

INSPECTION REPORT

CLEE HILL COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Clee Hill, Ludlow

LEA area: Shropshire

Unique reference number: 123360

Headteacher: Miss M. Hammond

Reporting inspector: Hugh Protherough
8339

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th February 2000

Inspection number: 189710

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 – 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Clee Hill Ludlow Shropshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Mary Wiltshire
Date of previous inspection:	7 th – 10 th October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Hugh Protherough	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it?
		Science	How high are standards?
		Information technology	How well are pupils taught?
		Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
		Equal Opportunities	What should the school do to improve further?
Meg Hackney	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?
Beryl Rimmer	Team inspector	Under fives	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Special educational needs	
		English	
		Art	
		Design and technology	
		Geography	
		History	
		Music	
		Religious education	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	28
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This small village primary school, the highest in Shropshire, has 84 pupils of predominantly white ethnicity on its roll. There are currently ten more boys than girls, which leads to some gender imbalance, particularly in Years 1 and 6. The school serves the village of Clee Hill and surrounding settlements. The headteacher and her deputy have, between them, worked at the school for sixty years. However, recent staff departures have led to the appointment of two new teachers, one of whom is newly qualified. The area is isolated, socially diverse and includes significant signs of rural deprivation as suggested by the evidence of the last census return. Most pupils come from either privately owned terraced and semi-detached houses or from local housing association properties. A significant minority speaks using a strong local dialect. Eleven per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is lower than the national average. The school's baseline assessment shows that the attainment of the pupils on entry reflects the full ability range, but is weighted towards the lower end. About a third of the pupils are on the school's register for special educational needs and this includes one pupil with a statement of special educational need. Children start school at the start of the term in which they become five. At the time of the inspection, there were eight pupils in their Reception year. Of these, four were under the age of five. They are taught in a class with thirteen Year 1 pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Although current standards are low, the general improvement of pupils' achievements has been faster than the national trend. This reflects the considerable improvements made in the quality of teaching since the time of the last inspection. The leadership is beginning to monitor both the quality of education and the results of each cohort of pupils in increasing depth. It is using this resulting information not only to set appropriate targets, but also to determine the priorities of the school development plan. However, some areas identified for improvement, such as information technology, have not moved forward quickly enough because the school lacks coherent systems for evaluating the progress of the plan. Similarly, although the governors have made shrewd use of their reserves by putting an extra teacher into Years 5 and 6 they are carrying forward too much money at time when other aspects of the school's provision, such as the curriculum for children under five, would benefit from further investment. These weaknesses, linked with the high cost of educating pupils at the school, mean that the school offers unsatisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school is a friendly and welcoming community. It has a strong ethos that emphasises care, consideration for others and the importance of doing one's best.
- The new staff team is working together effectively. There is a strong commitment to the school aims and a determination to raise standards.
- The quality of teaching is good because lessons are planned thoroughly and tasks matched carefully to the interests and abilities of the pupils.
- Although standards in English and mathematics are below average, the overall trend of improvement in the results achieved by the pupils is faster than that found nationally.
- The children's behaviour is very good. They are polite and courteous to their teachers, other adults and visitors. They work enthusiastically in lessons.
- The teachers provide good role models for the pupils, which encourages their moral and social development.
- Attendance is well above average and the school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are strong.

What could be improved

- The governing body does not make effective use of all of the financial resources at its disposal for the benefit of pupils currently at the school.
- The quality of provision for teaching ICT and the standards achieved by the pupils continue to be unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum for the children under the age of five does not include enough regular, frequent opportunities for their creative and physical development.
- The governing body does not check the progress of the school development plan in sufficient detail.
- The school lacks consistent approaches to recording the good knowledge that teachers build up about each pupil from day to day. As a result, the annual progress reports to parents lack sufficient detail about what the children know, can do and understand.

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 and subsequently has made steady improvement. Since then, for instance, the rate of improvement in the results achieved by pupils in the national tests has exceeded the national trend. Current standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are lower than those described at the time of the last inspection, but it is clear that these pupils have all made satisfactory progress in their work since taking their tests at the end of Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching is much more consistent than at the time of the last inspection. The quality of pupils' work in design and technology is much better, but standards in information technology continue to be unsatisfactory because the teaching arrangements inadequate.

The leadership now produces a school development plan that contains much more detail. This has been helpful in setting a clear timetable for action. However, the current arrangements for reviewing the progress of the plan lack rigour. Appropriate arrangements have been made to ensure that teacher appraisal is carried out regularly, and that this relates to the job descriptions provided for each member of staff.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	E	E	E*	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	A	B	B	B	
science	C	C	C	D	

The table suggests that standards in mathematics are much stronger than they are in English. Standards in mathematics are above average when compared both with the results nationally and those achieved by pupils in similar schools, but in English they are well below the national average and in the lowest five per cent when compared with the results of pupils from similar schools. Although standards in science are broadly in line with the national average, they are also lower than those of pupils in similar schools. Each year's results are liable to considerable fluctuation because the cohorts are normally much less than twenty and have a larger than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Taking the results of the last four years overall, it is clear that standards at the school have been improving at a rate faster than the national trend. The inspection findings confirm that a significant minority of pupils has difficulties with speaking Standard English, and in particular, with writing, but that all are making steady improvements in their work. This year the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in English and mathematics is below average. The pupils' achievements in science continue to be broadly in line with the national average. Although the current school targets for English and mathematics appear low in relation to national aspirations, they are nonetheless challenging and realistic for these pupils.

The quality of pupils' work in religious education is in line with the levels set out in the locally agreed syllabus. However, their standard of work in information technology continues to be below average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The pupils are keen and eager to come to school. They work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The pupils are very well behaved. They are polite and considerate to each other, their teachers and visitors to the school.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are positive throughout the school. The pupils willingly accept responsibility at work and play.
Attendance	Very good. The latest figures are well above the national average.

The children enjoy school. They work hard at their lessons and appreciate the support of their teachers who encourage them to improve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of the teaching is much improved since the time of the last inspection when more than one in ten lessons were unsatisfactory with some significant weaknesses identified in Key Stage 2. The teaching is now far more consistent. More than two thirds of lessons observed during the inspection were of good quality and almost all of the remainder were satisfactory. Nine per cent of lessons were very good and these were all at the upper end of Key Stage 2. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson [3 per cent] observed. This was in religious education in Key Stage 1. Thus ninety seven per cent of lessons were either satisfactory or better.

The major strength of the teaching lies in the successful introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. In these lessons, the teachers' objectives for learning are very clear and the work is well matched to the broad range of abilities found within each class. The weakness is that many teachers lack a secure understanding of how to teach information technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school's curriculum reflects the national priorities for literacy and numeracy, but the arrangements for teaching information technology are unsatisfactory. The physical and creative curricula for pupils under five also have some shortcomings.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The pupils receive appropriate support and make steady progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes good provision for the pupils' social, moral and cultural development. The provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory. The teachers' own modelling of positive attitudes and behaviour successfully promotes the moral and social development of the pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has put in place appropriate procedures to ensure the health, safety and security of its pupils, but lacks consistent approaches to the recording of the teachers' informal assessments of the pupils' progress.

Although the school's curriculum is generally well considered, the requirements for teaching information technology are still not yet fully in place. The physical and creative aspects of the curriculum for pupils under the age of five also require improvement. The school successfully promotes opportunities for regular informal contact with parents, but information about the curriculum is inadequate and the annual reports of pupils' progress lack sufficient detail. The weakness in these reports is in part due to the lack of agreed systems for recording the teachers' informal assessments of the pupils' work. In all other respects, the school provides good levels of care for its pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and her deputy provide sound leadership in the way that they are monitoring standards and the quality of teaching. Their induction of the new teachers is generally effective. However, there are weaknesses in their use of the school's budget.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities with the exception of their annual report, which lacks a full financial statement identifying how the school's delegated budget was used in the previous year.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The leadership has a sound appreciation of many of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but the governors' systems for evaluating the progress of the school development plan lack rigour.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. The school does not make best use of the funds at its disposal for the benefit of the pupils currently at the school. A sum equivalent to almost a quarter of the annual budget is held in reserve.

The headteacher, staff and governors have developed a strong, caring ethos that emphasises the importance of doing one's best. However, the systems for evaluating the progress of school development are haphazard and do not always make a clear link between the resources available, the way they are spent and the standards achieved by the pupils. The school is not yet applying best value principles in a consistent fashion to all aspects of its work. The school sustains good staffing levels. There is effective use of a part-time teacher to support literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6, but the lack of more regular adult help in the Reception/Year 1 class is a weakness. The accommodation is of very good quality and very well maintained. The resources are generally adequate, although those for information technology need to be used more regularly.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy coming to school. • The teachers expect the children to work hard and to do their best. • The children are polite and well behaved. • The teachers are good at their job. They make learning interesting and this helps the children to make good progress in their work. • The school provides plenty of opportunities for the children to take responsibility and develop a mature approach to life. • The good range of social events provided by the school each year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a quarter of those who returned their questionnaires feel that the school does not work closely with parents. • A significant number of parents say that they do not receive sufficient, good quality information about how their children are getting on at school. • Many parents would like to see a wider range of interesting activities offered to pupils at the end of the school day.

