is given within the class but occasionally pupils are withdrawn for effective small group and individual work.
22. Planning is good and has improved since the last inspection, with clear identification of what pupils are to learn during lessons. This has led to a greatly increased proportion of higher-ability pupils attaining at the higher levels. A weakness in this area was highlighted at the last inspection and has been very successfully addressed by the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is used particularly well in science and numeracy lessons in their questioning, which successfully extends pupils' learning. This is particularly the case in the discussion sessions held at the end of lessons. Here good opportunities are given for pupils to consolidate their learning and for teachers to assess pupils' progress during the lesson.
23. Teachers manage pupils well and pupils are encouraged to work hard and produce a good quantity of work. Particularly impressive is the organisation of practical and investigation work in the reception classes and in science lessons throughout the school. As a result, pupils are very involved in their own learning and are given appropriate opportunities to make choices and decisions about how they plan and go about their work. This has a positive effect on pupils' personal development and in their increasing confidence as they move through the school.
24. Pupils trust their teachers and, as a result of this close relationship, have the confidence to talk openly about their difficulties in their work and their personal worries. These are particularly well dealt with during circle time sessions, in which pupils are encouraged to share their feelings with the class in a supportive and reflective atmosphere. Paramount to the success is the very sensitive intervention of the teachers and the gentle encouragement of some of the quieter members of the class to take an active part in discussions. Several examples were seen during the inspection of less confident pupils being successfully encouraged to take an active part in the discussions.

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

25. The curriculum has improved significantly since it was a key issue in the previous inspection. The school now provides a good quality and range of learning opportunities and a good breadth of experiences. It has achieved sound enrichment of the curriculum by its satisfactory programme of extra-curricular activities, although some parents feel that the range is limited. The curriculum is further enriched by visits to centres of educational interest and visitors to school who share their expertise with pupils. Provision meets the needs of children under five, the requirements of the National Curriculum and of the locally Agreed

Syllabus for religious education. The school has strengthened its planning for English and mathematics through the effective implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The requirements for the daily act of collective worship are met.

26. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased the amount of teaching time devoted to mathematics, science and information technology, achieving a more rigorous foundation for these subjects. Schemes of work have been put in place for all subjects, except music and design and technology. These schemes effectively guide teachers' planning from year to year, showing how pupils are to progressively gain skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers' long and medium term planning identifies opportunities for pupils to develop the skills which will enable them to operate as independent learners, for instance the ability to find and use reference books confidently.
27. The school provides a good programme for personal and social education, which covers health and sex education and awareness of drug misuse. In their short term planning, teachers establish relevance within the curriculum, with one subject reinforcing another. For instance, information technology in Year 2 is used successfully to strengthen science recording and mathematical understanding of the function of graphs. Discussions in English are used, in Year 1 for instance, to extend pupils' moral awareness of issues such as responsibility for the well being of animals.
28. The personal and social development of children under five is effectively promoted in reception classes. Very good induction procedures give children confidence when starting school. The adults create a secure environment where children are quickly able to settle into their learning. Good opportunities are taken to allow children to talk about their lives and their feelings. Many opportunities are taken, particularly in "planning" lessons, to help children to gain important social skills such as independence and co-operation.
29. Pupils' spiritual development is well promoted through effectively planned assemblies. These make good use of a range of themes related to pupils' experiences. They link well with the work in religious education and the rest of the curriculum. Pupils are given good opportunities to reflect on their own understanding of the world in religious education lessons and circle time. This provision shows improvement from that outlined in the last report.
30. Moral development is well promoted through clear structures to encourage good behaviour. Classes have developed systems of rules that relate well to the day-to-day experiences of pupils. Adults present good role models and teachers ensure that pupils are clearly taught right from wrong. Pupils are encouraged to be honest, fair and to have appropriate respect for others.
31. Very good provision is made for pupils' social development. Many opportunities are given for pupils develop an understanding of how we live together as a community. Pupils are actively encouraged to take part in decision making, for example in the choice of a school logo, playground equipment and classroom rules. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to learn how to work collaboratively within the "planning" lessons, where pupils decide on, and organise their own activities. The regular school performances give pupils opportunities to gain confidence and self-esteem.
32. Pupils' cultural development is very well promoted. They learn about a range of faiths in religious education lessons and are helped to recognise both similarities and differences. Teachers make effective use of the range of backgrounds in the school to widen the knowledge and understanding of all pupils. A number of visitors to the school bring their own experiences and share these with the pupils. These include poets, musicians and members of a range of faiths. The school effectively prepares its pupils for the diversity and richness of life in a multicultural society.

33. The school's aims indicate a strong commitment to equal opportunities and this is reflected in curriculum policies. The school ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, have equality of access to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities. Provision for special educational needs is good. It has improved since the previous inspection in that the quality of pupils' Individual Education Plans is more consistent, and the pupils' targets are more clearly defined. The school aims to ensure equality of access to the curriculum, for instance by planning that pupils with special educational needs do not repeatedly miss important lesson introductions. Sometimes small groups of these pupils are withdrawn during assembly time for extra literacy work. As a result, they miss an important part of the school day. The planning of work suitable for particular ability groups is now an established practice, with particular benefit for higher attaining pupils. This effectively addresses the weakness identified in the last inspection. The school is good at enriching the curriculum by involving the local community. Links with local firms enhance the resources of the school. Visitors from the local churches bring a living dimension to religious education. Similarly the school values, and contributes to, good relationships with neighbouring schools. These are constructive and work to the benefit of pupils, by easing the nursery children into the reception classes, and smoothing the infants' entry into junior education. The school acts as a strong training ground for the next generation of teachers and support staff.

