

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Burnley

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119703

Headteacher: Mrs L Pollard

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Parrish
No: 22380

Dates of inspection: 5 - 8 March 2001

Inspection number: 189786

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Infant and Junior school

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 3 - 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Atkins

Date of previous inspection: 16 September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22380	Mrs P Parrish Registered inspector	English English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements What should the school do to improve further?
9327	Mr S Vincent 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?
25376	Mrs L Alvy Team inspector	Music Areas of learning for the foundation stage	How well are the pupils taught?
29504	Mrs S Herring Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education Special educational needs	
28200	Mr P Stevens Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
21045	Mrs S Walker Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography History	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Mary's is a voluntary aided Roman Catholic Primary School, situated close to the centre of Burnley, an area identified nationally as one of social disadvantage. The school is larger than average, with two classes in every year group. Currently 417 pupils are on roll aged between three and eleven; less than at the time of the last inspection although the same number of classes is maintained. There is an almost equal number of boys and girls but there are significantly more boys than girls in reception and Year 1. There are 90 children aged under six: 49 children attending part-time in the nursery and 41 full-time in reception. On entry to the nursery, the attainment of most children is below that expected for their age, and lower than at the time of the last inspection.

All pupils are baptised Roman Catholics and the majority are of white British heritage. A small number of pupils are of Asian background but none is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, 20.4 per cent, is average. The number of pupils with special educational needs, 18.7 per cent, is below average. Four pupils have statements of special educational need. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an effective school, based on Catholic values. There is a good sense of community and parents express strong support for its work. Teaching is good and from a lower than average starting point, most pupils achieve well in English and mathematics by the age of eleven. Attainment in science is lower than average, but improving. There have been recent changes in the leadership of the school and many improvements to management strategies, as required by the last inspection, are in the early stages. The headteacher is providing clear educational direction for the work of the school, which provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils are confident, friendly and well behaved. They are interested in learning.
- Compared to similar schools, standards are good in reading by the age of seven and in English and mathematics by the age of eleven.
- Good teaching enables successful learning from a lower than usual level of attainment on entry to the nursery.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress.
- Links with the community are very good and support good provision for spiritual, moral and social education. Parents' views indicate a strong satisfaction with the work of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing and in science are not yet high enough.
- Standards in mathematics are not high enough for seven-year-olds.
- Provision for the more able pupils is not as successful as for the less able.
- The management of the school is not based on a sufficiently clear school development plan.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in 1996, the school has made good improvement. The new headteacher, appointed two years ago, has worked hard to provide a clear programme for improvement.

Standards have improved in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) by the age of eleven, and are keeping pace with the rising national trend. Curriculum planning was weak in 1996 and now it is sound, with clear schemes of work in place in most subjects. Each subject now has a co-ordinator to manage provision and to help to raise standards further. Standards in design and technology were unsatisfactory but are now sound. The provision for pupils with special educational needs in the younger classes has improved and their progress is now good in both key stages. The quality of teaching has improved from satisfactory to good, due to improvements in planning and training for teachers, the impact of national strategies and the monitoring of lessons. A weakness remaining since the last inspection is a lack of opportunity for independent and collaborative learning, especially for the more able pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	C	C	B
mathematics	C	B	C	B
science	C	D	E	E

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

The inspection confirms the results of national tests, showing that standards for eleven-year-olds are keeping pace with the national average for English and mathematics. Standards in English rose earlier than nationally, which explains the very high grade in 1998. Currently, standards in both English and mathematics are continuing to improve for less able pupils and those with special educational needs but not for the more able pupils. In science, standards have remained stable at the 1998 level for three years, rather than rising as they have nationally and are now well below average compared to all schools. Inspection judgement indicates that standards in science remain well below average, although improving. The school has now adopted the national scheme of work and this is helping to raise standards. When compared to schools with a similar background, standards for eleven-year-olds are above average overall in English and mathematics, but still below average for the most able pupils and well below average in science. In all other subjects, including ICT, the attainment of eleven-year-olds meets the national expectation. The school's targets set for the year were exceeded and now require updating in preparation for future years to provide the school with a suitable challenge.

Results for seven-year-olds in the national tests in reading met the national average for all groups of pupils, and exceeded the average for similar schools. The inspection confirmed this good start to reading. In writing and mathematics, test results were well below national averages. Standards are steadily improving for the less able pupils, but not sufficiently for the more able. In science, standards in 2000 were well below average both nationally and for similar schools. Teachers now have a clearer understanding of national expectations in science for seven-year-olds, standards are now rising and, although still below average, are likely to match those in other schools within two years. In other subjects, the attainment of seven-year-olds meets national expectations except in art, where the range of activities provided is too narrow and achievement is low.

On entry to the nursery class, children's attainment is generally below that expected for the age group. However, they make good progress in the nursery, steady progress in reception, and by the beginning of Year 1, they are likely to meet the early learning goals set nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are attentive, concentrate well and try to do their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, and sometimes very good, in lessons and school assembly times. Good at lunchtime and playtimes, indoors and outside.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils are confident and suitably mature for their age. Relationships are good between pupils and between staff and pupils, showing mutual respect and consideration. Few tasks are set that allow pupils to learn independently to develop personal skills further.
Attendance	Satisfactory and in line with national averages. Pupils arrive punctually and all lessons start on time.

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.

Of the 90 lessons seen, the quality of teaching and learning was very good in 12 per cent; good in 45 per cent; satisfactory in 37 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in five lessons (6 per cent) due mainly to weaknesses in occasional lessons in planning for a suitable level of learning but also in two classes, due to weak pupil management skills. There are many strengths. The teachers in both the infants and the juniors are adept at teaching the basic skills, even to those pupils who find learning more difficult. Teaching in English is good. Reading is taught effectively and all pupils enjoy books and learn well. Parts of writing are taught well, such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting, but composition skills are less successfully taught. Within other subjects, reading is practised frequently, but limited opportunities are found to write. Teaching in mathematics is good in the juniors and satisfactory in the infants, where pupils in Year 2 learn at a slow pace. Numeracy skills are included to a satisfactory level in other subjects. Most teachers plan well for lessons, making good use of the time available. Their expectations are high for most pupils, especially for average and lower attaining pupils, and for those with special educational needs. Support staff are well prepared and play an important role in extending the pupils' learning. Teaching is less successful for the most able pupils and not enough is expected of them. Teachers' day-to-day assessments and marking vary in quality, with only a small number of teachers clearly identifying areas for improvement for individual pupils. The general termly targets set for individual pupils in English, mathematics and personal development come some way towards helping pupils to understand their next steps. Homework usefully supplements work in class. Teaching is good in science, where standards are rising, and in physical education. For the children under six, teaching and learning is good in the nursery and satisfactory in both reception classes.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. Links with the community supplement learning well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Provision for the pupils with special educational needs is given a high priority in the school. Teachers and support assistants work hard in close co-operation to help these pupils make good progress towards their individual targets.

Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress in their confidence and language skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development and helps pupils reach a good level of maturity. A significant contribution is the school's strong commitment to the Catholic faith. Provision for cultural development is sound.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A good level of care and welfare is provided and pupils feel confident and secure within the school community. Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are good and generally help teachers to meet the needs of most pupils well.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Good. The school has an open relationship with parents and seeks their views on what they like about the school and where they would like to see change. Parents support the school well and provide satisfactory support for their children's learning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear educational direction. She is enthusiastic, committed and has led the school successfully through a period of considerable change. Subject co-ordinator roles are new to most teachers but there are definite signs that they are leading the school towards improvements in standards in their subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are dedicated and hard working. Many of the governors are newly appointed and are not yet fully involved in shaping the future of the school. All statutory duties are fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. There is still work to be done on extending the use of statistical data to evaluate performance and set useful targets for the future.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. The school development plan is too brief and does not clearly state all the most important needs of the school, based on performance evaluation systems. This limits its usefulness as a guide to the school's use of available resources.

Staffing is satisfactory and accommodation is adequate to deliver the curriculum, although the layout of the junior building leads to significant inconveniences in its use. Most classrooms for the older pupils are cramped and oppressive. Although resources are satisfactory overall and adequate for most subjects, the school is aware of the need for more books in English and the school library. The reception classes would benefit from improved resources and more equipment for investigation is required in science. The school obtains resources appropriately at a competitive price, consults others on important matters and seeks to provide the best value it can.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching is good, the children have to work hard and they make good progress. Behaviour is good and the children become mature and responsible. The school is managed well and staff are approachable. The right amount of homework is given. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wider range of activities outside lessons. More information about their children's progress.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. The range of activities outside lessons is predominantly based around sporting activities, but is nevertheless satisfactory and similar to that provided in most other schools. The information provided for parents about their children's progress is broadly satisfactory but the extent and quality of the information in some pupils' annual reports is limited, and inspectors find that most schools offer more than one arranged opportunity each year for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory overall but varies at different levels in the school. The highest levels of achievement are in the nursery class, Year 1 and Year 6 for most pupils. At all stages in the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to a good awareness of their needs and additional learning support assistants supplementing staffing levels in most lessons in English and mathematics. The more able pupils do not always achieve as much as they are capable, as was the case in the last inspection. The school is aware of this and the new headteacher has made a start on resolving the problem. As a means of meeting the needs of pupils of differing abilities more successfully, arrangements have been introduced in English and mathematics for all year groups in the juniors whereby pupils work in 'sets', or classes, according to their previous attainment. This system is working well in both English and mathematics for pupils of average to lower ability, including those with special educational needs and the small number learning English as an additional language. The signs are, however, that this arrangement is helping to raise the achievement of the more able pupils in mathematics but not in English. Teaching plans for English tend to be the same for both sets and do not provide a high enough level of learning to really challenge the able pupils. Expectations for these pupils, including those who are identified as gifted or talented, are generally too low. In most lessons in all subjects, it is expected that these pupils will produce more work of better quality at an average level rather than work at a higher level. For example, in science and history, few questions are set for independent research for these pupils.