The inspection team met a large number of parents during the course of the inspection. Almost all of them expressed a positive view of the school, especially of the way that they can make informal contact at the start and end of each school day. For instance, many parents come in to read with their children every morning. However, the inspection team agrees with those parents who feel that the annual written progress reports lack detail and that one open evening each year is insufficient to enable a proper review of the pupils' progress. Similarly, the team agrees that the current range and scope of after school clubs and activities is very limited.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The results achieved by eleven-year olds in the national tests of 1999 show that standards in mathematics continue to be stronger than they are in English. Standards in mathematics are above average when compared both with the results nationally and those achieved by pupils in similar schools, but in English they are well below the national average and in the lowest five per cent when compared with the results of pupils from similar schools. Although standards in science are broadly in line with the national average, they are also lower than those of pupils in similar schools.
2. Each year's results are liable to considerable fluctuation because cohorts are normally have fewer than twenty pupils and include a larger than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Taking the results of the last four years overall, it is clear that standards at the school have been improving at a rate faster than the national trend. The inspection findings show that a significant minority of pupils has difficulties with speaking, and in particular, with writing, but that all are making steady improvements in their work. This year the proportions of pupils achieving the expected levels in English and mathematics are below average. The pupils' achievements in science continue to be broadly in line with the national average. Although the current school targets for English and mathematics appear low in relation to national aspirations, they are nonetheless challenging and realistic for these pupils.
3. Analysis of the results of the Key Stage 1 tests in 1999 is based on a very small cohort of ten pupils. This indicates that standards of reading were well above average when compared with the national picture and with schools of a similar type, but their performance in writing was below average on both counts. The children's performance in mathematics and science was in line with the national average, but lower than the results achieved by pupils at similar schools. The current Year 2 is also very small and contains more than a third of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, in crude percentage terms, the proportion achieving the expected level in English and mathematics is below average. Nevertheless, all pupils are working hard and making steady progress whatever their level of prior attainment.
4. The school has been very aware that in the past the performance of the boys has not been as good as that of the girls, especially in writing. As a result, the teachers have been involved in a local authority project that seeks to analyse the reasons why this might be the case. Thus, during the inspection it was evident that the teachers are very careful to ensure that they encourage both boys and girls to respond during discussion and that activities such as using computers and putting away heavy equipment are not the exclusive domain of just one gender group. Although the small size of each cohort makes the significance of the statistics unreliable, it is worth pointing out that all the Year 2 boys taking last year's tests for seven-year olds achieved the expected levels. Similarly, at the end of Key Stage 2, boys and girls achieved similar results except in mathematics where three more girls than boys reached the expected level. In the current Year 6, one higher attaining boy is already comfortably achieving standards well beyond the level expected. The teachers are working effectively to ensure that boys and girls make sufficient progress in their work.
5. The ability of the pupils on entry is generally below average. Many children enter the school with low levels of language development and this affects adversely their achievements in some of the other areas of learning. Consequently, few children reach the targets set within the foundation

curriculum for pupils under the age of five. The teaching in this class is satisfactory and helps the children to make steady progress in acquiring the key skills of literacy and numeracy. However, the lack of regular, trained classroom support limits the frequency with which the children can be encouraged to talk and interact with adults. Similarly, this also restricts the opportunities these youngest children have to practice their physical and creative skills.

6. Although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in English and mathematics is below average at the end of both key stages, these figures mask some steady progress and solid achievements. The school's adoption of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact. The youngest pupils sometimes struggle to sit still and listen, but by the time they are five most are improving in their concentration. It is evident that in this class many Year 1 children are deriving great enjoyment from books and are beginning to recognise simple words and phrases in print. By the end of Key Stage 2, although a significant number are reluctant readers, the majority is reading with increasing confidence and expression in direct response to the enthusiasm and high expectations of the teacher.
7. A similar picture emerges when analysing the pupils' writing. There are many examples of effective personal accounts of trips and visits, stories and poems and writing about experiments in science. However, the same minority struggles to express itself when writing. Part of the problem relates to the local dialect, which although attractive to listen to, has a structure that conflicts with Standard English. Many of the children who struggle with writing have difficulty in transferring their thoughts into a form that makes sense to the reader and obeys the conventions of grammar.
8. The pupils' work in mathematics also shows steady progress with several of the higher attaining pupils working beyond the levels expected of seven and eleven year olds. It is clear from their positive response that most children thoroughly enjoy activities such as the mental mathematics warm-up at the start of each numeracy hour. They appreciate the teachers' effective use of wall charts and digit cards that are helping them to discover pattern and logic within number. A further strength of the teaching is the way that many lessons encourage the pupils to practice mathematical skills in other subjects. For example the oldest pupils measure length and time with confidence as part of their work on sound. However, throughout the school there remains a significant minority that struggles with the subject. For instance, many pupils in the lower Year 5/6 mathematics set find it difficult to solve simple mathematics problems when the question is presented within a written text even though they can carry out the required calculation when they see it as a sum.
9. The pupils' work in science reveals a sound coverage of the National Curriculum. It is evident from talking with pupils from Year 2 that many have a particularly good grasp of natural phenomena such as the growth of plants and animals brought about by the teachers' regular use of the school grounds and local countryside. By the age of eleven, about three-quarters are confident in devising tests for more abstract concepts, for example to find out which material is the best for "muffling" sound.
10. The teaching of information technology was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and remains a major weakness of the school. Although there have been some improvements in the quality of resources and equipment available to the pupils, much of this has been purchased only recently. Similarly, the school has adopted a curriculum framework that, when in full operation, should begin to ensure the proper development of the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject. However, this programme has only recently been put into practice, and at the moment pupils' achievements in information technology generally remain beneath the expected levels at the end of both key stages. **This remains a key issue for action.**

11. The standards of the pupils' achievements in religious education are in line with those described in the locally agreed syllabus. The pupils are aware of the importance of religious beliefs and respect those of others.
12. The standard and quality of the work seen in art, design and technology, music, geography, history and physical education is in line with levels expected at the end of both key stages.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Throughout the school, the pupils have a good attitude towards learning and their behaviour is very good. This continues to be a strong feature of the school. The pupils are keen and eager to come to school and they show interest and concentrate well on the tasks in hand. The school is an orderly environment where there is an emphasis on caring for each other. The pupils in both key stages, including those with special educational needs, listen well to their teachers and contribute willingly. Most work well independently, and they are co-operative and constructive when working in small groups and with partners. During an art lesson, for example pupils in Years 3 & 4 pupils were observed working well in a small group creating a collage of a Roman soldier. Most pupils behave very sensibly when working without direct supervision on the computers in the general-purpose areas during lunchtimes. They are very friendly and courteous to visitors, and the respect they show for other people and property results in a very well maintained, pleasant and clean environment. The pupils take pride in their school and its scenically spectacular location, and there is no evidence of either litter or vandalism. There have been no exclusions during the last academic year.
14. Relationships between pupils and their teachers and between the pupils themselves are good. Through the consistent approach towards good behaviour, the clearly defined behaviour policy and the high expectations of staff, the pupils have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong. During lessons, pupils in all classes share resources willingly and sensibly, and they are tolerant of each other, showing a mature and growing understanding of different viewpoints. When given the opportunity to take responsibility, they do so willingly. For instance, they were observed confidently acting as door monitors, playing the recorded music during assembly and being generally helpful in classrooms.
15. The personal development of the pupils is good, and they have the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of visits to places of educational interest such as London, local museums, Ludlow Theatre and Hereford Cathedral. Through the police initiative, "Crucial Crew", the pupils in Year 6 are made aware of the dangers of the misuse of alcohol and drugs. The pupils take part in concerts, and they visit the elderly in the local community. Their personal development has been well extended by the assertive behaviour programme, and most understand the importance of looking after themselves.
16. Attendance is very good at 98.2 per cent and there is no unauthorised absence. The pupils are punctual and lessons start on time, which has a very positive effect on their progress and personal development.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is much improved since the time of the last inspection when more than one in ten lessons were unsatisfactory with some significant weaknesses identified in Key Stage 2. The teaching is now far more consistent. More than two thirds of lessons observed during the inspection were of good quality and almost all of the remainder was satisfactory. One in ten

lessons were very good and these were all at the upper end of Key Stage 2. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson observed in religious education in Key Stage 1.