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

34. The school provides a safe and caring environment for its pupils and staff which creates a good learning environment. There is an effective health and safety policy with termly inspections. An annual report is completed by the headteacher and submitted to the Governing Body. There are clear procedures for dealing with accidents and two members of staff are qualified in First Aid. All accidents are recorded appropriately. The school has a clear policy on dispensing medicine in school that is clearly stated in the prospectus. An effective child protection policy is in place and staff have been appropriately trained.
35. The behaviour policy is detailed and effective with a clear system of rewards and sanctions that are applied consistently throughout the school. The very good procedures for promoting and monitoring good behaviour have established a good learning environment and have had a significant impact on attainment and progress. Attendance registers are marked accurately using appropriate symbols and are monitored on a daily basis. The school secretary quickly follows up any unexplained absence.
36. There is a very good induction programme for pupils coming into the school. A weekly pre-school session during the summer term gives children the opportunity to stay for lunch and meet the reception children. Before starting school there are home visits by the reception staff and meetings for parents where books and games to help children's learning at home are available. There is good liaison with the junior school and procedures ensure a smooth transfer in the next stage of education.
37. The school deals with drug awareness and sex education at an appropriate level for the age of its pupils. Circle time is used very effectively to discuss any problems or concerns that the children may have. Teachers know the pupils well and personal development is effectively monitored. A very good pupil profile is prepared for parents every year that provides very good information for parents on pupils' social development.
38. The school has good arrangements for assessing pupils' attainments and progress in most subjects. Arrangements for National Curriculum testing are in order. The school is able to track progress in reading through teachers' comprehensive reading records. The analysis of the overall data enables the school to adjust its provision when necessary. Teachers'



assessments of pupils' levels in English, mathematics and science reflect pupils' actual performance quite closely.

39. Through tracking pupils' attainment levels in the core subjects, teachers can be confident that pupils will achieve the targets set for the year group. Teachers use secure assessment of pupils' work to adjust their planning when pupils move faster or slower in the core subjects. Assessment in other subjects is not as secure. Marking is done regularly, but not often used to guide pupils on how they can improve their work. Teachers are not yet using their very good informal knowledge of their pupils to set individual targets for progress. As a result, they are unable to monitor the extent to which they are consistently raising standards for individuals and groups.
40. Effective support and guidance is given to all pupils including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language. The school is alert to spotting signs of delayed progress and draws effectively on the expertise of specialist services for detailed diagnostic testing. Special educational needs pupils' Individual Education Plans are carefully analysed and evaluated before new targets are set. Good use is made of the expertise of both the teacher and the learning support assistants in this way. In Year 2, the learning support assistant is responsible for planning and assessing the work specifically related to pupils' Individual Education Plans. However, the teachers and co-ordinator do not systematically monitor this work. As a result, pupils' progress towards the targets is not sufficiently evaluated and there are too few opportunities to share expertise.

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

41. The school has a very good partnership with parents, which has a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make. Most parents express very supportive comments through the parents' meeting, questionnaire and discussions with inspectors. However, to date only 56 per cent have signed up to the Home School Agreement.
42. The school provides good quality information to parents through the prospectus, the Governors' annual report to parents and regular newsletters. There is also a range of information on the notice boards within the entrance to the school. Individual classrooms display information for parents on the work to be covered by their children during the week. The school actively supports parents for whom English is an additional language providing, for example interpreters when necessary. The school gives parents some effective information about the curriculum. Science and mathematics curriculum evenings have been organised with the support of parents and the school has held sessions on literacy and numeracy. There is an induction meeting for new parents and all parents are invited to the Friday assembly to which there is a very good response. Pupils' annual reports provide useful information on their personal development and attainment and progress in most subjects. However, they do not cover information technology and religious education as specific subjects.
43. There are termly consultation meetings for parents and sufficient opportunities are given for parents to discuss their children's learning and progress with teachers. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are involved in their children's reviews. They are kept closely informed of their children's progress. Evaluations of pupils' Individual Education Plans are carried out before the termly parent teacher meetings where the pupils' progress and new targets are discussed.
44. Parents are encouraged to contact staff if they have any problems or concerns and the school is very welcoming. The time at the beginning and end of the school day, when parents deliver and collect their children, is very effectively used for informal discussion. The

home reading book is also a useful form of communication between home and school particularly for parents who do not visit the school on a regular basis.

45. Parents contribute significantly to pupils' learning through their support in the classroom whilst many others help supervise pupils on school trips and visits. Several parents regularly help in lessons and provide well-organised and effective support for pupils' learning. In the reception classes, there are regular weekly sessions at the start of the school day where parents are encouraged to support their children's reading. An active Parents and Staff Association regularly organises social and fund-raising activities. It supports the school well through the purchase of equipment and improving facilities.