2. The findings of the inspection reflect the results in national tests and confirm indications that lower attaining pupils tend to achieve more in relation to previous work than the more able. The tests in 2000 place the school's results for eleven-year-olds as average in English and mathematics but well below average in science. When compared to similar schools, the results for eleven-year-olds are above average in English and mathematics but remain well below average in science. Results at the higher level in all three subjects are low, being well below the national average in English and science and below average in mathematics. Compared to similar schools, an average number of pupils achieve the higher level in mathematics but a below average number in English and a well below average number in science. For pupils who find learning difficult, including those with special educational needs, results are improving year on year, and the school is rightly proud of this achievement. In science, results have stayed at a similar level since rising significantly to meet the national average in 1998. Standards have thus failed to keep pace with the rising national trend. The school has now adopted the national scheme of work for science throughout the school and standards are rising but will take time to impact on standards for eleven-year-olds. In English, standards rose earlier than in most schools in 1998, but have since failed to keep pace with the rise in results for the most able pupils. The picture is similar in mathematics from 1999. Standards are now on an upward trend for all groups of pupils in mathematics, but only for the lower attaining pupils and those with special needs in English.

3. The school met its overall targets for eleven-year-olds in 2000 in English and mathematics. The targets set for 2001 are too low to provide a suitable challenge for the school.

4. For the seven-year-olds, the latest results in national tests and teachers' assessments indicate that good standards in reading have been maintained since the last inspection. Results in reading, confirmed by the inspection, meet the national average for all groups of pupils and are above average for similar schools. Standards in writing, mathematics and science, confirmed by the inspection, have not kept pace with the national trend for seven-year-olds and are below average nationally. This indicates, however, some improvement from the results in 2000, when standards in writing, mathematics and science for seven-year-olds were well below the national average, and below average when compared to similar schools. The standards expected nationally

are achieved by six-year-olds in Year 1 in all subjects, but not extended to an average level for seven-year-olds by sufficient pupils by the end of Year 2.

5. The high standards in reading for seven-year-olds are based on systematic, good teaching of letter sounds and blends, and good progress in word recognition skills. The National Literacy Strategy has extended this good foundation through improving the pupils' experience of different books and their understanding of the meaning of both fiction and non-fiction texts. The writing standards of most pupils maintain sound spelling, handwriting and punctuation skills but do not extend these skills to develop a sufficiently rich quality in the content of the writing. This means that many pupils, including the most able, are working at a more simple level than they should be. Too few opportunities are provided to practise enriching the pupils' written vocabulary, through improving describing words for people and places, or to extend the length of the pupils' written work.

6. In mathematics, the pace of learning is too slow to achieve the highest possible levels by the end of Year 2 and the more able pupils practise the skills they learn easily for too long before moving on. In science, the pupils are not taught to think and find out for themselves at an appropriate level in Year 2. Too often they are listening to explanations from the teacher and copying down her ideas. However, standards are rising in Year 2 in mathematics and science and results this year are likely to be below average, but higher than last year. In writing, standards are rising in Year 1 but composition skills are still not taken far enough in Year 2 to raise standards significantly for seven-year-olds.

7. When children enter the nursery, their attainment overall is lower than is usual for three-year-olds, and appears to be lower than at the time of the last inspection. Nonetheless, the children get off to a good start, make good progress in the nursery, built on by sound progress in the reception classes. By the time they begin Year 1 in the September before their sixth birthday, most children are likely to attain the expected goals identified nationally for three to five year olds in all areas of learning. There are, however, indications that more could be achieved in the reception classes. When the children are working in groups or on individual tasks, planning for learning is not as successful as the times when the children all work together as a class with their teacher. There are not always enough staff available at these times to extend the children's work through asking important questions to guide their learning forward. Play activities are not always focused sufficiently by the teachers to a clear purpose. There are some shortages in the reception classes of equipment of the right quality, and the available resources are not always organised well enough for easy access by the children. For example, a wide selection of ordered and labelled collage and modelling materials is not made available for creative work. An area for practising writing is not equipped with a sufficiently wide range of attractive materials and suggestions for writing, to motivate the children and encourage them to extend their skills.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them within their individual education plans. The teachers are adept at identifying early the pupils who may need extra help to achieve what is expected and the school shows a strong commitment to supporting these pupils well. It provides trained learning assistants for most literacy and numeracy lessons where these pupils are present, and this extra staffing helps teachers to organise extra help for the pupils. This system works very well, especially in Year 6 within the spring term, when pupils with special educational needs work in a small group every day for literacy and numeracy lessons. The teaching is of at least good quality and as a result, these pupils make at least good progress, often reaching a level of attainment by the end of Year 6 that is high in comparison to previous levels. The positive and hopeful attitude of all the staff towards the achievements of pupils with special educational needs is picked up by the pupils, helping them maintain a very enthusiastic approach to their work. This in turn helps them to achieve even more. By the end of Year 6, like other pupils, those with special educational needs have a good level of maturity and the ability to express their thoughts and views when questioned. In the infant classes, due to the part-time support available, help is not always available when needed, for example to help these young pupils in the very early and dependent stages of learning to write.

9. The provision for developing speaking skills is effective in most classes throughout the school and most pupils communicate well and through listening carefully to others, understand

instructions and discussions easily. This gives good support to the small number of pupils learning English as an additional language and they make good progress. Most speak English with the same confidence as other pupils and frequent practice extends their vocabulary skills rapidly. None is at an early stage of learning English.

10. Contrary to the national trend, boys achieved more than girls in all statutory tests for eleven-year-olds until 1999. The school's monitoring systems made staff aware of this difference and teachers have tried to improve the achievement of girls. A successful strategy last year was to include more girls who were thought to be underachieving within the small extra class set up for English and mathematics in Year 6 within the spring term. This arrangement paid off and in the most recent tests in 2000, girls have for the first time, achieved more than boys. With increased staff awareness of the tendency, gender differences in attainment are generally monitored carefully throughout the school.

11. In most other subjects beyond English, mathematics and science, pupils' attainment meets the national expectations at both seven and eleven years old. In information and communication technology (ICT), an improved scheme of work and the installation of a computer suite have ensured that standards are keeping pace with the national upward trend. In geography, history and physical education, standards meet the national expectations by the end of both the infant and the junior classes. This indicates that average standards have been maintained since the last inspection. In design and technology, the average standards being achieved represent a good improvement since the last inspection when standards were consistently weak throughout the school. In art, attainment varies between the infant and junior classes. Although standards are suitable in Year 1, a narrow curriculum in Year 2 means that attainment for seven-year-olds is too low. The pupils' skills pick up again in the juniors and, despite variations between the classes, by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly suitable for the age group, showing an appropriate level of attainment in the use of most techniques. However, a clear scheme of work is not yet established through the school and this explains to some extent the variations in standards. In music by the age of eleven, pupils are singing, composing and using instruments at the expected level for their age. Those who have the opportunity to have tuition in a musical instrument reach higher standards. Due to timetable arrangements, insufficient lessons were seen in the infants to judge the attainment of seven-year-olds in music.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. The pupils continue to have positive attitudes to their work and they are enthusiastic about what they do. The great majority responds well to instructions and to the expectations of their teachers. They are keen to contribute to discussions. As they grow older, pupils show increasing confidence in asking and answering questions, and talking about their work and the various other activities around the school. They are clear about their opinions and they are generally confident in expressing them.

13. Behaviour is good overall and the majority of pupils behave well in the classroom and around the school corridors. In the playground, they are equally well behaved. They are confident in their relationships with others and speak respectfully to adults. Just occasionally, a few pupils in junior classes are less amenable, but this is linked to unsatisfactory class management in a small number of lessons, where the quality of teaching is not good enough. There are very few instances of unacceptable behaviour and there have been no exclusions during the last school year. The small number of pupils with special educational needs who have targets linked to developing their behaviour make good progress.

14. Relationships at all levels are good and the atmosphere in the school is friendly. Pupils respect the views and choices of others and support those with special educational needs with sensitivity. Pupils who face specific difficulties in learning maintain good attitudes to school and their work, due largely to their positive relationships with staff and other pupils. No incidents of

bullying were observed at any time during the inspection. Parents express strong approval of the standards of behaviour achieved.

15. The pupils' personal development is good overall. Children enter the nursery with social skills which are below what might be expected for their age. Routines are effectively established in both the nursery and the reception classes and children understand what is expected of them. They enjoy coming to school and most persevere with their work and behave well. Occasionally children are less well motivated, for example during small group practical tasks. This is due to the lack of clear focus for the activity and the unavailability of an additional adult to extend and develop the children's work. Nonetheless, they make good progress in the early years and then improve steadily throughout the rest of their time in school. They are increasingly able to share resources, take their turn and work co-operatively in pairs and groups. They achieve an awareness of the world around them, know that many children are less fortunate than themselves and they help to raise funds for a number of charities. As pupils move towards the top of the school, they are able to accept responsibilities made available, for example as prefects supervising other pupils leaving the dining hall. Not all, however, can work independently. All pupils have personal targets, but not all are able to discuss them with confidence. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to work under their own initiative or to help in the day-to-day organisation of the school. Nevertheless, by the time they complete their final year in the school, pupils are sufficiently mature and prepared to move on to the challenge of secondary education.

16. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average and there is very little unauthorised absence. Just a few pupils attend irregularly and this does slow their progress. Most children are normally punctual and lessons start very promptly. Parents say their children enjoy school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching is good. Throughout the school, emphasis is placed on the teaching of basic skills and as a result, most pupils leave school at eleven years of age successful in both English and mathematics. In 94 per cent of the 90 lessons seen, the teaching was never less than satisfactory. In 57 per cent, it was good or better. In 12 per cent of the lessons, the teaching was very good. There were unsatisfactory elements in a very small proportion of lessons (six per cent) and this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when 19 per cent of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory.

18. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, in English, science, and physical education throughout the school, and good in mathematics in the juniors. Teaching is sound, overall, in ICT and geography throughout the school, in mathematics in the infants and in design and technology in the juniors. Insufficient lessons were seen to make overall judgements on the teaching in art, history or music, or in design and technology in the infants. Individual lessons of very good teaching were seen in Year 1 and Year 6 in literacy and numeracy, science, ICT, design and technology, physical education. Very good teaching was also seen in Year 3 in music. The good quality of teaching overall reflects the time and resources invested by the school in order to raise standards through improving planning systems and monitoring lessons.