18. The major strength of the teaching lies in the school's enthusiastic and effective adoption of the national strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. All the teachers have a secure knowledge of mathematics and Standard English. They have benefited from good quality training that has helped them become familiar with the content of the schemes. However, the most significant development has been the way that teachers have improved the quality of their planning. Throughout the school, the teachers' lesson plans are now much more precise about what they expect the pupils to learn during each lesson. In some classes these objectives are also written on the board so that the pupils are reminded of the key points of the lesson. This helps them to understand the focus of the lesson and frequently has a positive impact upon their rate of learning.
19. Although standards at the school are low all teachers have high expectations of their pupils. The ethos of all classrooms emphasises the need for pupils to "do their best" regardless of ability. As a result, an industrious atmosphere typifies most lessons where pupils apply themselves diligently to their work. The quality of presentation in exercise books is generally good, especially in Key Stage 2 because the teachers insist that the work is laid out neatly. The effective teaching of these fundamental skills helps the pupils to take pride in their work. A particular strength lies in the way that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are encouraged to write key mathematical rules or learning points in red so that they can be used for revision at the time of the national tests.
20. Another reason why the pupils work hard is because the teachers are now much better at matching tasks to their individual abilities and needs, particularly in English and mathematics. The oldest pupils are divided into two "sets" for these subjects which allows the higher attaining pupils to be properly extended whilst others, including many with special educational needs, receive the support they require. As a result, the pupils are making steady progress in their development of the key skills of literacy and numeracy.
21. The teachers' own enthusiasm and very good knowledge of their pupils are also used to good effect in setting a brisk pace to lessons. For instance, the mental maths warm-up sessions are often lively affairs in which the pupils' desire to succeed is effectively supported by the teachers' challenging questions and insistence that the pupils explain their answers. The teachers' approaches to talking to the pupils and the questions they are asked are strengths. This is because they are always careful to try to use technical language in a way that the children can understand. This is particularly important in this school where many of the pupils have poorly developed speaking skills and a limited range of vocabulary. The teachers make great efforts to extend the pupils' vocabulary at all times and as a result are steadily improving their pupils' ability to express themselves more clearly.
22. Much exciting learning takes place in many other subjects of the National Curriculum. For instance, the Year 5 and 6 class is devising a range of tests to find out the most effective way of muffling a source of sound such as an alarm clock. It is clear that the teacher is successful in developing the children's investigative skills because they have a good understanding of what makes a fair test. During the lesson, groups of pupils worked in different parts of the school, but maintained concentration throughout. They responded well to the lesson and reached successful conclusions because they were interested, wanted to test their ideas and were eager to share their findings with others.
23. The teachers are particularly skilled in helping the children to make effective links in their learning between different subjects. For instance, part of the work of Years 5 and 6 in

gymnastics required them to include symmetrical body shapes within a series of linked movements. This reinforced their previous work on symmetry in mathematics. Similarly, some of last term's work on "food" in Key Stage 1 helped the children to learn a little about healthy eating in science as well as finding out the geography of where different foods originate.

24. The teachers set appropriate amounts of homework on a regular basis, focussing particularly upon reading and mathematics. This is effective in supporting the school's efforts to raise standards.
25. There are few weaknesses in the teaching. However, although the teaching of the four children under five is satisfactory, the newly qualified teacher works alone in this mixed-age class for much of each week. She plans conscientiously using the nationally agreed Foundation Curriculum, but cannot always make full provision for the children's creative and physical development due to a lack of adequate classroom support. On those occasions where she works with the nursery nurse or a student helper her effective deployment of these additional adults enables more rapid learning to take place. This is because the quality of interaction with the pupils improves and their learning is explored in greater depth.
26. Most of the teachers have insufficient knowledge about information technology and its uses across the curriculum. The influx of new staff is having a positive impact in this area, but the proposed coverage of information technology curriculum is in its infancy. **This is a key issue for action.**
27. All teachers mark the children's work promptly. However, their approaches to this task are inconsistent. The strength of marking in Years 5 and 6 is that it is generally done alongside the child and the teacher tells the pupil how to improve. However, the absence of a written commentary is a weakness because the pupils need to get used to reading written assessments of their work before arriving at secondary school.

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

28. In the mixed reception and Year 1 class, there is sound provision overall for the children under five in most of the areas of learning recommended for this age group. The planning of their activities shows the teacher's sound awareness and understanding of the Desirable Outcomes of Learning and new learning goals. The curriculum contributes appropriately to their overall development and prepares them effectively for the subjects of the National Curriculum. There is particularly good provision for children's personal and social and language and literacy development. Mathematical development and knowledge and understanding of the world are also suitably covered. The provision for their physical and creative learning is less well developed. It does not include enough regular and frequent opportunities for them to use large climbing equipment, wheeled toys, and a wide enough range of painting and drawing materials. **This is a key issue for action.** Otherwise, the curriculum for the under fives achieves an appropriate balance between teacher directed and child initiated activities.
29. Although the majority of the school's curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 is well considered and planned carefully around topics, such as food in Key Stage 1 and journeys in Key Stage 2, there is a significant weakness. The school makes insufficient use of information technology and the arrangements for teaching the subject are still weak, especially in relation to the use of technology as a means of control. The school is aware of this problem and has begun to put in place appropriate training for the staff. The leadership has also adopted a curriculum framework to help the teachers to plan the work more effectively. However, the teaching of information

technology does not yet meet the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. **This is a key issue for action.**

30. Apart from this the school makes sound provision for teaching all of the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The introduction and successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy are strengths of the curriculum that are beginning to have a positive impact on the pupils' attainment and progress. They provide for the learning of skills in a systematic, clear progression, and are supporting the pupils' steady progress in these subjects.
31. A strength of the school's curriculum lies in the interesting and stimulating variety of visits that provide relevance to the pupils' learning. On a trip to London, for example, pupils in Key Stage 2 have the opportunity to plot their journey on a map and investigate significant historical events and places when they visit important buildings and landmarks. They use a wide variety of language and creative skills to record the experience. Displayed work and pupils' topic books provide further evidence of the strength of the cross curricular links between the different subjects, ensuring a suitable balance overall. However, the inspection team agrees with views of parents the school's range of extra curricular activities is somewhat limited.
32. There is sound provision for pupils with special educational needs. A well-organised programme of support is carefully planned to ensure that pupils have appropriate access to other areas of the curriculum. There is good liaison with outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist, who provides advice and support. Regular reviews, involving the teachers, learning support assistants and parents lead to steady progress. Typical of the caring nature of the school, is the opportunity for selected pupils to attend riding sessions specifically for children with physical disabilities. The pupils with less severe learning difficulties are withdrawn from lessons on a regular basis for help with basic skills such as reading and spelling. The teachers and adults know pupils very well and have established a systematic programme to help them to make sound progress in the basic skills in English and mathematics. The organisation of these pupils' individual education plans is satisfactory. However, the targets outlining each individual's future learning require greater precision.
33. Sex education is not taught as an explicit subject, but incorporated as part of the science curriculum in years 5 and 6. Attention to drugs and alcohol misuse is provided through a police initiative and pupils in Years 5 and 6 also benefit from a planned programme to develop assertive behaviour. These programmes make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development, helping them to examine social pressures, to relevant develop skills and to make informed and healthy choices.
34. Links with the community are most effective. There are strong links between the reception class and the local playgroup. A group of "rising fives" attends weekly sessions before they start school. This is an effective preparation for life at school. There is also good liaison with the local secondary school. The use of the computer suite there by the Year 6 pupils has had a positive impact on both the children's work and the teachers' more positive approaches to the subject.