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

46. There is strong and purposeful leadership of the school. This is having a very positive effect in raising standards. The overall values and aims of the school are clear and are incorporated in all policies, which steer the work of the school effectively. Very good relationships form the foundation of all interactions within the school and underpin all its work. All staff work very effectively together and share their skills willingly. These factors are a significant improvement from the quality of leadership and management seen in the last inspection. Through this effective teamwork, the school is in a strong position to continue to make gains and improve further.
47. The headteacher's management is very good. She has a clear and accurate view of the strengths of the school and provides strong and positive leadership. She demonstrates a commitment to good relationships, building and maintaining effective teamwork throughout the school. Her systems of monitoring teaching and pupils' work give good information and she shares her assessments thoroughly. Work done with individual teachers to improve the quality of their performances has been particularly effective in raising the quality of teaching. She is able to build a very secure picture of all the work of the school and use this in considering priorities for development and improvement. She is well supported by senior staff and subject co-ordinators with clear and appropriate ranges of responsibilities. Subject co-ordinators play an important and developing role in the school's quest for further improvement. They monitor planning effectively and have established secure systems for considering and evaluating pupils' work. They make regular reports and evaluations of their subjects for the governing body.
48. The governing body is enthusiastic and knowledgeable. It meets regularly and makes very effective use of its system of committees. Many governors take responsibility for overseeing parts of the curriculum, meeting subject co-ordinators regularly. Very good systems have been developed for governors to monitor the implementation of policies in the school, including the observation of lessons. Through this monitoring and good information from the headteacher and subject co-ordinators, the governing body develops a clear idea of the strengths and needs of the school. It meets all statutory requirements and has good systems to ensure that it remains aware of changing demands.
49. The school development plan includes appropriate priorities with effective systems to ensure the success of developments. The primary focus of the plan is to raise standards. Challenging targets are set with good allocation of resources and responsibilities. The school's financial planning is very good and clearly supports the priorities identified in the school development plan. The school budgets systematically for new and well-focused expenditure linked with the identified priorities. Careful monitoring of expenditure during the year ensures that funds are used appropriately. The governing body has an appropriately long-term view of the expenditure of the school and this is related realistically to the school's financial circumstances. The accounts currently show a surplus that is a little high. This has resulted from a series of additional payments related to replacement staffing. There are good plans to ensure that this is appropriately reduced in the next financial year. Financial

control and administration are very good. The school has effective systems to ensure that value for money is obtained from all purchases. The governing body makes good efforts to apply the principles of best value to the use of resources. The school's office is well organised and the secretary is welcoming and shows good partnership with the headteacher. Administration is efficient and ensures that the school is able to run smoothly, reducing the tasks of teaching staff.

50. The school fulfils all the recommendations of the Code of Practice<sup>3</sup> for pupils with special educational needs. An appropriate register is kept which identifies pupils' levels of need. Individual Education Plans are made for pupils on this register and appropriate arrangements are in place to review progress. The special educational need co-ordinator is knowledgeable, experienced and has good systems in place. She has worked hard to raise the quality of pupils' Individual Education Plans and specifically the targets on these plans. She works closely with the learning support assistants. Whilst, at present, she has some release time to work on the individual plans of those pupils who are on the higher stages, she does not have sufficient time to monitor the teaching and learning of these pupils. Consequently, her expertise is not being used as effectively as it could be in the monitoring of pupils' progress. She is not, therefore, able to give teachers full support in developing strategies to meet pupils' needs.
51. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers and support staff match the demands of the curriculum. There are sufficient teachers to teach the number of pupils on the school roll. All teachers are suitably qualified to teach the National Curriculum and religious education. All teachers have curriculum responsibilities and there are co-ordinators for most aspects of the curriculum, including special educational needs and children under five. The school benefits from a high level of support staff who are well trained and whose skills are appropriately matched to the demands of the curriculum and the needs of pupils. They are effectively used to support pupils' learning. There is good teamwork between teaching and non-teaching staff and mutual support which enables teachers to plan the curriculum effectively and to know their pupils well.
52. There are very good arrangements for the professional development of all staff. There has been appropriate training for the implementation of the school's numeracy and literacy strategies. This has proved to be beneficial and has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching in these subjects. A high priority has been placed in ensuring that teachers and other staff have appropriate support in order to make improvements in the school's practice. This is evident in the current arrangements being made to gain Investors In People status for the school.
53. The accommodation is good and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Two reception classrooms have sufficient space to carry out an appropriate range of activities. There is no secure outside space, however, to allow more physical activities to take place. This has a negative effect on children's development by restricting children's physical responses. However, teachers make effective use of the school hall for a good variety of physical activities. There are good displays and pupil's work enhances the environment all around the building and in classrooms. The playground is restricted but has an attractive range of play opportunities. The caretaker and cleaning staff maintain the school to a high standard.
54. Learning resources are good and contribute effectively to the delivery of the National Curriculum and religious education. There are ample books to support the development of

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<sup>3</sup> Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

pupils' reading skills and pupils benefit from a range of fiction and non-fiction books in their classrooms and the library. Many visitors to the school to further enhance pupils' learning.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

The school has made substantial improvements since the last inspection and standards are rising. In order to improve further, the staff, headteacher and governors should now:

- (1) Improve the quality of pupils' writing by:
  - creating greater opportunities for pupils to undertake a range of writing;
  - ensuring teachers provide activities that give pupils opportunities to perform at a sufficiently high level;
  - ensuring that pupils use their developing writing skills, such as vocabulary, spelling and handwriting, in all their work. (paragraphs 1, 4, 19, 62, 64, 66, 67)

In addition, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. They relate to:

- Ensuring that pupils' annual reports refer to all the subjects of the curriculum, (paragraph 42)
- The special educational needs co-ordinator taking more opportunities to observe pupils in classrooms in order to give greater support to teachers and support staff. (paragraphs 21, 50)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3.0	24.2	45.5	24.2	3.0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	184
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	60

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	12

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	43	26	69

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	34	35	36
	Girls	24	24	22
	Total	58	59	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	84 (80)	86 (80)	84 (90)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	33	36	36
	Girls	23	22	22
	Total	56	58	58
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	81 (76)	84 (79)	84 (84)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

## Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	17
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	135
Any other minority ethnic group	25

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

## Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	26.3
Average class size	30.7

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	140

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1998 - 99
	£
Total income	336720
Total expenditure	330442
Expenditure per pupil	1636
Balance brought forward from previous year	16725
Balance carried forward to next year	23003

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	186
Number of questionnaires returned	69