19. The teaching of the children aged three to five is satisfactory overall, as was reported in the last inspection. In the nursery, teaching is good and in consequence, the children make good strides in their learning. Examples of good teaching were seen, for example, in the development of early literacy and numeracy skills and the children's personal, social and emotional development. The nursery teacher's management of the children is good and this means that rules and routines are quickly established and early learning experiences are positive as a result. In the reception classes, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Whole class discussions are constructive and joint planning is effective in ensuring that both classes of children receive the same teaching opportunities. Planning for individual and groups of children is less effective, however, as tasks are sometimes less stimulating and the children have too few opportunities to develop independence

through, for example, an environment organised so that they can select further materials to supplement their work. This was apparent in their creative work, the use of construction materials and the lack of an independent writing area to stimulate skills through providing interesting reasons for writing. Teachers and support staff work closely together to assess the children's achievements and these are recorded effectively to plan the next stage of learning. When teachers are left without the support of qualified staff, important opportunities are missed to develop communication and language skills in each area of learning. For example, opportunities are missed to develop the children's mathematical vocabulary during practical tasks with construction kits, and to share and enjoy a wide range of books and poetry within a good quality setting.

20. The quality of teaching and learning in the infants is good overall but varies between the year groups. In Year 1, it is good overall and almost half of the lessons seen were very good. In a science lesson, a very clear and brisk introduction helped children to recall prior knowledge about investigating materials. Similarly the very good pace in a numeracy lesson promoted good mental skills, and in physical education effective instructions and demonstrations improved the pupils' performance. In Year 2, teaching is satisfactory overall although good in a third of lessons. In a geography lesson, for example, the pupils made good progress because the teacher's confidence and clear explanations helped them to understand how to use maps. In contrast, weak subject knowledge in an art lesson as a result of planning not clearly linked to a sequence of skill development led to low expectations. In science, lack of pace and in mathematics, insufficient involvement of the children in their learning and insufficient challenge for the more able pupils limits progress.

21. The quality of teaching for the junior pupils is good overall. In the best teaching, for example in a Year 6 literacy lesson, very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm inspired pupils to achieve more. In ICT, confident subject knowledge and support for individual pupils produced effective and demanding activities. In a lively music lesson in Year 3, a very clear introduction which included the planned learning objectives, maximised the progress the pupils made throughout the lesson. Other features of good quality lessons were teachers' clear explanations, good use of subject vocabulary, good organisation and intervention to maintain and assess progress and challenging questioning. In addition, good relationships with pupils mean that they are motivated and confident, willing to listen and so there are good gains in learning. Conversely, poor control and management of the pupils were factors leading to the unsatisfactory elements in a small number of lessons seen. This led to inadequate interaction with the pupils and reduced their learning significantly.

22. The teaching of literacy and ICT skills in other subjects are good and make a significant contribution to the development of these basic skills. In a history lesson in Year 5, for example, the pupils used their good factual knowledge about the Tudors to draw inferences and hypothesize through discussion about why Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. In an ICT lesson in Year 3, a class of more able pupils used their word processing skills to complete a word level task in a literacy lesson. In Year 6, effective use of CD-ROMs and books were used to support independent research about mountain ranges and the circulation system in the human body. In contrast, there were some missed opportunities during a Year 6 geography lesson to develop geographical vocabulary. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 use software programs effectively to support the development of both literacy and numeracy skills. The use of numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory and enables pupils to practise mathematical skills within everyday learning. For example, graphs are used in geography lessons to provide the annual profile of rain and sunshine within different climates, and numeracy skills are used to calculate spreadsheet entries within ICT.

23. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The tasks in literacy and numeracy are well matched to the targets in pupils' individual educational plans, which are drawn up by the class teachers. Learning support assistants are well deployed in lessons and well briefed by the teacher. This has a positive effect on the pupils' progress. However, in other lessons, work is not always suitably adapted to pupils' needs. For example, pupils with special educational needs sometimes have difficulty in reading a worksheet that has been planned for the whole class. On other occasions, particularly for the younger pupils, insufficient classroom help is available to support writing activities.

24. Teaching for the more able pupils is under-developed. In the more able sets for literacy in the junior classes, pupils are not always fully challenged by the work set. The same task is planned for both sets but the work generally meets the needs of the lower set best. For example, the poetry lesson for the higher set in Year 6 provided insufficient analysis of the different styles of poetry at sufficiently high level, well within the reach of most pupils. This reduced opportunities for most pupils to produce work of high quality. A review of work in history and lessons in geography indicate that tasks are usually general to the whole class, rather than tailored to provide the right level of challenge to all groups of pupils. Sometimes teachers try to make this work by asking pupils to work in mixed ability partnerships, but the more able pupils remain insufficiently challenged and the less able tend to become discouraged, looking to their more able partners for answers rather than working things out for themselves. The lack of challenge provided by teachers for the brighter pupils is restricting the overall level of achievement in the school. The school is aware of this weakness and has included it within the school development plan.

25. Methods used by teachers do not always include sufficient variety. Worksheets for completion by pupils are generally overused. Sometimes the use of worksheets restricts learning, such as in a geography lesson in Year 3 when pupils were taught through reading a worksheet rather than through direct teaching by the teacher. Pupils struggled to find place names on both the worksheet and then the map. Equally limiting is an inappropriate focus for the pupils on the completion of worksheets as opposed to learning to understand how to collect and record data on the climate. The over use of worksheets is limiting the development of extended writing. In history in some classes, much of the past work seen in pupils' books was copied; another example of teaching through a worksheet rather than independent research and recording of information. A striking exception were the letters composed by pupils in Year 6, supposedly from an unemployed worker in the shipbuilding industry in the 1930's, demonstrating empathy and understanding of conditions at the time, as well as good persuasive writing.

26. The small number of pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by the successful teaching of speaking and listening throughout the school and in consequence make good progress.

27. Homework is used satisfactorily to consolidate learning at school particularly in English to develop early reading skills. Teachers do not make good use generally of evaluative comments to support progress. Where they do as in mathematics in Year 6 they provide effective motivation to support the pupils' development.

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

28. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, is satisfactory in quality and provides an adequate range, overall, of opportunities to learn. This is an overall improvement since the last inspection when the full curriculum was not in place due to the omission of some aspects of design and technology.

29. The curriculum for the children in the nursery and reception classes is satisfactory overall and follows the nationally recommended areas of learning. There is insufficient emphasis, however, in the organisation and planning of the reception classes to provide challenging opportunities that develop the children's independence fully. For example, there are limited regularly planned opportunities to select good quality, exciting materials and resources to support imaginative play and language development. There is not always enough space made available to write and draw with a variety of materials and for a variety of purposes, to listen to a taped story, or to investigate how things happen and how they work.

30. The curriculum for five to eleven-year-olds is generally broad and balanced. Time

allocations to subjects are now appropriate overall and improved since the last inspection. This allows continued priority to be given to English and mathematics, but also a sensible balance between the other subjects. Science is now allocated enough time and standards are improving in consequence. The school's curriculum is based on sound policies and programmes for learning. These are usually based on national schemes of work, and some are still in the process of being fully adapted to meet the needs of the pupils. For example, in English, provision for the composition aspect of writing is insufficient and not fully co-ordinated through the school. This is limiting standards in writing overall. Nonetheless, in most subjects, arrangements are improved since the last inspection and the school has tried to ensure that there is better progression in learning from year to year. The school has worked hard to improve its planning systems to support the delivery of the curriculum and long and medium-term planning schedules are now satisfactory. Although the needs of the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are met, the arrangements for the highest attaining pupils are not fully considered and this is reducing their achievements. As at the time of the last inspection, there are too few opportunities organised for independent learning or research. In science, for example, pupils have too few opportunities to devise their own investigations or to supplement those planned by the teacher. The library is not sufficiently well equipped to enable independent research through texts.

31. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and enables them to take part in all areas of the curriculum, in lessons and after school. There is good support within the literacy and numeracy lessons, both from the class teacher and from learning support assistants. However, the tasks in some other subjects, such as history and geography, are not always adapted successfully to suit the different levels of understanding in the class and within others, particularly in the infants, insufficient support is available for these pupils within reading and writing activities.

32. The school has responded well to the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, and effective systems are in place. The school's arrangements for teaching literacy are good overall, although much stronger for reading than for writing. Literacy hours are carefully planned, and teachers try to achieve a sensible balance between teaching reading and teaching writing. Opportunities for reading are well integrated into the planning for other subjects and suitable occasions in school. For example, lessons in science and history include finding out through reading, and hymns sung in assembly times are written out for all to read. Provision for writing is not so successful and the school is seeking to improve this element of the literacy curriculum. The requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy are in place and helping to ensure that pupils achieve all key learning objectives specified. Mathematical skills are integrated to a satisfactory level in other subjects to provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn to apply their skills.

33. A suitable range of activities outside lessons is provided and these extend the skills of the pupils who choose to take part. There is a wide variety of sports available, such as cross country events, rounders and cricket in addition to football and netball. Pupils have the opportunity to learn a variety of orchestral instruments and there is a choir for pupils interested in singing. Those interested in reading are able to join the book club. Educational visits are arranged to supplement the curriculum and these include a residential visit for the older pupils. There are opportunities for pupils to attend religious activities, such as saying the rosary each morning.

34. The school seeks to ensure that equal opportunities for learning are made available for all groups of pupils. Although there is no separate policy, the school's aims, subject policies and practice clearly establish that the principle is in operation. No significant differences were identified in attainment between boys and girls during the inspection week. In lessons, teachers include all pupils in discussions and activities, and ensure that pupils with special educational needs receive the support they require and are not generally withdrawn from lessons. Teachers do not always plan, however, to ensure that the most able pupils are successfully challenged. Pupils generally have equal access to all activities. For example, both girls and boys participate in football and in rounders. On the other hand, pupils choosing to learn to play a musical instrument are withdrawn from lessons. The negative effects of this practice are kept to a minimum by alternating times each term and making sure that full lessons are not missed. All pupils have the opportunity to be

monitors with responsibilities that keep the school running smoothly. In addition, the school gives extra support to pupils in Year 6 who are close to achieving the national level for their age in literacy and numeracy.

35. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. The school covers sex and drugs education as required nationally. Some teachers set time aside for discussions, where pupils explore such themes as relationships, feelings and self-esteem. However, there are currently differences between classes in their approach to PSHE, which have been recognised by the school. Consequently, a draft policy has been drawn up that has yet to be agreed and put into action. The school supports pupils in their work for charities such as Cafod, St Joseph's Penny and other Catholic organisations. Pupils have also supported, through fund-raising, children in Chernobyl and the Sunshine project for Orphans in Egypt. Personal and social education helps pupils to become more aware of how their school community is affected by their own attitudes and behaviour towards one another.

36. The school has set up very good links with the community to develop pupils' individually and as growing citizens, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Local supermarkets have assisted with healthy eating projects, and professional footballers are involved in providing coaching. The school participates in many activities with its associated church, and has also visited the place of worship of another religious denomination. Regular features in the local newspaper have led to the school creating its own publication. Pupils support people in the community who are in need. These are a few examples of the many ways pupils are learning to become good citizens. Links with local high schools are satisfactory and St Mary's is newly involved in an 'Excellence in Cities' project based at a local high school.

37. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. This is an overall improvement since the last inspection. However, provision for pupils' cultural education is less successful than the other aspects.

38. Provision for the pupils' spiritual development is good. In assemblies, pupils respect the atmosphere that is created by the quietness and the light of candles. In one assembly, there was a representation of wilderness, symbolising the Christian journey through Lent in the company of Jesus. This added to the sense of reverence and led to purposeful reflection on the meaning of Lent. Pupils sing hymns where they are encouraged to reflect carefully on the meaning of the words. Occasionally pupils experience moments of wonder occurring within lessons. In a geography lesson, for example, pupils were in awe of the scale and beauty of mountains. In a science lesson, pupils were very impressed by the vast changes that take place from seed to tree in plant growth, while in another, a pupil exclaimed that she was 'shaking with excitement' when she saw part of the skeleton of a shark. Sometimes these feelings are expressed in poetry, such as the cinquaine poem written about a mountain by a pupil in Year 6.

39. Provision for moral and social development is good. The school has a clear behaviour policy that emphasises the difference between right and wrong. In lessons, teachers expect pupils to act towards one another and adults in a way that shows respect. They also provide many opportunities for pupils to collaborate in pairs and groups, such as in ICT, geography and history, where they share activities and try to support one another. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities such as monitoring behaviour in the dining hall and cloakrooms and helping teachers. In lessons and assemblies, the school acknowledges pupils who have shown good manners or been kind. Outside the school, Year 6 pupils learn to live together at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre at Whitehough.

40. Provision for the pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Teachers make pupils sufficiently aware of cultural dimensions in what they are learning. In English, for example, pupils' work covers a satisfactory range of literature, and storytellers occasionally visit the school, including one with an African heritage. In addition, pupils make visits to local theatres and theatre groups visit the school. Work in history brings pupils into contact with the changing role of women in society, and the effects of increasing industrialisation on people's way of life. Pupils learn folk dancing in

physical education and are beginning to use musical instruments from different cultures. Older pupils have had the opportunity to visit art galleries and have gone on to produce work in the style of other artists, such as Monet, Van Gogh and Lowry. Children in the nursery have links with a nursery in Geneva in Switzerland. Within religious education, pupils are introduced to features of Judaism and held a 'Holocaust Day' to raise pupils' awareness of the history of the Jewish people. However, the school is seeking to extend the pupils' awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of British society through links with schools in more culturally diverse areas. A book is kept to keep a record of any 'racial incidents' occurring in school to monitor any problems in relationships between pupils of different ethnic background.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The good procedures for the care and welfare of pupils are based on the positive relationships between adults and pupils. The last inspection report made some criticisms of this aspect of the school's work, particularly concerning the identification and support for pupils with special educational needs. These concerns have been dealt with and the provision and support for pupils with special educational needs is now consistently good across the school.

42. Procedures for child protection are satisfactorily organised, led by the headteacher. Class teachers have the first responsibility for pastoral care and the children know they must speak to adults if they have any worries whilst they are at school. The personal, social and health education curriculum deals with many aspects of growing up safely and securely. It has been recently reviewed to provide more consistent and planned opportunities in line with the wider curriculum recommended nationally.

43. A new health and safety co-ordinator has been appointed and a new guidance document has been received recently from the local education authority. The school's own policy is now due to be updated accordingly. All matters related to management responsibilities, classroom safety, fire drills, first aid, medicines and general welfare are dealt with satisfactorily. The headteacher, caretaker and staff carry out assessments of risk and inspections at regular intervals. The headteacher is very aware that particular vigilance will be necessary during the imminent building developments, some of which will be carried out during term time.

44. The systems for the improvement and management of behaviour are effective. The rules are clear, often posted in the classrooms, and the standard of behaviour expected is clearly understood by staff and pupils. Teachers are particularly good at behaviour management, supported well by assistants and mid-day supervisors. Pupils enjoy the rewards of merits and certificates, co-operating and working together well. The school is a friendly place to be and parents approve of the school's provision for appropriate behaviour.

45. Attendance and punctuality are monitored well and most parents are very co-operative in reporting absences and getting their children to school regularly and on time. Where necessary, the school follows up absences and lateness very promptly and makes good use of the educational welfare service.

46. There are good procedures for assessing the progress of the children aged three to five years. Early assessments are completed in the first few weeks of attendance at the nursery, shared with parents and used to guide planning for future work. These form part of the children's records as they progress through the school and provide useful starting points as they enter the reception classes. Further statutory assessments are then undertaken a few weeks after entry into the two reception classes and, alongside other assessments of the children's work, are used to plan tasks matched to the children's level of achievement. Comprehensive records are also kept of the children's progress in for example, literacy, numeracy and personal and social development. Children with special educational needs are effectively identified at an early stage and provision is good as a result.

47. In the infant and junior classes, in addition to the statutory national tests and assessments in English, mathematics and science in Years 2 and 6, pupils undertake the optional national tests in English and mathematics in Years 3, 4 and 5 and a similar assessment has recently been introduced in Year 1. Good use is made of resulting information in the setting arrangements established this year within each year group in the juniors. This is helping to raise standards in English and mathematics. However, analysis of the test information is not yet sufficiently rigorous in identifying specific areas for improvement. A good start has been made on identifying individual targets for each pupil. All pupils from Year 1 onwards have their own booklet identifying individual targets in English, mathematics and in their general attitudes to school. For example, several pupils resolved to remember their homework and to give it in on time, and their teacher has noted a good improvement. Pupils generally give their personal targets careful attention. They are learning to evaluate their own progress and use this information to identify future targets. This system, intended to increase the pupils' awareness of their own learning, is in its early stages but nonetheless demonstrates the school's commitment to raising standards through improved use of assessment procedures.

48. There are regular tests in spelling and mathematics to assess progress, and tests at the end of science topics have recently been introduced. Teachers keep clear records showing the progress of each pupil against key objectives in English and mathematics. Good use is sometimes made of the mental arithmetic sessions as a quick assessment. For example, the Year 1 teachers find out which pupils know the answers to particular sums as pupils use their fans with numbers on to show the total. The school recognises the need to develop a method for tracking the levels of learning of pupils as they move through the school. It has begun to keep such records over the last eighteen months for pupils in the lower junior classes and plans to gradually adopt this system throughout the school. As yet there are no established systems for assessing the pupils' progress in subjects other than English, mathematics and science, although subject co-ordinators are working towards introducing appropriate strategies.

49. Good care is provided for pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress against the clear targets set within individual educational plans. Pupils with such needs are identified early and they are well supported by class teachers and by learning support assistants, where available. In infant classes, classroom help is available in about half the lessons and this is adequate overall. Good support is given in literacy and numeracy lessons through the setting arrangements in the juniors, accompanied by learning support assistants on four days out of five. Arrangements for literacy and numeracy lessons in Year 6 enable a very small group of pupils with special educational needs to work together during the spring term. This has a strong impact on achievement for these pupils. Support for pupils with special educational needs is generally satisfactory within other subjects, although help is not always sufficient to support such pupils in reading and writing in the infant classes. Clear records are kept for the pupils with special educational needs and their progress is monitored closely. For those pupils with statements of special educational need, progress is recorded daily. However, despite their best efforts, the school is experiencing some difficulty in getting external specialist advice in order to move pupils to Stage 3 of the national Code of Practice.

50. The procedures for recording pupils' personal development, attendance and behaviour are satisfactory and pupils receive appropriate support to help them achieve their best. The headteacher, through her role as co-ordinator for special educational needs, and the class teachers know the pupils well and help from a variety of sources can be channelled effectively as a consequence. Behaviour or attendance targets are agreed where necessary and parents are involved at an early stage. Pupils with special needs are quickly identified, receive good support and make good progress as a result. Good records are built up so that detail of their progress is available for review meetings with parents and for further target setting.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. A remarkably high proportion of the questionnaires issued for the inspection were returned

to the school by parents and carers, and this itself is indicative of the good relationship which exists between them. The questionnaire responses show very high levels of approval for what the school does for its pupils and what it achieves on their behalf. Parents are very happy with the progress made by their children, the behaviour in the school, the quality of teaching, the leadership and management and the approachability of staff.

52. Parents are given a satisfactory range of information about the school and what is happening there. As their children join the nursery and the reception class, parents are welcomed with an induction meeting to explain the organisation of the school and the curriculum. Most information about day-to-day matters is done through newsletters which are attractive, informative and wide-ranging. At the beginning of each year, information is provided about the topics to be studied in each class, so that parents are informed and able to help. There are opportunities to attend class assemblies and there are additional meetings to explain important curricular issues, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. There are many opportunities for informal communication. The headteacher and class teachers are available and talk with many parents at the start and end of each day. However, in some classes and in some subjects, the pupils' annual reports are insufficiently detailed to tell parents what has been achieved, how their child might improve and how they might help. The two school brochures contain limited information about the curriculum and how it is taught. There is only one occasion during the school year when parents can have a formal discussion with the class teacher without making a special appointment.

53. Parents of children with special educational needs are involved in decisions from the earliest stage. They are consulted as soon as the school feels any concern and before pupils are placed on the register of special educational needs. Parents are invited to reviews and are kept fully informed of the children's progress. Some families have targets set for the children at home to support work being done in school, and this improves progress.