35. The provision for the pupils' moral and social development is good and a strength of the school. The teachers and other adults have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and manners, and provide very good role models through their good relationships with one another and with the pupils. The example set by adults also successfully promotes pupils' the understanding of right and wrong and results in very good behaviour. The pupils are given many varied opportunities to work together in pairs and groups, such as in group reading in years 5 and 6. They show initiative and take responsibility for themselves and for others in a variety of jobs in and around school, including delivering milk and registers. They acquire social awareness and responsibility when they raise funds for local causes and various charities, including hospitals. In addition, a group of pupils benefited from a visit to a local Parish meeting.
36. There is satisfactory provision for the pupils' spiritual development. The quality of the artwork and the presentation within pupils' books shows how their work is valued. The teachers receive and value the pupils' ideas across the curriculum and give them opportunities to share differing views. In Key Stage 1, the pupils develop self-awareness through well-chosen stories that are used to encourage the discussion of their feelings. The pupils in Key Stage reflect upon fundamental issues during religious education lessons and there are examples of teachers making the most of incidental opportunities to wonder at natural phenomena in the spectacular scenery around the school. These are, however, rare and although the pupils share in times of prayer, there are too few moments for them to think and reflect upon the ideas and thoughts expressed.
37. The school makes good provision for the pupils' cultural development. They learn to appreciate and value their own country traditions and take part in fete days and entertain the community with maypole dancing. They also gain understanding of British culture through visits to castles, museums and theatres. The curriculum is further enhanced by visits of local authors, artists and drama students. There is a suitable multicultural element to the curriculum through religious education and geography lessons, although there is still scope for the pupils' understanding of the diversity of cultures in their own country to be further developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school has strong commitment to caring for its pupils. There are clear procedures that enable the teachers and classroom support assistants to respond appropriately and effectively to their individual physical, emotional and intellectual needs.
39. The procedures for monitoring child protection issues are good. A designated person takes overall responsibility for this area of the pupils' welfare, and members of the senior management team have also attended recent training courses. Good up-to-date records are kept of the pupils' personal details. The school has satisfactory links with outside agencies, from whom the pupils receive appropriate support. The health and safety policy is closely followed. Health and safety issues are regularly monitored by the staff and the responsible governor, and a formal risk assessment of the site is completed annually. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, and the registers are completed consistently and accurately. Similar procedures in place for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and are also consistently implemented throughout the school. Through the school's behaviour policy and the STAR assertive behaviour programme for pupils in Key Stage 2, the school pays good attention to the elimination of bullying or oppressive behaviour between pupils. Consequently, the pupils feel confident that the staff will handle any incident of bullying appropriately.
40. The school has strong links with the local playgroup and good arrangements are made to support and care for the children as they are inducted into the Reception class. Likewise, pupils in Year 6 make regular visits to the local secondary school and most feel appropriately prepared for the

next stage of their education.

41. The arrangements for assessing pupils' academic progress are good. The school makes effective use of the results of national tests and other assessment data in order to check the progress of each cohort of pupils as it moves through the school. The recent appointment of a part-time teacher in Years 5 and 6 is a good example of how the leadership is responding effectively to the weaknesses in writing thrown up by the analysis of recent test results. The only weakness lies in the lack of an agreed system through which teachers can record their informal assessments of pupils' work and progress. Although the teachers' knowledge of their pupils' achievements is good, there is a lack of consistency in their approaches towards day to day assessment and insufficient detailed recording. Thus, although the planning of lessons reflects what has been learnt previously, there is seldom a written record of what individual pupils have found easy or difficult to master. Partly as a result of this, the annual progress reports to parents lack sufficient detail about what pupils know, can do and understand. **These are key issues for action.**
42. The school's systems for supporting the pupils with special educational needs are under review. The current level of provision is satisfactory because each pupil on the school register for special needs has an appropriate individual education plan that is used to ensure that work is matched to their abilities. Progress is regularly reviewed. The next challenge facing the school is to ensure that the targets within the plans become even more precise about the specific learning that needs to take place between each review.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Although the majority of parents are satisfied with the education their children are receiving, a significant number feel ill-informed about progress and disagree that the school works closely with them.
44. The informal arrangements for parents to find out about their children's progress are strong. For instance, during the inspection parents were observed in Key Stage 1 classrooms reading with their children before the start of the school day, and informal discussions confirmed the good relationships between the teachers and parents. Many parents contribute to their children's learning and the work of the school by listening to reading at home and assisting with homework. This additional help impacts well on the pupils' progress and achievement. Although the school received very little response, the parents were consulted before being asked to sign a Home/School Agreement. About half have now signed and returned the agreement to the school. The parents whose children have special educational needs are involved well, and they are invited to attend all review meetings to discuss progress. Although there is no parent teacher association, the occasional social and fund-raising activities that are organised by the school are well supported by parents and families.
45. However, some of the formal arrangements that should guarantee all parents receive high quality information about their children's education are weaker. Although, the headteacher regularly sends out helpful letters with information about events and organisation, they include very little information about the topics to be covered and what the pupils are learning to enable parents to help at home. The annual reports on pupils' progress are sent out in accordance with statutory requirements but they are unsatisfactory in their content. The reports focus too much upon what has been taught, rather than what each individual pupil has managed to learn over the year. Parents are not given a clear indication of either the progress that has been made or what the priorities for learning should be in the next school year. **This is a key issue for action.** The inspectors agree with those parents who feel that with only one open evening per year there is insufficient formal opportunity for them to see their children's work and talk to the teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

46. The school is a friendly and welcoming community. It has a strong ethos that emphasises care, consideration for others and the importance of doing one's best. These values are cogently expressed within the school aims along with a clear commitment to raising standards. However, there is a significant weakness in management that is slowing some aspects of the school's generally steady improvement.
47. The problem is that the leadership is not making full use of the financial resources at its disposal for the benefit of the pupils currently at the school. A sum in excess of £40,000 was carried forward at the end of the last financial year. This is equivalent to almost quarter of the funds at the school's disposal annually. Although a little money has been allocated to provide additional staffing for literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 2, there are many other aspects of the school's provision that would also benefit from greater investment. For example, information technology was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and is still a weakness. The mixed age class containing the pupils under the age of five has no full-time ancillary support. The school's book provision although adequate, does not reflect a determined approach to ensure high quality literature is central to children's experience of school.
48. The headteacher and governing body are well aware of the funds they are accumulating. Their concern to be in a position to preserve staffing levels in the event of sudden fluctuations in the school roll is understandable. The governing body is far-sighted and accurate in its analysis of the needs of the local community and is anxious to establish a nursery on its site along with arrangements for pre- and after school care. However, this is not appropriate use of the school's budget, especially when standards are so low. The leadership's use of its financial resources does not reflect a coherent approach to the principles of best value. **This is a key issue for action.**
49. A strength of the school, and a factor that contributes to this large budget surplus, is the extremely efficient way that the school purchases its equipment, supplies and resources. The headteacher is careful to compare prices and quality and is effectively supported by her experienced secretary who makes sound use of the school's computerised accounts software. The staff and pupils care for the fabric of the school and the resources at their disposal. There is no wastefulness. The accommodation is modern, attractive and well maintained. Standards of cleanliness are very high.
50. The headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school that have been successfully communicated to staff and governors. There is a firm focus on standards and good evidence of some analysis of test results and other data. As a result, there is a sharply defined picture of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance in each year group at the school. Lessons are monitored on a regular basis by the headteacher and her deputy and informative records maintained. All teachers have an appropriate job description and, as suggested at the time of the last inspection, these will be used to inform the appraisal process next autumn. The induction of the newly qualified teacher is working well because she receives good support from her mentor and has regular opportunities to observe the work of other staff.

51. Since the last inspection the leadership has improved considerably the quality of the school development plan. There is far more detail about what is to be achieved and of what this will cost. The information gathered by the leadership about standards features prominently in the plan. The headteacher, staff and governors are all aware of the need to raise standards of literacy and numeracy, and there are precise, realistic targets to be met. However, the evaluation of the school's success, or otherwise, in meeting the aspirations of the plan are informal and lack rigour. There is no agreed system by which the governors can assure themselves either that new initiatives are working successfully, or that money spent has had a positive impact upon the quality of the children's work. **This is a key issue for action.**
52. The governors work hard on behalf of the school and local community. They have a keen appreciation of the work of the school, its successes and the issues it faces. Many governors visit the school on a regular basis to provide help and support. However, there are few, focussed visits recorded that set out to check the quality of education in relation to the priorities of the school development plan. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities with the exception of one aspect of their annual report. The last annual report included neither the required information on how the previous year's budget had been spent, nor details of the school's reserves. **This is an additional weakness for the governors to address.**
53. The school sustains good staffing levels, including a number of classroom assistants who are effectively deployed to support the pupils. The exception to this is in the class containing the children under the age of five where there is insufficient ancillary support. **This is a key issue for action.** The specific grant received by the school to support pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately and ensures that these children are successfully integrated whenever possible.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to raise standards further and sustain the school's improvement the headteacher, governing body and staff should:
- Make more efficient use of the large financial reserves for the benefit of the pupils currently attending the school by:
 - i) Improving the school's provision for the teaching of information technology by further investment in staff training and resources; (Paragraphs 10, 26, 29, 48 and 105)
 - ii) Ensuring that sufficient adult support is deployed to support the effective teaching of the pupils in the Reception class, especially those under the age of five. (Paragraphs 28, 53 and 62)

They should also:

- Devise more systematic approaches to reviewing the progress of the school development plan so that all aspects are thoroughly and regularly evaluated on the basis of their impact upon the pupils learning and achievements.(Paragraphs 41, 48 and 51)
- Develop agreed approaches to the marking of pupils' work and the recording of informal day to day assessments so that teachers have written evidence to share and to help improve the quality of the annual progress report to parents. (Paragraphs 72 and 83)

Other matters which should be considered by the school:

- ♦ Ensure that the governors' annual report to parents complies with the statutory requirements.
(Paragraph 52)

- ♦ Improve the quality of information for parents about the school's curriculum and increase the number of opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress more formally.
(Paragraph 45)

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	11

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9	58	30	3	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	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	84
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	11

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	28

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	1.8
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	3	7	10

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	3	3	3
	Girls	7	5	6
	Total	10	8	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	100 ()	80 ()	90 ()
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	3	3	3
	Girls	6	6	6
	Total	9	9	9
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	90 ()	90 ()	90 ()
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	10	10	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	8
	Girls	6	9	8
	Total	11	15	16
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 ()	75 ()	80 ()
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	7
	Girls	6	7	6
	Total	11	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	55 ()	65 ()	65 ()
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	82
Any other minority ethnic group	2

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Rec – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19
Average class size	21

Education support staff: Y Rec – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	35

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	18,0257
Total expenditure	17,4272
Expenditure per pupil	1709
Balance brought forward from previous year	36,256
Balance carried forward to next year	42,241

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	84
Number of questionnaires returned	32

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	63	38	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	66	28	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	59	28	6	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	47	38	13	3	0
The teaching is good.	59	28	6	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	53	16	19	6	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	25	9	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	31	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	22	19	9	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	28	13	6	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	34	6	0	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	25	13	9	16

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 with low levels of language development and this affects their attainment in other areas of learning. Few children reach the nationally recommended Desirable Learning Outcomes in the language and literacy, mathematical and knowledge and understanding of the world, areas of learning by the time they are five. Although attainment is below expected levels, the children nevertheless make sound progress in their personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical development and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Standards in creative and physical development are close to expectations, but the children's progress is slower than it should be in these areas of learning because they have too few opportunities for exploration and expression. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features. It is compromised by the lack of necessary additional adult support for this age group.

Personal and social development

56. By the time they are five, most children have learned to sit quietly and give full attention to their teacher as a result of the use of effective strategies, such as the glove puppet in a numeracy lesson. They behave well and co-operate in large groups, beginning to learn to raise their hands before speaking, although some persistently call out, eager to answer questions. When their interest is taken, as in a presentation by visiting musicians and by well told stories, they show the capacity to concentrate for long periods. Most of the time, however, they find it difficult to take turns and show little awareness of the needs of others, expressing their own needs quite spontaneously. There are very good relationships and children enjoy coming to school. The teacher's frequent use of praise and encouragement develops the confidence of most pupils. Good questioning skills successfully draw out responses to stories and the children have the confidence to show a range of feelings at appropriate times. They need help to manage their coats and take little responsibility for their belongings and equipment, although frequently encouraged to do so. The children relate appropriately to familiar adults and to one another, co-operating in their work and play activities.

Language and literacy

57. The children are confident to express themselves orally, although their vocabulary is limited and consonants often indistinct. Their speech is below standards usually found in this age group. They listen intently to stories told skilfully by their teacher during the literacy hour and show great enjoyment in language, joining in with familiar, repetitive phrases. In the book corner, they sustain attentive when listening to story tapes, with little adult support. They handle books appropriately and talk about pictures and stories with enjoyment. By the time they are five, they recognise their own names and are beginning to link sounds to letters, by hearing and saying some initial sounds. The children have not yet developed appropriate ways of holding pencils, but are provided with ample opportunities to practise these skills in a writing area. They begin to use writing to communicate meaning to others, with an adult acting as scribe. The teaching in this area of learning is good, with the teacher making effective use of resources, such as big books. She develops vocabulary well and makes good provision for the children's language through clearly defined areas that encourage them to pursue reading and writing activities independently. There is, however, a lack of adult support to develop language through everyday purposeful play activities.

Mathematics

58. In the area of mathematical development, the children are beginning to recognise number symbols to five and to count and match every day objects with increasing accuracy, although they do not record independently. They have an awareness of number operations such as addition and subtraction, but their understanding is below expectations for the age group. They recognise the basic shapes of squares and circles in the shape robots on display. The teacher succeeds in capturing their interest and generating enthusiasm by good use of resources. She develops number vocabulary effectively during whole class sessions. However, there the lack of additional adult support limits the opportunities to reinforce learning or develop understanding through independent practical activities. The teacher makes detailed and accurate assessments of the children's progress.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

59. Children enter the school with an underdeveloped knowledge and understanding of the world and lack the vocabulary to talk about their homes, families and other matters of interest to them. They know how old they are, but are unsure when their birthdays will be and recognise and name colours accurately. They grow in understanding during imaginative role-play situations such as 'The Shop'. The children enjoy cooking activities and examine how materials change with mixing, heating and cooling. They taste food, grow plants and experiment with magnets and moving vehicles. The teaching is satisfactory. Carefully planned activities make learning relevant through chosen topics that incorporate science, history and geography and enable the children find out about objects and materials by using their senses.

Physical

60. By the time they are five, in spite of some quite awkward grips when using pencils and other tools, *the* children develop satisfactory pencil control through writing, colouring and drawing activities. During outdoor play and physical education lessons in the hall, they move confidently and imaginatively with increasing control and co-ordination, with suitable awareness of space and others. The teaching is sound and the children respond well to clear directions. There are too few opportunities, however, for the youngest children to develop their imagination, skill and agility, using a suitable range of climbing or large construction toys on a regular basis.

Creative

61. The children paint lively and imaginative pictures of themselves and fill in adults' outlines to illustrate a story or particular topic. They have reasonable opportunities to experiment with colour, shape, texture and form through planned sessions, although the range of media and materials is rather restricted. The children lack frequent and regular access to painting and other materials, in order to express or communicate their thoughts, ideas and feelings creatively and imaginatively. They respond to music and rhymes with enjoyment and enthusiasm. Good teaching in a dance lesson resulted in their interpreting well-chosen music with sensitivity and good expression. The children have suitable opportunities to participate imaginatively in role-play activities.

62. In order to improve further the quality of provision for the pupils under five and to raise their achievements, specifically in physical and creative development, the leadership should consider increasing the amount of trained classroom assistance in this class. Additional adult support will also enhance the opportunities for the children to improve their spoken skills across the curriculum. **This is a key issue for action.**

ENGLISH

63. The results achieved by eleven-year olds in last year's national tests were well below the national average and in the lowest five per cent when compared with schools where a similar number of pupils were entitled to free school meals. The results achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 in reading were well above average when compared with schools both nationally and with those of a similar type. However, their results in writing were below average on both counts.
64. Each year's results are liable to considerable fluctuation because the cohorts are normally much less than twenty and there is a larger than usual proportion of pupils with special educational needs at the school. Analysis of the results of the last four years suggests that standards at the school have been improving at a rate faster than the national trend. The inspection findings confirm that a significant minority of pupils has difficulties with speaking and, in particular, with writing, but that all are making steady improvements in their work. This year, at the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading is broadly average, but fewer are reaching the expected level in their writing. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are attaining below average standards in English. Although the current school targets for English and mathematics appear low in relation to national aspirations, they are nonetheless challenging and realistic for these pupils.
65. More detailed analysis of the test results of the past four years shows that the performance of girls has been slightly better than that of the boys at both key stages. The leadership is well aware of this issue and has been part of a project that attempts to analyse this difference in performance. Although it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions from statistics relating to such small cohorts of pupils, the evidence shows a rising trend in standards overall for both boys and girls. The effective introduction of the national literacy strategy and good quality teaching are now leading to a marked improvement in the development of both reading and writing skills, particularly in Key Stage 2.
66. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils listen attentively to teachers reading stories and poems, and when giving instructions during lessons. When given the opportunity, they readily answer questions and volunteer information about their chosen text in the Literacy Hour. However, many have a limited vocabulary and often make inaccurate use of tenses. The attractive local dialect is firmly embedded for many children, but as a result a significant number of children find it difficult to develop a confident command of spoken Standard English. This is a major factor that contributes to the many errors in their writing. By the time they leave the school, the higher attaining pupils are articulate speakers who have the confidence to express their views and opinions. However, the majority struggles to take part in spoken debate and their speaking skills are below average.
67. Standards are about average in reading at the end of both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils read competently, with interest and enjoyment, from suitably challenging texts well matched to their ability. They have a secure knowledge of initial sounds, but as yet insufficient knowledge of blends and letter patterns. They lack independent strategies that would help them

decipher unfamiliar words. The pupils recognise and understand punctuation, such as the apostrophe. They grasp that when text increases in size this might signify someone shouting. They know how books are organised and are beginning to understand terms such as author and illustrator. By the end of Key Stage 2 many pupils are independent readers, enjoying an increasing range of stories, poems and books for information. A good number read with accuracy and reasonable fluency, showing understanding and enjoyment of reading. However, their unfamiliarity with a high proportion of the vocabulary reflects their limited range of spoken language. Most pupils are able to discuss the plots and characters in their books with appropriate reference to the text. They carry out some independent research from books provided by their teachers, but rarely visit libraries for this purpose. Similarly, only a few have begun to use the school computers to retrieve information in a systematic fashion from encyclopaedia stored on CD ROM.

68. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in writing at the end of Key Stage 1 is below average. Most are beginning to write simple sentences, and a few make accurate use of capital letters and full stops. When given the opportunity, the pupils have good ideas for stories and show imagination, such as when a boy in Year 2, in describing a picture writes, ‘...all his mind was on catching fish’. However, a weakness of the writing in this part of the school is that there are too few opportunities for independent extended writing.
69. The pupils show a growing understanding of homophones when they discriminate between words with similar sounds but different spellings. Pupils of all abilities are beginning to build systematically on their knowledge of the sounds of letters to improve their skills in recognising spelling patterns. Some show good understanding, when, for instance, a boy spells ‘leisure’ accurately to demonstrate an exception to the recently learned spelling rule. However, a significant minority makes frequent basic spelling mistakes that show the difficulty they have in mastering these skills. The pupils’ handwriting is joined, usually well formed and neat but is rather laboured and lacking in fluency.
70. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils write for an increasing variety of purposes, in different styles and formats. This includes a few beautifully presented accounts, with good use of headings, titles and sub-titles, of their many visits to places such as Ludlow Castle. About two thirds of pupils show a sound understanding of punctuation and parts of speech. They develop more interesting ways of writing through examining the use of metaphors and similes in traditional poetry, such as ‘The Highwayman’. The pupils make suitable plans when writing stories that lead to some well-structured narratives. The higher attaining pupils also produce imaginative poetry using vivid language in writing about ‘The Magic Box,’ and write effective character studies using descriptive language. However, the writing of a significant minority of pupils falls short of the levels expected. A considerable volume of the pupils’ writing is simply the reproducing of information gained from teachers and books. Although some of their independent work has imaginative content and increasingly expressive vocabulary, their knowledge of spelling rules is insecure and there are many basic errors. The handwriting of these pupils is generally below expectations. Too many of them form letters inaccurately and join their writing inconsistently. These pupils’ handwriting is not helped by their frequent use of ballpoint pen.
71. The pupils with special educational needs make steady progress. They gain knowledge of reading and spelling patterns through a systematic and well-structured programme of work.
72. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. The teachers plan well and use the structure of the literacy hour to good effect. They promote a love of literature and enjoyment of language with their enthusiastic introductions using the ‘big books.’ The learning objectives are clear and

the teachers provide suitable activities, well matched to their pupils' abilities. This ensures that the pupils make good progress, adding significantly to their skills. The whole class session is used effectively to reinforce the learning objectives of each lesson. The teachers in Key Stage 1 reinforce learning in weaker areas, such as the use of full stops and capital letters. They make good use of the texts to develop the pupils' vocabulary and understanding, such as probing for synonyms for words such as 'appetising' and 'concocting'. In Key Stage 2, the teachers establish good relationships with their pupils, giving them confidence by listening to and valuing their written and oral contributions. This is exemplified in a very good lesson at the end of the key stage, when a group of able pupils share their physical descriptions of an imaginary god. The teachers provide much encouragement often correcting work alongside the child. However, the lack of a written commentary in the marking in Years 5 and 6 is a weakness because the pupils need to get used to reading about how to improve their work before they transfer to the next stage of education. Similarly, the school lacks agreed systems to record the teachers' informal, day to day assessments of the pupils. This means that much valuable knowledge is lost and can neither be passed onto the next teacher nor used for constructing the annual reports to parents. **This is a key issue for action.**

73. Since the last inspection, the introduction of 'booster' classes to improve the skills of a selected group of pupils has been effective in improving standards. These pupils show improvement both in their spoken grammar and their written sentence construction. The subject co-ordinator bases decisions about who should receive such help on the effective analysis of test results and her regular monitoring of children's work in lessons around the school.

MATHEMATICS

74. The results achieved by eleven-year olds in last year's national tests were above average when compared with both schools nationally and with those where a similar number of pupils were entitled to free school meals. The results of pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 in 1999 were broadly in line with the national average, but lower than those achieved by pupils in similar schools.
75. Although there were twenty pupils entered for last year's Key Stage 2 tests, normally there are far fewer. The school also has a significant number of pupils with special educational needs that leads to some apparently dramatic swings in the performance as each small cohort moves through the school. For example, the target for the number of eleven-year old pupils the school anticipates will achieve the expected level in mathematics this year is sixty per cent. Although this is much lower than the national average, it nevertheless reflects a realistic target for this cohort which contains some pupils with significant special needs.
76. A far fairer picture of the school's improvement can be gained by analysing the trend in results over a four-year period. This suggests that despite some wide fluctuations in performance, the school's results are improving at rate faster than the national trend. Further analysis of the data suggests that on average, by the time they leave school, the girls are performing about two terms in advance of the boys. However, the analysis of the teaching during the course of the inspection found no evidence of gender bias. Indeed, it is evident that some of the most able mathematicians in Year 6 currently are boys.
77. The inspection findings confirm the school's own assessments that at the end of both key stages standards in mathematics are below average. At most, about two thirds of seven-year olds are currently working at the expected level. These pupils have a good grasp of their number facts up to ten and have begun to understand the place value of digits up to one hundred. They are increasingly confident in calculating how much money they have spent and the change they

should expect from fifty pence or a pound. However, a significant minority struggles to master basic number facts and recognise patterns. For instance, in one good lesson the teacher used a large hundred square to help the children practice adding on ten or eleven. Although the higher attaining pupils were quick to spot the pattern, several other children found this difficult to grasp.

78. The regular use of practical activities is a strength of the work in Key Stage 1. The teachers try to make mathematics relevant and fun. For instance, the project on “Ourselves” led to every child measuring different parts of their body using a range of units. During the inspection, the pupils demonstrated sound skills of estimation when deciding which objects were either heavier or lighter than a kilogram weight. However, it is an indication of the small number of pupils with higher ability that not one spotted, or recognised the weight written on a two-kilogram bag of sugar.
79. Slightly less than two-thirds of the current Year 6 are achieving the level expected of eleven-year olds, although about a fifth exceeds this level. A strength of the current arrangements for the teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 lies in the way that the years 5 and 6 pupils are divided into two sets based upon their prior attainment. Thus, the majority of the top set is working around the expected level 4 and the teacher is able to extend the higher achieving pupils. In this group, most pupils have a secure grasp of number. They know their tables and are increasingly competent in manipulating numbers to solve simple problems. They have a satisfactory understanding of fractions and can convert these into decimal equivalents. They know the names of common two dimensional-shapes and represent these in different orientations on grids using co-ordinates to plot their position. A further strength of their mathematical abilities lies in the way that they confidently make use of this knowledge when carrying out tests in other subjects such as science.
80. The second mathematics set is working at a much lower level. Although a few pupils are starting to grasp and remember their fundamental number skills and can use these when carrying out mental calculations with larger numbers up to a hundred, most still find this difficult. Similarly, although a few have mastered the simpler multiplication tables, most still require further practice. Their teacher has high expectations and great patience. She matches work in class extremely accurately to the abilities of the pupils and questions carefully to assess exactly how pupils are getting their answers. For example, it is clear that most of these children find it incredibly difficult to read a simple problem and decide which mathematical operations are required to solve it. Even when the process involves simple numbers and operations, it is the process of logical thought that is the stumbling block for many.
81. Despite the particular difficulties of the current Years 2 and 6, it is evident that the teaching of mathematics throughout the school is effective. The teachers have responded enthusiastically to the introduction of the national strategy for numeracy and have implemented it with considerable success. Their lesson plans clearly reflect the coverage suggested by the strategy and the objectives for each lesson are much more explicit than at the time of the last inspection. They are often shared with the class. The pace and purpose of lessons are invigorating and have an extremely positive impact upon the pupils. The children demonstrate consistently positive attitudes to mathematics and enjoy the challenge of both the mental work and the demands of more detailed problem solving.
82. These positive attitudes are reflected in the good volume of written work produced by pupils of all ability levels across the school. The teachers check the pupils’ work regularly, but there are no consistent arrangements for marking. Although some teachers are making useful annotations alongside the pupils’ work to act as an informal record of assessment, others provide only oral feedback to the children instead. Both these approaches are successful in telling the pupils how to

improve their work. However, in Years 5 and 6 the pupils should be getting used to responding to teachers' written remarks in preparation for the next stage of education.