### Percentage of responses in each category<sup>4</sup>

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72.0	28.0	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55.0	43.0	0	1.0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	59.0	40.0	0	0	1.0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40.0	49.0	10.0	0	1.0
The teaching is good.	59.0	41.0	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46.0	45.0	7.0	1.0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67.0	28.0	1.0	4.0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46.0	48.0	3.0	1.0	1.0
The school works closely with parents.	47.0	40.0	9.0	3.0	1.0
The school is well led and managed.	57.0	33.0	3.0	1.0	6.0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67.0	28.0	4.0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20.0	26.0	28.0	8.0	18.0

<sup>4</sup> Figures in each row may not add up exactly to 100 per cent due to rounding errors



## **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**

55. Children enter the school at the beginning of the school year in which they are five and join the reception classes. Most have had pre-school experiences in local playgroups and nurseries. There are variations in their attainment on entry to the school but overall it is above that found nationally. There are very effective systems to ensure the well being of children as they enter the school. Parents are particularly impressed by these and feel that they underpin the very good relationships in the school. Children make good progress overall and in language, mathematics, personal and social and knowledge and understanding of the world. Satisfactory progress is made in their creative and physical development. By the time children begin statutory schooling their attainment is above national expectations in most of the areas of learning. Most pupils achieve most of the Desirable Learning Outcomes. The overall quality of teaching is good and there is particularly good teamwork between teachers and classroom assistants. Very secure and caring classroom atmospheres are established. Children's development is effectively tracked through teachers' secure record keeping systems. Weaknesses exist, however, in the promotion of children's physical development through outside play due to restricted space.
56. Children under five make good progress in their personal development and teaching is good. Teachers and classroom assistants have very good relationships with children. They use these effectively to promote children's progress. Reception classes create a secure environment where children are quickly able to settle into their learning. Children behave well and follow the established routines of the classrooms well. They develop good levels of independence, for example in changing for physical education lessons. Children apply themselves well to their tasks and often concentrate for long periods. They share materials and equipment well and take turns sensibly when required. "Planning" lessons where children identify what they will do and the equipment needed play an important role in developing children's personal skills. Circle time is used effectively to encourage children to speak and listen to others. They gain greater understanding of the feelings of others and respect for children of other cultures.
57. Children make good progress in their language and literacy skills and teaching is good. Teachers make effective use of elements of the National Literacy Strategy to promote children's experience and understanding of books and stories. The "office" gives good opportunities for children to develop their writing in a meaningful context. Most children have increasing understanding of books and how they are used. Children listen carefully to teachers and other adults and respond with appropriate comments. Speaking and listening is well promoted in circle time. Children talk with an increasing vocabulary about stories they have heard. Most children match an increasing number of sounds to initial letters of words. They begin to read simple books with support. Some higher-attaining children recognise many words and read simple text accurately.
58. Teaching in mathematics is good and makes effective use of elements of the National Numeracy Strategy. Children make good progress, recognising numbers with increasing security and counting objects correctly. They play number games together well and apply their developing numeracy skills across the curriculum. Class sessions where children talk about mathematics are effective; for example when children talk about ways that they can count on. Teachers use their questioning skills well to draw out what children know and understand. Higher attaining children show developing skills with number, beginning to understand setting out addition sums. Children develop increasing vocabulary and make good gains in their understanding of number through effective levels of challenge.

59. Children make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world and teaching is good. Children make use of information technology such as tape recorders and computers in their learning. They talk about their families when discussing important items that they have brought from their homes. Children look at seasonal changes and describe aspects of the weather such as wind and shelter, clouds and sun. They have increasing understanding of the environment and features of living things such as plants. Children talk about their observations and begin to recognise changes over time. Children make use of simple tools and materials to make things, such as collage pictures.
60. Creative development is soundly taught and children make satisfactory progress. Children paint freely and use a good range of media for their pictures. They make collage pictures with effective use of a range of materials. These pictures have promoted a good range of descriptive language. Children join together well in singing songs and rhymes, often linked effectively with their learning in other areas of experience. There are appropriate opportunities for children to play together in the home corner. The "office" gives further opportunities for structured imaginative role-play. These activities enhance creative development and reinforce development in other areas of learning.
61. Children make satisfactory progress in their physical development through secure teaching. They make appropriate gains in their fine motor skills through opportunities to use simple tools in a wide range of activities. Children handle pencils and brushes with care and generally develop secure ways of using them. There is currently no secure outdoor area to allow children to work throughout the day. This places some restrictions on children's physical development, as the range of physical activities is restricted. However, to address this weakness, teachers make effective use of the school hall to hold physical education lessons. These have appropriate activities that offer sufficient challenge to children under five and create a firm foundation for physical education in the school. The school has good plans to create a secure outdoor play area in the near future.

## ENGLISH

62. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests, pupils achieved overall standards in reading in line with the national averages. However, a higher proportion of pupils achieved the higher levels of attainment. When compared with schools of a similar background, the Ashley Down results were well above average. Achievement in writing, however, was not as high. The percentages of pupils achieving Level 2 and for Level 3 were close to the national average, but they were still above the averages for similar schools. Overall, both in reading and writing this represents a rising trend, at a higher rate than that occurring nationally. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls, but in 1998 there was a small dip in achievement, caused by a higher than usual proportion of pupils who were new to the school, and also more pupils with special educational needs, in that year group.
63. These results are significantly higher than the standards found at the previous inspection. This reflects the determined way in which the school tackled the key issues of the last report. Overall provision for English has substantially improved through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Good implementation of the strategy provides teachers with strong guidance on progression in planning their lessons. In turn, pupils get good structured opportunities for extending their learning. In particular, higher attaining pupils are given tasks that are more challenging, doing work that is better matched to their abilities. This addresses a specific criticism in the 1996 report.
64. Standards in reading, by the end of Year 2 are above the national average with a high proportion of pupils achieving well. Pupils are particularly good at reading with lively expression. They produce, for example, gruff or mournful voices at just the right point in the

text. They know about non-fiction books, how to find them on the library shelves and are quite determined to explain what a glossary does. Standards in writing are closer to the national average. Most pupils are competent at putting their thoughts accurately down on paper, but are not achieving all the elements of composition that would put them securely into higher levels of attainment. Standards in speaking are above average. Most pupils talk articulately, but a small proportion has limited speech skills. Standards of listening are above average. Virtually all pupils pay good attention in class, sometimes for long periods. They take in and act upon information and instructions. Pupils with special educational needs have a shorter concentration span, but they also listen attentively and want to make the best use of the information they receive.