54. The good relationship between the parents and the school ensures that parents make a good contribution to the life of the school and what it achieves. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is very active and its organisers arrange regular and well attended social events. As well as creating a sense of community, their efforts also make a significant contribution to school funds and these are spent directly on resources for the benefit of the pupils in the classrooms. Some of these funds have been spent on improvements to the buildings and these have had a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school seeks parents' involvement in shaping the future direction of the school and parents respond positively. The 'Parents Support Group' (to which all parents are invited) has recently helped in the review and development of a number of key policies, such as the behaviour policy. Most have signed the Home and School Agreement, which commits the school, parents and pupils to a list of actions in support of the pupils' education. The school uses its own annual questionnaire to canvas opinion about the work of the school and to find out what issues parents feel are important. Parents give good support to the social life of the school, attending performances, assemblies and services in good numbers. Requests for parents to help supervise children on school trips are always answered positively, but very few parents help regularly in the classroom and the school would welcome more.

55. Parents feel very positive about the education their children receive and play a satisfactory part in it themselves. Some parents would like to see the range of activities made available outside lessons extended. Homework is generally well supported, though a few parents do not accept its importance in achieving high standards. Most parents are keen to attend and discuss progress at the consultation meetings, particularly where their children have special educational needs. A significant minority has expressed the wish for an additional consultation evening with teachers each year. Parents are keen to ensure their children come to school regularly and punctually. Since the last inspection, the school's strong partnership with parents has been maintained.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher, appointed since the last inspection, and her recently appointed deputy work well in partnership and share a clear understanding of the future direction for the school, strongly underpinned by Roman Catholic principles and values. The headteacher is enthusiastic, committed and has led the school successfully through a period of considerable change both nationally and through improvements made to existing school practices. The school has improved well since the last inspection although a lack of clear focused development planning and rigorous monitoring are two issues still to be addressed. The headteacher has won the confidence and support of staff and governors, and has fostered the team spirit that is now emerging; in the main, staff have responded positively to change.

57. Governors are interested and supportive; their statutory duties are appropriately met. Several are new to the role and have yet to develop their skills fully. Through their regular meetings, committees and training, the governors have a sound overview of the work of the school although they have little active involvement in shaping its future. The headteacher provides regular reports to update governors but these provide too little information about standards and consequently, governors do not have a clear overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the school or of the standards for which they are accountable. Governors are becoming increasingly more involved in the day-to-day work of the school, for example through the visits of the governors who visit the school to see the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Suitable strategies for the performance management of staff are in place.

58. Since the last inspection when it was a key issue, the role of subject co-ordinators is developing well although co-ordinators' knowledge of standards in their subjects is variable and some are more effective than others. The most effective have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards in their subject and a good insight into teaching and learning. For others, knowledge of their subjects is limited to auditing resources and monitoring work on display. Although there has been some monitoring of teaching and learning by co-ordinators, particularly in literacy and numeracy, this practice has yet to extend to other subjects. All co-ordinators have been given an opportunity to develop their management skills through handling a small budget for their subject. All produce an annual action plan, although these vary in quality and key areas for development are not routinely prioritised within the school development plan.

59. Priorities set by the school for development are in the main appropriate, although the school development plan does not include the full list to provide an efficient management tool. A significant omission is the improvement of science, a core subject in which standards are too low. The plan has further weaknesses as it does not project beyond the current year and lacks enough detail to make it a useful management tool in guiding the school forward. Although there are clear objectives for each priority included, it does not make explicit the small steps to be taken to enable each objective to be achieved. Success criteria are measured by the completion of a particular task, such as writing a policy, rather than evaluating the impact of each development on teaching and learning. Furthermore, it is insufficiently linked to the budget to provide a clear strategic plan.

60. There is not a clear enough link between financial planning and school priorities. The previous inspection highlighted shortcomings in the school's financial planning and this remains an area for improvement. A large under-spend (14 per cent of the school's current annual budget) has been accrued with insufficiently precise forward planning for how it will be spent. The projected accrual for the current year is earmarked to fund urgently required building work. The governors are understandably committed to maintaining the existing staffing levels and classes of single age groups, but financial planning needs to take a longer-term view, particularly with regard to the school's falling roll and its potential impact on the budget. The clerical assistant who deals with finance has been in post for only a year and is not yet fully conversant with the computerised system for financial management. Nonetheless, day-to-day financial transactions are managed satisfactorily and the administrative procedures in place enable the school to run smoothly. Specific grants are appropriately spent.

61. Monitoring of the school's work is satisfactory overall and has developed significantly since the last inspection when monitoring of teaching was minimal. The newly established programme

for monitoring teaching and learning involves both formal and informal classroom observations by senior managers. This has been well thought out to ensure that there is a specific focus, such as the provision for literacy and numeracy. It has the potential, when rigorously implemented and evaluated, to have a positive impact on the performance of staff. Governors are not yet involved in monitoring the work of the school rigorously. Statistical data is not used fully as a management tool for target setting and ultimately raising standards, for example by making comparisons with similar schools. The school is aware that this is an area for development and has begun to use data from national tests to monitor the performance of pupils, for example to highlight any variations in standards by gender, and the impact of the extra classes arranged for Year 6 in the spring term.

62. The school has an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers to teach the National Curriculum, religious education and the foundation stage for three to five year olds. All teachers now have a subject co-ordinator role and other key responsibilities are shared between members of the senior management team. There is a satisfactory number of learning support assistants, appropriately deployed and contributing significantly to the overall standards of teaching achieved and the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

63. The management of arrangements for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school and this is an improvement since the last inspection, when provision for pupils aged three to seven was inadequate. The headteacher, who is also the special needs co-ordinator, and the governor with responsibility for special educational needs have a good overview of provision. The headteacher sees all the individual educational plans and ensures that all statutory requirements in respect of local education authority statements of special need are met. The governor has monitored the provision for those pupils with statements and keeps the governing body fully informed. The school has full regard for the national Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs and the school's systems and procedures are fully in place and up to date. The school seeks specialist advice at an early stage, though there is some difficulty in receiving the specialist support required to move pupils from Stage 2 to Stage 3 of the Code of Practice.

64. The accommodation is satisfactory, overall, but the criticisms made in the last inspection still remain. The infant building has small teaching areas with a large open-plan area, which is not fully used; the junior block is an extremely awkward building, with small classrooms, poor access and a difficult working environment. However, every effort is made to minimise the effects on pupils' learning and the caretaker ensures that the buildings and environment are kept clean and maintained well. Improvements to the junior building have been planned for some time and these are now taking place, financed by the local education authority. Classroom space is in the process of being improved; the library is being re-sited; access improved so that lessons are not disturbed by through traffic of pupils; and the toilet areas are all being refurbished.

65. The resources for learning are generally sufficient to meet the demands of the National Curriculum. However, there are insufficient stocks of books in class to fully support the breadth of the reading curriculum required in English and it is often necessary for pupils to share textbooks. The stock of library books is deficient in quantity, range and quality and this limits pupils' opportunities independent learning through research. However, there are plans to improve the junior library in the immediate future, when the reorganisation of the junior building is complete. In science, there is a shortage of equipment required to teach the investigational aspects of the curriculum and this reduces pupils' opportunities for exploration and experimentation. In the foundation stage for three to five year olds, particularly in the reception classes, resources are limited and those available are not sufficiently well organised to develop the children's independence in literacy, numeracy, imaginative, creative and 'small-world' play. In obtaining resources, the school appropriately seeks a competitive price, consults others on important matters and seeks to provide the best value it can.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. The governors, headteacher and staff should:

- (i) review the curriculum for writing and science in both the infant and junior classes to seek ways of raising standards further;
[paragraphs 86-88, 108]
- (ii) work to raise standards in mathematics for seven-year-olds;
[paragraphs 95-96]
- (iii) improve the provision for the more able pupils in order to improve their levels of attainment in all subjects;
[paragraphs 1, 24]
- (iv) establish a clear and comprehensive school development plan that includes:
 - all the main priorities for improving standards;
 - implications for staff training;
 - an informed estimate of costs;
 - measurable targets linked as far as possible to pupils' attainment to provide a means of monitoring the success of action taken and the cost effectiveness of expenditure.
[paragraphs 59 –60]

In addition to the main areas for improvement, the school should:

- review the provision for three to five year olds in the light of latest national guidelines, to ensure that opportunities for the children are of equally high quality in all classes.
[paragraphs 7, 19, 67-80]

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	90
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	12	45	37	6	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	25	368
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a	75

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	69

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	10

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	33	25	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	27	26	25
	Girls	20	20	19
	Total	47	46	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (86)	81 (81)	83 (91)
	National	83 (82)	84 (83)	90 (86)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	27	25
	Girls	22	19	14
	Total	48	46	39
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	83 (86)	79 (86)	67 (93)
	National	84 (82)	88 (86)	88 (87)

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
	2000	19	21	40

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	13	10	13
	Girls	20	19	18
	Total	33	29	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (76)	73 (83)	78 (78)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	11	12	13
	Girls	16	13	17
	Total	27	25	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (86)	63 (82)	76 (83)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	317
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.5
Average class size	26.3

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	183

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Total number of education support staff	1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	32.5

Number of pupils per FTE adult	12.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	694,649
Total expenditure	706,203
Expenditure per pupil	1,840
Balance brought forward from previous year	111,284
Balance carried forward to next year	99,730

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	393
Number of questionnaires returned	335

Percentage of responses in each category

My child likes school.

My child is making good progress in school.

Behaviour in the school is good.

My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.

The teaching is good.

I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.

I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.

The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.

The school works closely with parents.

The school is well led and managed.

The school is helping my child become mature

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	35	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	52	42	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	47	6	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	48	6	4	1
The teaching is good.	60	36	3	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	43	16	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	32	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	35	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	40	45	13	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	38	6	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature	50	45	2	1	1

and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

28	32	22	10	9

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

67. The children's attainment on entry to the nursery is generally below the level usual for three-year-olds, which represents a change from the last inspection when attainment on entry was judged to be average. Assessments undertaken by the nursery staff support this judgement and they provide valuable information to guide planning for the children's development. Most children joining the reception classes have attended the nursery and further assessments show that most have progressed well. Children's achievements in the reception classes are sound and by the end of the reception year, children are likely to attain the level typically expected in personal, social and emotional development, language, communication and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world, physical and creative development. A few children exceed the level expected in reading and mathematics. Children who have special educational needs are identified early, receive good additional support and make good progress.