83. A further weakness is the absence of consistent approaches to recording from day to day what the teachers know about their pupils' performance in mathematics. Although the teachers successfully carry forward a very good knowledge from each lesson as they plan the next, they cannot retain this information indefinitely. Thus, by the end of the year they have few notes to refer to when compiling each pupil's end of year report. As a result, they tend to describe the curriculum that has been taught rather than what each pupil knows, can do and understands. The school needs to devise an agreed approach for the recording of informal teacher assessments that in turn will help improve the quality of the annual pupil progress reports to parents. **These are key issues for action.**
84. The co-ordinator has a sound appreciation of the standards currently at the school. She has analysed the results of national tests and also uses a range of other assessments and tests to keep track of individual pupil progress. A fuller use of the statistics contained within each year's autumn package will enable even better analysis of the value added by the school to pupil performance.

SCIENCE

85. The results achieved by eleven-year olds in last year's national tests were similar to the national average, but lower than those achieved by pupils in similar schools. The result of the teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show that pupils achieved standards close to the national average, but again lower than those achieved by pupils in similar schools.
86. Analysis of the results of the past four years shows that on average by the time they leave school the pupils are achieving levels a month or so behind those that they should be at that age. However, the results of recent years have improved faster than the national trend. The inspection findings confirm that the proportion of pupils working at the expected levels continues to be similar to the national average at the end of both key stages.
87. By the age of seven about four fifths of pupils know the different ways that seeds are dispersed and some of the conditions they require for successful growth. They understand that animals require food, drink and shelter to survive. They talk about the human diet and are beginning to recognise some of the foods that make up a healthy diet. Most suggest simple and appropriate tests for demonstrating their assertion that the snow falling outside is comprised of frozen water. Many anticipate eagerly the coming of spring, the spawning of the frogs in the school pond and the subsequent development of tadpoles and froglets.
88. By the age of eleven most pupils are producing a good volume of work across the full range of the science curriculum. They are acquiring important knowledge about the human body and know the names and location of many major organs. They understand a little about the circulatory system and that the heart acts as a pump. The pupils' appreciation of different types of material and the range of possible applications is growing steadily. For instance, they recognise that some metals are effective conductors of heat, and that certain plastics make effective insulators.

89. However, the major strength of the school's work in science, particularly in Key Stage 2, is the good range of practical, investigative work encouraged by the teachers. For instance, in Years 3 and 4 groups of pupils are encouraged to predict how far they might stretch or compress a range of springs of different sizes. The teacher questions the class carefully to help them explain their ideas. She challenges them to ensure that the tests they carry out are fair ones. Throughout the lesson she demands very high standards of concentration and hard work. It quickly becomes clear that the pupils are used to working together in this way because they share equipment happily and successfully meet the objectives the teacher sets for the lesson.
90. By the time they reach the oldest class, the pupils are working with increasing independence. In one lesson they were completing their investigations into how best to muffle sound. The teacher opened the lesson by re-capping previous learning during which time it became obvious that most have a thorough appreciation of how sound is made and how it travels. Once the pupils returned to their tests they spread out round the school whilst the teacher moved from group to group to assess their progress. Although some groups were not within sight of the teacher, they all continued to show great responsibility and worked extremely hard. A strength of the work was the way that skills learnt in mathematics such as measuring distance and weighing the mass of insulating materials were effectively practised. Similarly, once tests were complete, the pupils appeared competent in recording their data. A few made good use of the class computer to put their results into tables. However, the pupils' abilities to express their scientific findings coherently in writing are less secure. Although perhaps slightly more than a half of the class manages this to a satisfactory level, the difficulties experienced by a significant minority of the pupils means that their written work does not always do justice to their scientific understanding.
91. The school has a good understanding of the difficulties with speaking, reading and writing faced by a significant minority of its pupils. A good example of how teaching is helping to address this issue was seen in Key Stage 1 where a science lesson on medicine provided a strong focus on the correct use of technical vocabulary as well as communicating the benefits and dangers of drugs. By drawing on the pupils' own experiences of visiting the doctor, the teacher was able to help them master such words as stethoscope, temperature and pulse.
92. The science curriculum has not been a recent, major focus on the school's development plan although a recent review of resources means that the school is generally well equipped to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. The school grounds and pond are particular strengths in terms of the provision made for "Life processes and living things."

ART

93. The standard of the pupils' achievements in art is in line with the expected levels at the end of both key stages.
94. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils experience a suitable variety of materials, tools and techniques and have regular opportunities to express their ideas through drawing, painting, printing, collage and in three-dimensional activities. The youngest children show imagination when they produce independent paintings of their own faces. When they print with different shapes, the pupils in the reception class show an appropriate awareness of pattern and colour. In Year 2, they combine media and materials in an interesting and practical way to illustrate their geography project. The pupils also employ information technology skills when using the 'Paintbox' programme to create pictures of houses, landscapes and the millennium dome. They use basic collage techniques to produce displays of their favourite stories from literature.

95. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are painting less often, but develop their drawing skills suitably. Their observational drawings of fossils and molluscs, to support their science topic, show confidence and good use of line, shape and shading techniques. They make colour wheels to develop their skills and understanding of colour, and their mixing and blending techniques are of a sophisticated level. They make effective use of pastels and paint to create bright and vibrant pictures based upon the work of Tom Schulten. In Years 3 and 4, the pupils are developing a combination of skills as they work co-operatively to create collages to illustrate their history topic on Roman soldiers. A group of Year 6 pupils show a developing knowledge and understanding of the styles of various artists when they describe the work of Lowry and Van Gogh. There are also impressive examples of careful and original paintings inspired by a visit from an artist and based on 'Reflections'. Their past work also includes some competent portraits of Tudor figures.
96. Although only lesson seen was observed during the inspection, this confirmed that the teaching of art is well organised. The teacher provided a suitably challenging activity that demanded that the pupils work collaboratively in constructing large collages of Roman soldiers. This meant that the children had to extend their previous knowledge of working on small scale, individual collage and decide how to devise an accurate outline and what types of colour and material to incorporate for each aspect of their "soldier." The lesson also confirmed the very positive attitudes of the children to their work. They co-operated happily in sharing equipment and materials and worked at a good pace.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

97. Judging from examples of the pupils' past work, the teachers' planning and conversations with pupils and teachers, the standards of work in design technology at the end of both key stages are in line with the expected levels.
98. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have experienced a suitable range of focused, practical tasks, including cookery. They have assembled and joined materials in a variety of ways so that their knowledge of the techniques involved is at a satisfactory level. For instance, the children make simple puppets with moving parts, using paper clips. They select appropriate materials from a suitable range of wood, paper and card to construct a moving vehicle. They learn to fold, cut and stick and assemble materials based on their drawings. They also examine structures to find out which are the strongest.
99. By the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils have continued to develop their skills to produce more complex models with increasing confidence and skill, incorporating scientific and mathematical knowledge of shape and measurement. The higher attaining pupils effectively evaluate their designs and incorporate appropriate changes to improve them. They do not, however, use information technology sufficiently to control simple mechanisms. There are few planned occasions to disassemble products to evaluate design and purpose.
100. There is a suitable balance between teacher directed activities and opportunities for pupils to experiment and learn from their mistakes. The subject contributes effectively to the pupils' literacy skills because they are regularly challenged to read instructions and make notes about their designs. The comments of the pupils indicate that they enjoy the challenge of this subject, and derive pleasure from the range of interesting tasks that they encounter.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

101. The major strength of the school's approach to teaching these two subjects lies in the very good range of educational trips made to places of historic interest, of visitors to the school and the regular use of practical work undertaken by the children. Both subjects are planned for on the basis of a series of topics that cover the bulk of the National Curriculum programmes of study.
102. In history, by the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils gain an understanding of life in the past and an appropriate sense of chronology by comparing and sequencing today's toys, houses and forms of transport with those of the past. They make historical enquiry through an interesting variety of sources, including a visit to a castle. Visits continue to play an important part in pupils' learning in Key Stage 2 and it is evident from discussions with the children that these have made a significant impact in enhancing their positive attitudes to learning about the past. In years 3 and 4, they visit Chester in connection with a topic on Romans and enjoy a Viking Day in school. A trip to London in the summer brings history to life for years 5 and 6. Their experiences and knowledge are combined in well presented books where they reproduce information gleaned from work sheets, books and their teachers. The pupils know the difference between fact and fiction and can talk about the reliability of different sources of evidence, including archaeology. However, their skills of independent research are more limited.
103. In geography, the pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 are developing a reasonably secure grasp of the key features of their local landscape, but find it much harder to make comparisons with other countries. However, they compare hot and cold climate and understand the sorts of clothes suitable for different conditions. In Key Stage 2, the pupils make a study of the local area, visiting the quarry and investigating the reasons for the development of Ludlow and Clee Hill. They make good progress in geographical skills when they keep weather records in Year 3 and 4. They use a range of measuring instruments to make a map of the quarry in connection with a history topic. In understanding keys and symbols, the pupils reach appropriate standards of work and gain knowledge of maps to a good extent. They build on this knowledge in Years 5 and 6 when they put key towns, seas and rivers on a map of the British Isles. Interviews with the pupils show an interest in the subject and an aptitude to talk readily about the attractive and unattractive features of two contrasting areas, such as their own with the nearest city of Birmingham. They have a sensible awareness of environmental issues and man's impact on his surroundings. The teachers make good assessments in geography and the pupils' records show they can follow a street map accurately using compass directions.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