65. Progress in reading is good, often very good. Pupils respond well to the structure of good teaching of basic skills. Teachers are particularly good at building upon previous learning and creating vibrant opportunities for pupils to capture the feeling as well as the meaning of the text. An effective strategy is to check frequently that pupils understand the meaning of even basic words. A good balance is achieved between fiction and non-fiction text. Year 1 pupils express as much excitement about the travelling arrangements of snails as they do in the ending of "The Snow Lambs". Year 2 pupils develop phonic skills further and increase their list of words known by sight. Most become adept at working out new, longer words from their own knowledge. A few pupils are already beginning to look critically at the style of favourite authors.
66. The school analyses test results carefully, and has adjusted the curriculum to counter the gaps found. The inspection findings confirm the school's opinion that standards in writing, although sound, are relatively weaker than pupils' general attainments. Teachers use effective strategies to teach basic skills. However, they do not have sufficiently consistently high expectations of pupils' use of their developing writing skills in all their work. For example, teachers use an effective method of developing handwriting using specific practice lessons. These create a creditable above average style and control in the Year 2 practice books. However, this high quality of script is not sufficiently demanded and therefore does not carry over into normal bookwork. Good methods are used to teach correct spellings but too little emphasis is placed on the correctness of spelling when pupils are using these words. Teachers usually provide pupils with useful vocabulary lists to guide their expression of ideas, and pupils do refer to these. However, when pupils are asked to use new words and more adventurous language, a thesaurus is not available for them to explore possibilities.
67. During literacy hour introductions, teachers get pupils fired up and fully enthusiastic to start quickly on their independent tasks. These are useful but very technical exercises, practising important skills and improving pupils' writing skills. Some good examples occur of literacy used to support other subjects such as evaluations in technology and experiments in science. The application of writing in other topic areas, however, is limited. Teachers do not find sufficient imaginative applications for some of the wider range of writing, such as to instruct, amuse or persuade. Pupils are not, therefore, sufficiently challenged to write in ways that will allow them to apply and practise their skills. The literacy hour structure does not give long time slots for extended writing so the school has created space on the timetable for this. However, teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on teaching compositional skills, such as planning, settings, storyboards, characterisation and imagery.
68. Pupils make good progress in listening through a range of interesting opportunities. The teachers' good management and voice technique encourage pupils to pay attention, and good question and answer skills make them active listeners. Tapes of stories and headsets are in frequent use to develop pupils' ability to concentrate silently. In "planning" sessions pupils learn to listen effectively to each other's viewpoints and to negotiate meaning. Pupils make good progress in speaking. Good learning opportunities exist in lessons for pupils to answer questions, to discuss and plan together in pairs and groups, and to explain their

ideas, for instance when describing their own number strategies in numeracy. They grow in competence year by year, not least in the dramatic arts where pupils enthral their audience of parents and the wider community three times a year. A few pupils, often those with special educational needs, find difficulty in making clear sounds and recognisable words. Teachers use well-detailed strategies such as 'now say the whole sentence' to good effect in reception, or 'make the vowel sounds with small mouth movements' in Year 1 to develop pronunciation that is more precise.

69. Good co-ordination has ensured the good implementation of the literacy strategy, effective use of classroom time and appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils. Teachers use a strong package of assessments keep them in touch with pupils' progress, enabling them to make informed decisions about grouping, planning future work, targets and organising the curriculum. The assessments which teachers made of pupils' attainment were close to their actual performance in the standard tests. Teachers show clear objectives in their lesson plans. However, in the very small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, the lesson planning did not show exactly what pupils would know, understand and be able to do at the end of the lesson, and how the activities would promote progress. Teachers use the good literacy resources effectively, with good selection of big books and group readers, and accurate placement of pupils on their reading levels. No home-school record books were seen in use. The teachers' reading record books are particularly detailed giving an accurate picture of pupils' reading profile and attitudes, to use in planning further steps to progress.

## **MATHEMATICS**

70. The results of the National Curriculum tests in 1999 at Key Stage 1 show attainment to be in line with the national average for all schools. It is well above that found in similar schools with a significant proportion of pupils achieving higher levels. Trends over the previous four years have suggested a gradual decline in performance from 1997 when results were very high. However, these falls were primarily related to the different attainments of the cohorts of pupils involved. The initial National Curriculum test results in 2000 show a substantial improvement with some very high attainment. Substantial numbers of pupils are achieving at higher levels, successfully addressing the weakness outlined in the last inspection report. These results are generally confirmed by the inspection. These levels of attainment are a clear improvement from those found at the time of the last inspection. Indications through the school suggest that the current Year 2 is particularly strong but standards in the reception class are also high.
71. Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is well above the national average with many pupils achieving at higher levels. Teachers' emphasis on developing pupils' mental arithmetic skills is having a beneficial effect on pupils' overall mathematical achievement. All pupils use and apply their developing numeracy skills effectively in a wide range of appropriate problems. Consequently, pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of mathematics. By the end of Year 2, they have good knowledge of number bonds and are accurate in their computations. They show real confidence when using a good variety of mental strategies to make calculations. For example, pupils correctly identify the number operations required to solve problems and they explain their working well. They have good knowledge of mathematical terms and use them correctly in their explanations. Pupils are familiar with the measurement of time and length and apply this knowledge to appropriate problems. They know the properties of two- and some three-dimensional shapes and display data in a variety of ways including block and line graphs and pie charts. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are appropriately supported to achieve standards that are in line with their capabilities.
72. The quality of teaching is good with some examples of very good teaching observed during the inspection. Pupils learn well, because of the teachers' good quality planning. The good levels of teamwork in the school enhance the quality of teaching. Teachers plan lessons