Personal, social and emotional development

68. By the time the children leave the reception class, most are likely to reach the expected levels in personal, social and emotional development. Clear well-established routines are taught effectively from the children's entry to the nursery. Initially many children require support to take part in the carefully planned activities. Teaching is good because the adult's sensitive and thoughtful interventions guide the children successfully. With this support they begin to form good relationships with other children for example, taking turns and sharing. Members of staff get to know the children very well and help them to sustain interest in the activities provided, and to listen sensibly to each other during group discussions.

69. In the reception classes, staff build effectively on the good start in the nursery; for example, most children tidy away the resources sensibly and put on their outdoor clothes with little assistance. Classroom management and organisation is satisfactory overall although the opportunities to select materials and resources independently are limited by their organisation, presentation and quality. Most children are beginning to develop their understanding of the needs of others; for example, more able children take turns using the computer sensibly whilst a small group of less able children needed adult intervention to complete a construction activity productively. Sometimes during more independent activities the development of language and communication skills alongside personal, social and emotional development is restricted by insufficient adult intervention or the lack of a clear focus set for the task.

Communication, language and literacy

70. In communication, language and literacy, most children are likely to attain the expected levels by the end of the reception year. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and good in the nursery. The children achieve well in the nursery and good teaching provides an appropriate balance between opportunities to develop skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing in a variety of planned and spontaneous settings. Children enter the nursery with differing levels of literacy skills. A small number of more able children already speak in sentences and converse confidently with the adults. Most, however, use single words or need skilled prompting by the adult when taking part in a conversation. A few remain silent. In a literacy game 'Where will the wolf hide?', more able children with the teacher's support used picture and word prompts to name the different rooms of a house. A few found the correct word and one or two could recognise some initial sounds like 'b' for bedroom. They enjoyed the game and persevered because the teacher made it both enjoyable and exciting. Less able children have limited vocabulary and use of descriptive language in their conversations. The teacher uses registration effectively to develop language skills. "Am I looking or choosing?" she says when checking whose turn it is to count the

children that day. Incidental opportunities, such as snack-time, are used well to support communication skills, as the children are encouraged to discuss their choice of snack for the following week. They listen carefully and offer some sensible suggestions. Teachers read stories well to the children and work tirelessly to engage interest, and to encourage concentration and participation. Questions are used effectively to help the children to understand the story. A number of children answer eagerly although some have some difficulty in listening. A few higher attaining children pretend to read to each other making up the words and using expressive voices for the characters as they follow the pictures. A small number of children can read simple books and a few begin to know the initial sounds of letters and write them. The majority of children are producing emerging letter shapes as they move to the reception classes.

71. Satisfactory teaching and learning overall in the reception classes supports the development of confidence in reading and writing skills. The teachers effectively build on the skills already learnt in the nursery, with good input into the whole class element of teaching. As a result, by the end of the foundation stage, the majority of the children recognise simple words, read and write simple sentences and recognise and write most of the initial sounds of the alphabet. A number of less able children, including those with special educational needs, still require support to form recognisable letters and do not readily build simple words. They try hard to complete reading and writing tasks but need much adult support to succeed. A few children exceed the level expected in reading. The children have a satisfactory level of interest in their work but exciting and imaginative opportunities that challenge them to write independently and incidentally, such as through labels, lists and captions, are limited and this reduces the children's interest and possible achievement.

Mathematical development

72. Initial assessments as the children enter the nursery show that many children have limited mathematical experiences. The children enjoy learning and are taught well through practical self-chosen tasks or within small well-planned groups, formed as a result of thorough assessments. The teacher and the nursery nurse use every available opportunity to develop mathematical vocabulary through counting activities, games and rhymes for example. Daily routines are made enjoyable by the staff, such as by counting who has attended each session, and the children persevere with the task well. More able children can count beyond 10 with support and confidently volunteer to write down the number attending on a list, with the teachers' help. A small target group of less able children perseveres well in order to count to three, for example, and match the number on the washing line. Whilst the more able children concentrate carefully to thread beads, they still require adult support to help them to copy a pattern. Progress for the majority of children is good by the end of the year in the nursery and sound in the reception year.

73. Numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily in the reception classes, and most children are on course to achieve the nationally expected standards by the end of the year. Planning is thorough and supports the key learning objectives for numeracy particularly well during the first part of the lesson. The effectiveness of the other activities is often reduced because of a lack of clear focus or objectives, stimulating resources and the absence of sufficient adult support. Most children try hard with their work and by the end of the reception year are able to recognise and sort numbers to ten and begin to complete and record simple addition. They name basic two-dimensional shapes although some have difficulty recognising a rectangle for example. Less able children need adult support to understand mathematical vocabulary and have difficulty in matching objects that are the same and have limited number recognition to five.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

74. Standards in knowledge and understanding of the world are broadly typical by the end of the foundation stage. The quality of teaching is sound overall. In the nursery, the children achieve well due to some good quality teaching that harnesses initial curiosity and enthusiasm. For example, children deepen their knowledge about care for living things as they plant seeds as well as

beginning to learn that the seeds need water and light to grow. The teacher used effective intervention to support their understanding as they had little prior knowledge.

75. In the reception classes, the children extend their understanding and build on previous experiences. In a class discussion, for example, the more able children talked sensibly about 'Spring' in relation to new life before planting bulbs and seeds most carefully. They knew the plants would need water to survive. Planning includes some exciting opportunities, such as a visit to a local supermarket, experimenting with melting ice, baking Naan bread or finding out about the past by talking to 'Grandpa'. When these activities are planned thoroughly to provide rich and stimulating experiences that the children enjoy, and learning support assistants are on hand to encourage communication and discussion, teaching is good and as a result most children make good progress. Planned opportunities for children to initiate their own investigations, such as through practical tasks using a variety of materials, are limited. This is often because too few adults are available to support the children but also due to the limited quality, quantity and organisation of the resources available. With sound teaching, most pupils use a computer software program to draw simple pictures. A few higher attaining children print their work with very little help from the teacher.

Physical development

76. In physical development, most children are likely to reach the level expected nationally by the time they complete the reception year. The quality of teaching is sound overall. In the nursery, most children make satisfactory progress as they have access to a range of appropriately planned outdoor activities and opportunities to practise their cutting, drawing and writing skills. Planning provides relevant activities both indoors and outdoors, although it sometimes lacks the precise detail needed to identify the specific role of the adult, for example in developing associated vocabulary or in providing additional challenge for the more able children.

77. By the time they join the reception year, most children are confident enough to climb up large indoor equipment and jump from a safe height. More able children notice the change in their heart rate after running and jumping as they warm up their muscles prior to exercise. Most of the children behave very sensibly as they help to put out the apparatus for the lesson and enjoy using it. The teacher is rightly insistent on teaching the importance of safety and her good organisation and control supports the less able children particularly well. A few children use their imagination effectively to change their movement along a bench. Effective support from the nursery nurse means that small groups of children extend their ability to think about different ways to travel and movement is more controlled and interesting as a result. A small number of children find difficulty in listening sensibly and completing movement with appropriate control and co-ordination.

Creative development

78. Most children attain broadly average standards in creative development at the end of the reception year. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The children use a range of materials simply in the nursery and require adult guidance to develop their ideas. In the nursery most children join in singing enthusiastically and know some familiar songs and rhymes from memory. Music is used effectively to signal the beginning of group sessions. It is taught well as the adults encourage the children to think about the mood each piece creates, for example, "This morning the music is calm, yesterday it was lively." More able children model the adult's vocabulary and some offer their own simple suggestions although the less able need much more support to do this.

79. Children continue to develop their knowledge of a range of songs and rhymes effectively when they move to the reception year. Most children sing tunefully and enthusiastically although a number of less able children require a little more encouragement and support to do so. Planning for music shows appropriate activities with children creating sounds by clapping out the rhythm of their names and extending this to use of percussion instruments. This is taught well although the limited number of instruments available meant that in one lesson, children unable to practise skills even though they were bursting to have a turn and this reduced the overall progress made. The children

enjoy opportunities to create their own artwork. In the reception classes, more able children painted with great care as a result of appropriate adult support. Less able children often layer colours randomly and have to be reminded to wash their brushes before using a new colour. Whilst teaching and learning is sound, there is insufficient opportunity for children to practise their skills by using a variety and range of good quality media and materials independently. Opportunities are limited by the lack of continuous adult support needed in order to help the children to explore and develop their own ideas fully.

80. In all the areas of learning, careful assessments made by the nursery staff are used effectively to plan work for individual and small groups of children. Records of achievement are transferred to the reception teachers as a basis for planning as the children move into school. These form part of a comprehensive record of children's learning. Whilst the provision for the foundation stage is satisfactory overall and some of the teaching the children receive is good, there are weaknesses in the educational provision the children receive at this stage. The organisation of the reception class accommodation limits the opportunities made available for the children to select materials and resources independently. This means that the effectiveness of activities, particularly structured play, is sometimes reduced and although the children's learning is satisfactory overall, their ideas are not always fully extended. This type of activity often lacks sufficient focus and clear objectives within the teachers' planning. There is also insufficient variety of good quality resources to support planning and usually too few staff to provide the required informed adult intervention. The foundation stage is newly established nationally and this has led to fresh focus within school on the provision for this age group. With the new appointment of a co-ordinator, an appropriate action plan is now in place to review the current planning and provision. At present, although teaching and learning is satisfactory in the reception classes, it is good in the nursery. The good provision in the nursery ensures that most children, even those learning from a lower starting point than usual on entry, reach the early learning goals set nationally in time for their transfer to Year 1. This indicates sound improvement since the time of the last inspection, when similar standards were achieved but attainment on entry for most children was judged to be higher, meeting the usual level for the age group.