104. The teaching of information technology was a key issue at the time of the last inspection and remains a major weakness of the school. Although there have been some improvements in the quality of resources and equipment available to the pupils, much of this has been purchased only recently. Similarly, the school has adopted a curriculum framework that, when in full operation, should begin to ensure the proper development of the pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject. However, this programme has only recently been put into practice, and at present the pupils' achievements in information technology remain generally beneath the expected levels at the end of both key stages.
105. The leadership has made some efforts to improve the range of opportunities for the pupils to have access to more frequent use of information technology. One of the classroom assistants is helping the children to develop their keyboard skills. The Year 5 and 6 pupils make visits to the computer suite at the local secondary school. One of the teachers is mid-way through a course to

improve her knowledge of how to teach control technology using the new “buggy”. However, the major problem is that opportunities for pupils to make regular use of information technology across the curriculum have been far too limited for far too long. **This remains a key issue for action.**

106. The pupils are eager to use the school’s computers. When given the opportunity, they work sensibly and show great commitment to their work. The teaching was effective in the occasional instances observed during the inspection when classroom assistants helped the pupils to master specific skills. For instance one pupil in Key Stage 1 was attempting to navigate the image of a caterpillar through a maze by clicking on direction arrows with a mouse. The patient support of the adult helper ensured that his control of the mouse improved during the session. On other occasions, the absence of adult support leaves pupils struggling to make progress. For instance, although some Year 3 and 4 pupils know how to load a CD-ROM encyclopaedia, their strategies for searching for information are inadequate and they need regular assistance to refine their work.
107. There is evidence within the classroom displays of how information technology has been used to collect, collate and present data from work in science and mathematics. However, there is little evidence of the pupils learning to present their findings with increasing complexity. For instance, both the Reception and Key Stage 1 classes present their data about food in the form of similar block graphs.
108. The school now needs to develop coherent approaches to implementing its chosen scheme of work so that the pupils develop their skills and understanding in a systematic way. They should also identify more regular opportunities for these to be practised across the breadth of the school’s curriculum.

MUSIC

109. The previous inspection found good standards in music throughout the school. During this inspection, observations were limited to one lesson in Key Stage 1 and a presentation by a group of visiting musicians to the whole school. The school is in the process of developing a policy and scheme of work following the recent loss of expertise for this subject and is compensating well. There is a good range of provision through singing lessons for the whole school, recorder lessons for all pupils in Key Stage 2 and visiting musicians. Additional instrumental tuition is provided for a small minority of pupils. On the limited evidence available, the pupils are making satisfactory progress in performing and composing and good progress in listening and appraising.
110. In Key Stage 1, the pupils have suitable planned opportunities to experiment with percussion instruments and create sequences of sounds to illustrate familiar stories. For example, they rustle bags, bang drums and cymbals, shake maracas and use hands and feet to bring to life the story of ‘Goldilocks.’ With the teacher’s help, they can select appropriate instruments and follow a sequence of symbols to create a musical structure. They are taught to recognise how musical sounds are used to create special effects.
111. In the lesson seen, considering the wide age range, the pupils concentrated well whilst waiting for the appropriate time to make their sounds. They control the pitch and power of the instruments and listen to one another with enjoyment, developing their awareness of other performers well. The pupils are very keen to hear the results of their efforts when the composition is recorded and played back.
112. During the woodwind recital to the whole school, older pupils demonstrated their secure knowledge of notation and skills gained from regular recorder lessons begun in Year 3. Pupils of

all ages and abilities showed an interest in music and a fascination for the way in which the different instruments produced their various notes. They showed delight at the range of sounds produced by the clarinet, for example, and watched carefully to see how the higher and lower notes were made. Adults developed their musical vocabulary to a good extent. On this occasion, the enthusiastic and lively presentation and encouragement led to total involvement and the pupils enjoyed joining in songs accompanied by the range of instruments. This provides for significant progress in both their understanding and enjoyment of music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. The dance lesson involving the youngest children in the school had many strong features. The teacher had clear objectives for the lesson and pursued them at a brisk pace so that the children had no time to become distracted. The warm-up was not only fun, but also helped the pupils become more aware of how they use space. The teacher's use of a feather to illustrate the type of movement she wanted them to create captivated the children and inspired their imaginations. The music for the dance was extremely well matched to the movement theme. As a result, all the children worked extremely hard with a significant minority dancing with great expression. Almost all the class managed to sustain slow, spiral movements moving through different levels and showing good attention to matching their actions to the phrasing of the music. The teacher made many supportive comments and occasionally intervened to help individuals improve the quality of their work. The children worked hard throughout, and their achievements exceeded the expected levels.
114. The gymnastics lesson involving the Years 5 and 6 was also extremely effective. Although space is at a premium, the pupils demonstrate outstanding co-operative attitudes and behaviour throughout the lesson. They work carefully together and show good attention to safety when getting out and using equipment. The teacher has a secure knowledge of what to teach and her lesson objectives are clear, building effectively from the good range of work that has been carried out earlier in the term. Thus, during this lesson the pupils were working in groups of three and four to improve a sequence of movements. Every group was successfully linking a range of actions including rolls, slides, bridges and balances that included at some point a contrast in pace. Their achievements are in line with the levels expected for eleven-year-olds. The teacher knows her pupils very well; she trusts them and gives them plenty of opportunities to accept responsibility. For example, she is able to focus upon each group in turn to help them improve whilst the rest of the class works in harmony. Thus the pace of learning is rapid. The teacher also takes care to ensure there are regular opportunities for the pupils to review and evaluate each other's work which they do with sensitivity. Several suggestions were extremely perceptive and helpful. The successful integration of a pupil with considerable physical special needs is managed superbly so that he is able to make a full and successful contribution to the work of one of the groups.
115. The school makes good provision for swimming by taking groups of pupils each week to the local baths. As a result, most of the pupils learn to swim at an early age, and by the time they leave school almost all are swimming a minimum of twenty-five metres in good style. The majority swims much further.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

116. The pupils' achievements in religious education are in line with levels outlined in the locally agreed syllabus at the end of both key stages. Although the arrangements for planning are informal and not based on a clear scheme adapted to the school's particular needs, a satisfactory range of work is covered. The lessons are based on topics such as 'food' and 'journeys' that are drawn from the locally agreed syllabus.
117. By the end of Key Stage 1, the pupils have a sound knowledge of Bible stories from the Old and the New Testaments, and through other well chosen stories are beginning to develop an awareness of feelings in themselves and others. A good example of this is the way that the teacher in Reception/Year 1 uses the story of 'Dogger' to help the children consider how to behave with care and consideration towards others. This type of lesson is used effectively as a basis for thinking about moral and social issues. The pupils are secure in their knowledge of the major festivals of Christmas and Easter in the Christian calendar, but a few are unable to explain their significance. In the topic currently being studied, the pupils are encouraged to think about special times when they share food. They are introduced to Diwali and this leads to a growing awareness of other world religions.
118. An examination of the pupils' work shows sound progress at the beginning of Key Stage 2 when they extend their learning by considering the importance of symbols of Christianity, such as hot cross buns at Easter time. In a topic on water, the pupils learn more about the importance of Baptism. They reinforce their understanding of other religions suitably when they learn the importance of Ramadan and its significance to Moslems. By the end of Key Stage 2, they examine the religious significance of historical events and people during their topic about "Journeys". Through effective discussion, the pupils begin to ask their own questions about the validity of the stories they know, showing an increasing maturity and independence. They are aware of the importance of religion and respect the beliefs of others. They record the significant events in their own lives on a time line, showing good links with history.
119. The strength of the teaching lies in those lessons that are well organised with teachers using interesting resources that capture the attention of the pupils and support their learning. As a result, the pupils are mostly very well behaved in lessons and listen attentively. In the best lessons in Key Stage 1, the teacher successfully creates a reflective atmosphere through skilful story telling and gives pupils the opportunity to consider their feelings. Occasionally, the teachers' own knowledge of other religions is less secure which can lead to less confident teaching. However, all teachers make very successful links with other curriculum areas and religious education makes a good contribution to both literacy and numeracy. In Key Stage 2, the teachers provide good opportunities for the pupils to investigate other religions, to offer suggestions and to discuss ideas.