together making good use of their knowledge and understanding. There is very effective use of all support staff to further promote the learning of individuals and groups of pupils. Activities take good account of the different abilities within classes. This enables pupils to engage in appropriately challenging work. Teachers make good use of their informal assessments of pupils' gains in learning. When necessary, they make well-judged adjustments in their lessons. These ensure that pupils are able to achieve the learning that has been planned for them. Teachers often share with pupils what they intend to achieve in lessons. This helps pupils to begin to judge their own progress and to appreciate the learning that they have made.

73. Teachers make effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy guidelines. They consistently provide work that extends pupils' understanding and experience. In these activities, pupils apply their developing skills effectively. Little time is wasted, for example, in the over-practising of known number operations. Pupils make very good progress in their ability to make mental calculations as teachers provide them with the skills and opportunities to practise them. Year 1 pupils, for example, use their increasing range of known addition facts. They describe how they will combine numbers together to make their additions easier. Teachers' questioning skills are effective and they use these skills to promote pace within their lessons. Year 2 pupils are effectively challenged, for example, to use numbers up to 1000 in mental calculations. Teachers address questions at appropriate levels to make suitable demands upon pupils of all levels of attainment. Pupils' learning is considerably enhanced by the interest generated by their teachers through the work provided and the very good relationships that have been established at all levels.
74. Pupils have good attitudes to mathematics lessons. They concentrate hard on what teachers have to say and follow instructions well. They think carefully and are keen to answer questions. Pupils listen carefully to other pupils' answers and show interest and enthusiasm when they make significant achievements. Some Year 2 pupils, for example, spontaneously applaud when a lower-attaining pupil answers his question correctly. Pupils follow the well-established classroom routines well, taking good care of property and other resources. They identify what they need and collect their materials sensibly. Their behaviour is good at all times and they work together well.

## **SCIENCE**

75. The 1999 National Curriculum teacher assessments for seven-year-olds showed overall attainment below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher Level 3 was above average. A weakness shown in these assessments was pupils' understanding of physical processes. Inspection evidence indicates that there has been a considerable improvement in standards with the present Year 2 pupils, who now have above average attainment. However, the weakness remains in pupils' understanding of physical processes.
76. Teachers' good subject knowledge has led to clear improvements in pupils' investigation work. By the age of seven, pupils have a good understanding of a fair test and use this well in experiments, such as when they find out what effect heat has on different materials. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things. They know what foods must be eaten to keep healthy and are developing a particularly good knowledge of the functions of different parts of a plant. Teachers are very effective at questioning pupils' observations and encouraging them to use their own experiences. For example, when asked if the cress they had grown would die if left in a dark place, one pupil replied "No, because plants don't die at night-time". There is good use made of pupils' research skills when they find information for the books they are writing on different animals. In the area of physical processes, pupils carry out fair tests, for example, to roll objects down a slope. They are accurate in measuring and analysing the effect of different surfaces on the distance travelled. However, a significant minority is unclear about the

forces of gravity and the effect of friction in their investigations.

77. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the world in reception classes and this is built on well by the teachers in Year 1. Pupils have particularly good knowledge of mini-beasts, which have been a focus of pupils' work this term. Pupils' understanding is enhanced by good quality displays that require pupils to handle materials and think, reinforcing their learning. Pupils make particularly good progress in their own personal learning when they have to find answers to questions which they themselves have raised. During the inspection, some very good work was seen when a teacher worked with a group of pupils studying snails. Very good questioning by the teacher encouraged pupils to put forward their own hypotheses. For example, one pupil, on observing a stationery snail, suggested that "Snails need a rest after they have made the slime".
78. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with one lesson observed being very good. Teachers' planning clearly identifies what pupils are to learn in the lesson. Where learning is most successful, such as in Year 1, these objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. This results in pupils focusing well and working hard towards achieving these goals. Pupils' attitudes to science are good and sometimes very good. Pupils enjoy practical investigations, collaborate well and build well on each other's suggestions. Pupils are attentive, listen and relate well to their teachers. Behaviour in lessons is generally good and very good when pupils are totally involved in their practical work. However, in one Year 2 class, pupils' concentration waned and their work output declined when they were not given a fixed time in which to finish their work. Pupils are encouraged to record their results in a variety of ways but teachers do not have consistently high standards of presentation. The quality of some of the older pupils' diagrams and writing is untidy and does not clearly show their good level of understanding.
79. The regular assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject through investigations, is a good initiative. It gives teachers a clear understanding of what pupils' know and how quickly they are learning. These assessments are now set by the science subject leader and are more clearly focused on pupils' recent learning. Opportunities are missed to assess the older pupils' understanding by not asking them to use their scientific knowledge to explain the findings of their investigation. For example, Year 2 pupils discovered that a car travelled further down a ramp than a cardboard roll but were not asked to explain the reason for this. Teachers' questioning and use of their subject knowledge is most effective when challenging pupils' thinking and is a principal reason for the significant number of pupils who are achieving at the higher level. Teachers use the resources well in pupils' investigations and for setting up good quality displays in the classroom. The science curriculum is well organised and clearly states what pupils are to learn each term. However, some of the targets in the Year 2 scheme of work are not specific enough. They do not ensure that teachers' planning is accurately focused on systematically developing pupils' skills. As a result, pupils are not fully challenged across the whole curriculum.