ENGLISH

81. Standards for eleven-year-olds, both in their work in class and in the latest tests in 2000, are broadly in line with the national average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. This indicates that standards have risen significantly since the last inspection, keeping pace, overall, with the rising national trend. When compared to schools with a similar background, results are above average. Standards are significantly higher in reading than in writing, as is the case nationally.

82. When looked at more closely, results indicate that although a good number of pupils are achieving the expected level overall for their age, fewer than average of the brighter pupils are achieving the higher level. This is the case when results are compared both to schools nationally and to similar schools. The trend over the past five years has been a good rise in the number of pupils achieving the expected level and higher results for the lower attaining pupils, helped by the boost given through extra classes for pupils in Year 6, funded nationally through specific grants. The number of able pupils achieving the highest level has not improved. The needs of the less able pupils and those with special educational needs are met well, especially in Year 6, but the more able pupils are not always fully challenged. However, recently organised setting arrangements in the juniors give the school a good opportunity to improve the attainment of able pupils.

83. For seven-year-olds, the latest national test results and work in class indicates that standards match the national average for the age group in reading and when compared to similar schools, results are above average. Standards in writing are not so successful, being well below the national average and also below the average for similar schools. Inspection judgement supports test results. In writing, teaching in Year 2 is more successful for the less able and those with special educational needs than for the more able.

84. **SPEAKING AND LISTENING:** By the age of seven, almost all pupils show a willingness to talk and an ability to express their thoughts and ideas well. Good relationships established between staff and pupils give them confidence and staff provide a good working atmosphere for discussion. Most pupils listen well and talk with fluency at considerable length. They are aware of their audience and adapt their style of speaking appropriately, for example, from informal chat with friends to talking with greater precision to their teachers, and providing detailed information on their activities for visiting adults. Standards at least reach the level expected for the age group. This indicates good progress from the below average starting point for most children on entry to the nursery and is testimony to the constantly high language contribution from teachers and other staff, who provide a good model of correct pronunciation and clear and concise conversation. These good standards established by seven years of age are effectively built on in most junior classes. By the time the pupils are eleven years old, most are reaching the standard of self-expression expected nationally for the age group, although some are not as careful about clear pronunciation as the younger pupils. Staff provide good role models of confident and meaningful speaking and careful and respectful listening. Discussions for the most able, however, within the higher sets arranged in the subject, does not always achieve the depth of analysis of which pupils are capable. Examples of this shortcoming were seen in the work on poetry in the higher sets in both Year 5 and Year 6. However, in individual discussions with pupils in Year 6 about books they read or history topics they have covered, pupils generally reach a good level of analysis and are able to take part in discussion, expressing their own views well and countering the views of others politely. For example, an average pupil was able to explain characteristics of a person described as 'unflappable' and give relevant examples; he could also reach an understanding of the characteristics of an 'open minded' person and give vivid examples of relatives he now saw as open minded and those who could not be considered to be so. The very sound, confident standards in speaking and listening provide pupils with a firm foundation for all other learning.

85. **READING:** Successful reading skills are firmly established throughout the school. In Year 1, good teaching establishes good reading habits and these are maintained throughout the school. Pupils decipher unfamiliar words well using letter sounds, pictures and the meaning of sentences as cues. They deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words from other messages within the text. The school is particularly strong, as at the time of the last inspection, on teaching pupils to blend letter sounds from the earliest stages of reading. With the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, teachers are now focusing more attention on the pupils' understanding of texts. They successfully provide a suitably wide range of literature and initiate good, productive discussions on the content of books, both during shared reading sessions with the class group and in guided reading groups. This is paying off well and pupils at both seven and eleven years of age of all reading attainment levels show a good understanding of the books they are reading. Because communication skills are well developed and teaching is good, pupils are able to gain a lot of information from the texts and discuss themes within the text in relation to their own experience at a suitable level for their age. For example, a pupil in Year 6 with special educational needs was able to discuss a poem portraying the effects of environmental pollution. However, the oldest more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. For example, in a lesson in Year 6, higher attaining pupils were helped to enjoy poetry but not to reach a clear understanding of the nature of communication suited to different styles of poetry. There is a good balance achieved within literacy lessons between the use of fiction and non-fiction books, and pupils are well aware of the different uses that can be made of these texts. However, in other subjects, worksheets are used in preference to books, and pupils are given information that they could be asked to find themselves from books. The libraries in both the infant and the junior buildings are sparsely stocked, as was the case at the time of the last inspection, and many of the small number of books included are outdated. This reduces pupils' opportunities to use their good reading skills within the context of other subjects or to develop independent research skills to a suitable level. The school is aware of its limited library resources and plans to establish a new library in the junior building when current building plans are complete. On the other hand, the school's stock of reading material available on computer programs is expanding and pupils are making increasing use of ICT to access written information. Examples of such work were seen in Year 1, where pupils researched simple information on animals to enable

them to produce a guide book, and pupils in Year 6 used a CD-ROM to answer questions on the circulation system as part of a science lesson.

86. **WRITING:** Writing is the weak element in an otherwise strong subject in the school. Too few pupils reach the expected levels both at seven and eleven years of age. The basic skills of writing are taught to a satisfactory level overall. In both infant and junior classes, this includes a sound development of spelling skills, which links with the good work on blending letter sounds seen in teaching and learning reading. Sentence punctuation takes longer than average to become firmly established but most pupils are sufficiently aware of the need for capital letters and full stops by the age of seven. By eleven, most pupils use consistent sentence punctuation and include commas, question marks and speech marks where appropriate. Some use brackets occasionally and divide their work into paragraphs. Handwriting varies between the classes, but most pupils learn to write clearly and legibly by the time they are seven. The higher attaining seven-year-old pupils join their letters, often producing very neat work. Progress in handwriting varies in the juniors between classes and sometimes between different samples of the same pupils' work. The subject co-ordinator is aware that a clear scheme needs to be established to guide handwriting practice through the school. Nonetheless, by Year 6, most pupils write legibly but work at the expected level for their age is often inconsistent.

87. The weakest aspect of writing is the composition, or the organisation and style. Once pupils have accomplished a reasonable level of independence in producing written work, they do not go on to improve the content or style of their work to a suitable level for their age. Descriptive words are not used enough to describe people, places or actions. Words that connect sentences are not extended in variety, being usually 'and' or 'then' rather than the more interesting 'no sooner had that happened' or even 'the next day'. Too few examples of extended writing are seen throughout the school, with most work being single sentence work in response to exercises or the completion of worksheets. Work in Year 2 includes opportunities for factual writing, such as 'How to plant an acorn' or 'How to make toast'. Some of this work is returned to and redrafted to make improvements, and this is raising standards. Pupils in Year 2 tend to produce written work on loose paper, which is not stored in an orderly way. This means that neither teachers nor pupils can look back over past work and identify clear signs of progress in composition, or set targets for the future. The individual targets set in the subject generally refer to the basic skills of writing rather than its composition. In the junior classes, the same weaknesses continue, with a lack of balance between work on exercises and opportunities to practise composition skills, with too few opportunities for extended writing. The overuse of copying writing and worksheets in subjects such as history and geography miss opportunities to practice writing skills. There are very few examples of extended pieces of work which convey the pupils' own opinions or research. An exception is the letters written in Year 6 on behalf of unemployed workers as part of the study of Britain since the 1930s.

88. Resources for teaching and learning writing are limited. For example, whiteboards are not freely available for teachers to reinforce discussions or vocabulary by quickly writing a word or a point made on the board. Frequently used words are not easily available to copy at a glance for pupils who need that support. As a result, time is lost and learning is slowed. The time pupils spend on copy writing exercises should be reduced and more time found for pupils to learn to compose original written work to a higher level.

89. The teaching observed in English was good overall, for both the infant and the junior classes, but a review of pupils' past work indicates that it is much stronger in teaching speaking, listening and reading than writing. This is reflected in the results achieved by pupils. The organisation of the daily Literacy Hour matches the national guidelines and teachers work hard to successfully maintain a good pace of teaching and learning. The sections where the whole class is taught together generally cover a good amount of material although occasionally too much for the youngest pupils in Year 1. Group activities are most productive when a learning support assistant is available to help the teacher to provide for the pupils' differing needs. Plenary, or summary, sessions at the end of lessons are successful in drawing new learning together or presenting evidence of pupils' work to illustrate teaching points made earlier in the lesson. Teachers' good relationships with pupils, enthusiasm for literature and discussion, and the open and friendly

atmosphere in most classes encourages pupils' interest and concentration. Most pupils make their best effort. Pupils work in groups set according to their levels of attainment and this arrangement helps teachers to meet the differing needs of pupils. However, planning does not always use this opportunity to challenge pupils differently, and the same task is set for pupils in all groups. Within the junior classes, planning is generally successful for the lower sets and pupils with special educational needs, where learning support assistants supplement the teacher's work well. For the upper sets, the opportunity to challenge these pupils more is not fully used. Teaching does not go into sufficient depth or fully use the pace of work of which the pupils are capable. This results in standards that are lower than average in writing for the highest attaining pupils both nationally and in similar schools. The teachers' understanding of composition skills is limited compared to other aspects of the subject. Regular homework is provided to support work in class but this varies in quality between classes. Homework supported by parents has a significant impact on the pupils' progress in reading.

90. The learning of pupils with special educational needs in literacy is supported well by teachers and learning support assistants, and their progress is good overall. Teachers have a good awareness of the individual needs of these pupils and the targets set for them within individual education plans. The targets are clear in focus and help teachers to plan relevant work at the right level. Pupils are as interested in learning as other pupils and are generally pleased to discuss their work and their achievements. When reading individually, the level of fluency and accuracy is usually lower than average for their age, but the level of interest and understanding they show for their books is usually good due to the good teaching they receive. In Year 6 this term, a group of ten pupils with special educational needs have their literacy lesson each day with a temporary teacher. The teaching observed was very good and its strength is the teacher's high expectations for the pupils in the understanding of literature. The teacher skilfully chose a text for study that was at an appropriate level of reading but lost nothing in the complexity of the message. Thus pupils were able to discuss overt and hidden messages within 'The Newcomer', a poem dealing with environmental pollution at a suitably mature level for their age. The teacher's questions to the group took the pupils to a good depth of understanding and allowed them to develop their own personal views without a 'right' answer expected, only a logical one. Thus the pupils made very good progress in the lesson in literacy comprehension and maturity of thinking.