## **ART**

80. No art lessons were seen because of the adjusted timetable to accommodate the National Curriculum standard tests for Year 2. However, the school's provision for art has improved since the previous inspection. Long term planning shows a clearer sequence of steps by which pupils will learn. Greater focus on media and techniques gives pupils a valuable repertoire of skills to use in future work. Tasks such as observational drawing and the use of the computer for artwork provide pupils with a wider range of experience. A stronger emphasis on the study of the work of other artists, including Seurat and Modigliani provides more opportunities for pupils to reflect on style and feeling. This is a sound part of pupils' investigation into creative media, and does not detract from the development of their own imagination. By the end of Year 2, pupils are achieving at least the level of skill and

knowledge expected for their age.

81. Pupils make good progress through the school. For example, their clay work grows in difficulty each year, from the simple playdough experience in the first few weeks of the reception class to lifelike snails in Year 1 and complex designs in clay tablets in Year 2. Reception pupils do simple colour mixing at first. By Year 1, this has become a study of primary colours and palettes of pastel mixing. The oldest pupils go on to look at secondary and tertiary colours. This suggests that teachers provide many well-planned opportunities for pupils. Teachers have worked hard to display the artwork well, guided by the requirements of the display policy. They value pupils' efforts show their enthusiasm clearly to pupils. Pupils, in turn, have good levels of pride in their work. Pupils are involved in the decisions of how to display their work. This is a valuable experience that allows them not only to reflect on each other's work, but also to develop a sense of composition and proportion.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

82. No lessons were observed during the period of the inspection. Teachers' planning, pupils' past work and discussions with pupils show that provision for design and technology has improved since the previous inspection. Planning indicates that teachers have sought to give pupils the full range of technology experience including structures, simple mechanical vehicles and work with textiles and food. By the end of Year 2, pupils are achieving appropriately for their age.
83. Pupils' work is displayed in an attractive form in several classrooms. The displays indicate that teachers plan topics well. The design and making of finished products have good relevance to other areas of the curriculum. For example, a lively collection of weaving frames links pupils' technical ideas of warp and weft to the science of materials and the history of clothing. Teachers introduce pupils to the full process of design. Reception pupils study a variety of joining techniques in the 'tube to the wall' project, and show that they can plan designs in the effective blue lorry display. These skills are used and carried further each year. Year 1 pupils add labels to their designs and write short evaluations of their work. By Year 2, their designs have become more complex and the materials and techniques more demanding. In evaluations of their own and others' work, pupils write how the products, such as the sunglasses, must be fit for the purpose, as well as looking elegant. This is good use of literacy and reflects sound progress in all aspects of design and technology.
84. The quality of finish of the work demonstrates both the care which pupils take and their positive attitude to this subject. The older pupils can explain clearly how the items were planned and constructed. Although pupils use their developing numeracy and information technology skills, these are not formally planned into design projects. Teachers do not have the guidance of a coherent, ordered scheme of work, to support their planning. However, the co-ordinator is developing a new scheme, to include a simple system for tracking pupils' progress.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

85. During the inspection, no teaching of history and geography was observed due to the organisation of the curriculum. Judgements are based on discussions with pupils and analysis of pupils' work and the school's displays. Based on the available evidence, by the age of seven, pupils are achieving appropriately in these two subjects. During the last inspection, no judgement was made on pupils' progress. Teachers make good use of educational visits and of visitors to the school. This was particularly effective for younger pupils last year when grandparents, past pupils and staff members talked about their life in the school as part of the school's centenary celebrations. The interesting and carefully

planned curriculum helps pupils enjoy both these subjects.

86. In geography, there is a consistent emphasis on the development of pupils' map skills, which results in a good understanding of different types of maps. Year 2 pupils have a particularly good understanding of maps that show the local area. Several of the pupils in school have travelled outside Europe and good use is made of these pupils' knowledge in lessons. This was particularly the case in a Year 1 class where the migration route of swallows from South Africa to England was followed. Pupils had the opportunity to talk about countries on this route that they had visited. Teachers' careful choice of storybooks introduces pupils to other countries where the climate and lifestyles are compared with their own locality.
87. In history, pupils have a good understanding of the past and an increasing understanding of chronology. For Year 2 pupils, this is enhanced by their own personal time line. History resources have been improved since the last inspection and teachers make good use of artefacts loaned by parents to develop pupils' understanding of times gone by. Year 1 pupils, in their topic on "Keeping Clean", contrasted kitchens, bathrooms and toilets of the past with the present day. Pupils were fascinated by some of the kitchen utensils and particularly the Victorian irons, which were the focus of some careful observational drawings. There are also some good links with information technology when pupils' sketches are put into context by a sentence written on the computer. Year 2 pupils use their literacy skills well when they write about their feelings on a child's life in a Victorian school. They show good empathy with pupils in the harsh punishments and in the ridiculing of the children who had to wear a dunce's hat.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

88. Provision for information technology has improved significantly since it was a key issue in the previous inspection report. The standards of achievement by pupils at the end of Year 2 are in line with those expected for their age. Pupils are now particularly good at word processing, found to be absent in the previous inspection. Most pupils control the mouse competently and use the keyboard at an appropriate rate. They enter their text appropriately and use basic editing techniques soundly to correct their work. They use a database program to store and analyse the results of science experiments, for instance the effect of friction on the speed of toy cars. They are not as good at controlling programmable devices.
89. Pupils make sound progress in response to an effective range of learning opportunities planned by teachers. No observations of direct teaching occurred during the period of the inspection, but many pupils in each year were seen while using the computer. Teachers use the sound strategy of introducing a new skill or piece of software to the whole class, then giving pupils in turn the time to practice, during the days following. Pupils approach the tasks confidently and clearly listen attentively to instructions. They use the various resources provided by the teachers, such as instruction cards, prompt sheets and assignments as good supports to their learning. A printed rota ensures equal opportunity by allowing the teacher to check who has had their turn, and which skills have been covered. Teachers are particularly good at planning activities that support learning in other subjects. So that at the same time as learning new editing techniques, Year 2 pupils also improve their spelling and punctuation. Year 1 pupils speed up their keyboard familiarity through activities that reinforce their knowledge of the drinking habits of snails.
90. Teachers' medium term planning charts the steps by which the pupils' skills and knowledge is to proceed. It also indicates the increased expertise and confidence of the teachers since previous inspection because of a determined programme of in-service training. Teachers are guided effectively by the school's comprehensive new scheme of work, and effectively supported in technical matters by the co-ordinators. Teachers have succeeded in including all relevant strands in their planning, thereby giving pupils a wide range of experience.



Teachers are not as good at ensuring that the classroom computers are fully used through the day. This restricts pupils' access to the equipment, the topics that can be covered and the progress that can be made.

## **MUSIC**

91. No music lessons were seen during the inspection due to the arrangements of the timetables. However, the school makes satisfactory provision for the development of the subject and pupils make appropriate progress. Although the school has no music specialist, good use is made of the skills of parents and the junior school. For example, junior school pupils play instruments in some infant school assemblies. Pupils have opportunities to sing and play simple percussion instruments as a part of their normal classroom activities. Some teachers make good efforts to integrate songs and musical appreciation into their day. Music topics are appropriately included in the school's overall curriculum plan. Effective use is made of assembly times to give pupils good opportunities to listen to music. Pupils' listening is attentive and many give good interpretations of the music they have heard.
92. The school places great emphasis on developing music skills through involving pupils in performances. These include instrumental music and songs and take place each term so that all pupils are involved annually. Much of pupils' concentrated music work takes place in blocks leading up to these performances. Video of past productions shows that the quality of singing is often good. Some confident solo performances by a number of pupils enhance the quality of these productions. Parents are particularly appreciative of these.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

93. Pupils make appropriate gains in skills and knowledge through the school, in line with the findings of the last inspection. Only observation of gymnastics lessons was possible during the inspection. Teachers' planning and the school's curriculum framework show that the school makes satisfactory provision in other aspects of the subject.
94. Pupils in the reception classes move appropriately in the hall, following instructions well. They develop new skills of jumping and landing, making good progress in learning to control their landings. Most pupils show good levels of confidence when working with apparatus. Many pupils apply their developing understanding of types of shape to their use of apparatus. Older pupils move sensibly around the more demanding apparatus, making different types of movement at low and high levels. Pupils have appropriate opportunities to use the limited outside space for team games and associated skills.
95. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers establish clear routines to ensure the safety of pupils in lessons and these reduce time lost in moving around the school. Good pace is generally maintained in lessons through clear instructions and appropriate time targets. Teachers are enthusiastic and this is conveyed well to pupils. As a result, pupils take part with good levels of involvement and generally give of their best. Pupils take turns and share well. They are supportive of each other and quick to recognise others' skills. Teachers make effective use of pupils' good performances in showing pupils what they want them to do. Sometimes, however, this restricts the amount of imagination that pupils put into their work as they simply copy the example work. In some lessons, apparatus is set out before the lesson begins. This restricts the space available for pupils to move in the earlier sections of the lesson. Although pupils generally adapt well to this, the quality of their performances is sometimes reduced.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

96. No judgement was made at the last inspection on the standards in religious education. During this inspection, discussions with pupils about their work and the observation of lessons show that, by the age of seven, pupils' attainment is in line with expectations laid down in the locally Agreed Syllabus.
97. The school's curriculum is divided up into half termly units of work that are closely linked to the individual year's topic, assembly themes and circle time. In this way, pupils' learning is well integrated into the daily curriculum. By the age of seven, pupils have a good understanding of Christian beliefs and values as well as knowledge of some other world faiths. Pupils understand the differences between the Old and New Testaments and higher-achieving pupils show a very good knowledge of some Bible stories. Knowledge and understanding of religious practices, such as prayer and worship in Christianity are compared and contrasted well with that of other world faiths such as Islam. Pupils understand the significance of Church buildings and are aware of the importance of the position of these buildings. For example, they know that Christian churches face east, whilst Islamic mosques face Mecca.
98. Circle time makes a significant contribution to the religious education teaching of the school. It is well planned and sensitively led by teachers, allowing pupils to explore issues, which are important and pertinent to them. Year 2 pupils, for example, share experiences and feelings about the importance of prayer. Pupils' understanding of other faiths is enhanced when their peers in the class talked about the significance of prayer to them as non-Christians. Teachers have very good skills in giving pupils confidence to talk openly about their experiences, as for example when Year 1 pupils describe occasions that are special to them. This boosts the self-esteem of the pupils and successfully develops relationships between the pupils and gives a feeling of class identity. Pupils particularly enjoy these lessons; they listen and concentrate well and are keen to share their ideas with the class.
99. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well prepared and the pupils are told clearly what they will learn. Good opportunities are made for questioning, which enables pupils to reflect and clarify their understanding. There are good relationships with local church leaders who make valuable contributions to the development of pupils' deeper understanding. Assemblies are carefully planned to complement pupils' learning. During the inspection, a parent talked to the pupils in assembly about the Qur'an, what it meant to her and how she looked after it. The Qur'an was compared with the school's own Bible and how it was used and looked after. A good range of commercial videos further enhances pupils' knowledge of different faiths.