91. The small number of pupils learning English as an additional language are supported well through the generally good provision for spoken language, with teachers and support assistants well aware of their needs. They make good progress in developing English skills and in the confidence to use them.

92. Two co-ordinators manage provision for English in the school, one for the infant classes and the other for the juniors. They are united in the systems and teaching methods they are working to establish within the school. The literacy hour is firmly established in all classes and the reading resources have been widened to suit national requirements. This work is not fully complete and they are aware that further resources are required. There is a suitable action plan for the subject, focused mainly on improving writing, but these important intentions are not included within the main school development plan. Both co-ordinators have observed lessons in literacy in order to provide support for colleagues. This is a significant step towards improving standards further but observations made so far are not fully analytical. Neither have had training in observing lessons.

MATHEMATICS

93. In the national tests in 2000, the attainment of eleven-year-olds was in line with the national average and above that for similar schools, even though the number of pupils achieving a higher level than typically expected was slightly below average. The inspection judgement is that there has been a good all round improvement this year in the junior classes, due mainly to the new setting arrangements and to the smaller classes in Year 6 this term due to the establishment of a third set, or 'booster class'. This has resulted in higher standards, demonstrated by the improvement in the

number of pupils on line to achieve the higher level at the end of Year 6. In addition, this represents an overall improvement in results for eleven-year-olds since the last inspection and indicates that attainment for the oldest pupils in the school is keeping pace with the national trend.

94. Results in 2000 for seven-year-olds were well below the national average and also below the average for similar schools. Inspection judgement is that there has now been some improvement in the number of pupils working at the appropriate level in Year 2, due to a closer monitoring of lessons and teachers' planning. Nonetheless, standards are still below average and fewer pupils than expected nationally are working at the higher level. In the last inspection, standards were said to meet the national average for seven-year-olds. However, national standards have improved considerably since then and, in the Year 2 classes, the school has not kept pace with these increased expectations.

95. Most pupils achieve their best in the infant classes, but higher attaining pupils are capable of more in Year 2. They are generally insufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve to the best of their ability. The pace of learning is too slow, with learning objectives not completed in sufficient depth. Pupils of varying needs achieve well in the junior classes, due mainly to the successful planning of appropriate levels of work within the sets (classes based on previous assessment). Those with special educational needs progress well due to the good support they receive from their class teachers and from the learning support assistants; the arrangement for teaching such pupils in Year 6, within a very small class, is particularly effective.

96. By the age of seven, most pupils can place numbers to 100 in the correct sequence. They can perform simple addition and subtraction sums and are learning to add two 2-digit numbers with reasonable accuracy but most lack fluency and confidence in reaching their answers. Higher attaining pupils can divide by two, five and 10, but the proportion of pupils achieving these skills is lower than average. Lower attaining pupils can add and subtract by counting forwards and backwards along a number line to 20. Pupils in Year 1 develop good numeracy skills through well-targeted practice in the initial oral mathematics sessions and most pupils have a quick recall of number bonds to 10. The teachers pace these sessions well and make good use of simple resources such as the 'Bertie Bee' puppet to concentrate pupils' attention. By the end of Year 2, most pupils can add 10 more to numbers in the hundreds in their heads though the pace of the initial mental activity in lessons in these classes is not always sufficiently brisk. This reduces the possible development of the pupils' arithmetic skills. Simple problem-solving activities are used appropriately to develop the pupils' understanding; for example, pupils in Year 2 work out how many different ways they can pay for their shopping. Sometimes, however, the teacher gives insufficient responsibility to pupils within lessons to develop their skills, such as when the teacher counted the pupils who liked football rather than asking pupils to count. Suggestions made by pupils within the whole class part of lessons are not always used fully to take their learning forward.

97. By the age of eleven, pupils are developing good arithmetic skills through regular mental practice and through good opportunities provided by teachers for pupils to explain how they have worked things out and to compare methods. Most pupils have a sound recall of multiplication tables and are able to use their knowledge successfully. For example, pupils in Year 5 are able to calculate the area of rectangles quickly. Most pupils in Year 6 can work out long multiplication with increasing accuracy, but have not yet grasped an understanding of the method for calculating long division. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of decimals and fractions, and can work out 25 per cent of 150 in their head. Through the individual help they receive in their small group, lower attaining pupils are developing a good understanding of multiplying hundreds, tens and units. Pupils develop their arithmetic skills well throughout the juniors during the initial oral sessions, which are generally well paced, and through regular problem solving opportunities. For example, pupils in Year 4 work out how to arrange a set of numbers on a triangle so that all the sides are equal, whilst older pupils use a spreadsheet to calculate the price of different quantities of T-shirts.

98. Most pupils in the infant classes have a growing understanding of measurement and, by the end of Year 2, are working in standard units of length and weight and can tell the time using *o'clock*

and *half past*. They know the names of the common two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and have a sound understanding of symmetry and pattern. From Year 1, pupils learn to display information in a variety of ways, for example by sorting objects into sets of vehicles and buildings. By the end of Year 2, pupils have experienced a satisfactory variety of graphs including pictograms and bar charts. Most can read the information and draw conclusions. For example, they find out that most pupils in Year 2 prefer the colour blue.

99. By the age of eleven, most pupils in the juniors have a secure knowledge of shape and measure. They can draw and measure angles reasonably accurately and can calculate the area and perimeter of rectangles and some more complex shapes using the standard formula. Higher attaining pupils investigate the angles of a triangle to discover that the total is always 180 degrees. Throughout the juniors, pupils have regular opportunities to display information on a good variety of graphs. Pupils in Year 4 construct a bar graph, using suitable intervals, to show the numbers of pupils having a school lunch each day. Pupils in Year 6 gather information about shoe sizes to work out the mode and the mean and understand the correct terms. They are developing an understanding of probability as they work out the chance of throwing a six.

100. The pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to develop their number skills within other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 1 use the computer to generate a graph about their favourite food. Pupils in Year 5 construct a family tree in history and calculate the age of different members of the family, and in science, pupils measure their pulse rate before and after exercise and display the difference on a graph.

101. The overall quality of teaching in mathematics is good. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, due to the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy and an improvement in planning. All lessons have clear objectives, which are generally shared with the class, so that pupils know what is expected. In most lessons, the concluding plenary session is used well for pupils to discuss their learning and to check how far they have succeeded. This has had a positive effect in helping pupils set their own targets for further improvement.

102. Teaching is satisfactory overall in the infants, with very good teaching in Year 1. Here lessons are very effective because of the brisk pace which keeps all pupils involved and because questions and activities are planned well to provide a suitable level of challenge for different groups of pupils. Teachers in Year 2 give clear explanations and make good use of the correct language to promote understanding. However, the pace of lessons is slow and there is a tendency for teachers to demonstrate rather than to fully involve the pupils. For example, when compiling information for a graph on 'Which sporting activity do most six and seven-year-olds enjoy', the teacher counted the number of pupils who said they liked football rather than handing the task to pupils. This led to some lack of concentration and missed opportunities for learning. Higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve higher levels.

103. Teaching is good in the juniors, with over half of lessons observed at least good and one very good. One lesson observed was unsatisfactory and this was due to ineffective management of the class, leading to a lack of concentration and little learning taking place. This was an exception as teachers generally have good class management skills and good relationships with their pupils. The most effective teaching is characterised by lessons that are stimulating and which move at a brisk pace, seizing the attention and interest of the pupils. Teachers have a sound understanding of the subject and they explain new work clearly, enabling pupils to learn the basic skills well. Work is well planned and activities are well matched to pupils' needs. Teachers have adapted lessons appropriately in the setting arrangements and this is helping to raise standards for all pupils.

104. Teachers assess the pupils' progress well in lessons through answers in the introductory session and through careful marking of work. For example, one teacher adapted a subsequent lesson on area when pupils showed a higher level of understanding in the initial session than was expected. Where available, learning support assistants are well briefed by teachers and have a good understanding of the needs of their group.

105. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully managed and has had a positive effect on standards. The agreed formats for planning and for recording progress against key objectives are clear and are working well. There has been some analysis of assessment information to check pupils' progress over their time in school and to monitor the attainment of pupils in Year 6 in the term before the statutory tests. However, the analysis of results at the end of each year group is not sufficiently rigorous to identify specific areas of weakness and to take account of these in future planning.

SCIENCE

106. In the 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds, the percentages of pupils achieving the expected level and the higher level were well below the national average and below the average for those in schools with a similar intake. Standards dropped to a very low point in 1997 after the last inspection, but have considerably improved over the past three years. Results in the school for science are now in fact higher than at the time of the last inspection but the rate of improvement since then is slower than in schools nationally. The findings of this inspection broadly confirm these assessments. Nonetheless, positive developments in the school's provision for science, most notably in the planning and the teaching, are gradually securing improvements in attainment.

107. In the 2000 teacher assessments for seven year-olds, the percentage of pupils achieving the nationally expected level was well below average and very low in comparison with similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher level was well below the average both for schools nationally and for similar schools. Evidence from the inspection finds that standards of attainment are improving, even though they remain below the national average.

108. For eleven-year-old pupils, the skills of scientific enquiry are well below average. A significant proportion of the pupils are not confident in devising an experiment to test the strengths of different types of paper, for example. Not all pupils are aware of the need for a fair test or how to construct one. However, they can predict results and know ways to communicate their findings. Pupils know what animals need to survive, and can give examples of food chains. They can explain a healthy life-style, and know some of the most important organs of the human body and the systems to which some of them belong. For example, they understand the part played by the heart in the circulation of blood, oxygen and carbon dioxide. The pupils' knowledge of materials and their properties is well below average. They are unsure about the purpose of filtering and sieving, but do understand evaporation. Some of the more able pupils can identify condensation, and a little about when the effects of heat are reversible. Most pupils are unclear about why metal is used to conduct electricity and not other materials. They are also insecure about physical processes. They know friction produces heat and that boats float because of a balance of forces, but are unsure about planetary movements or the behaviour of magnets.

109. Less than the average proportion of seven-year-olds reach the nationally required level of knowledge and understanding for their age. For most pupils, however, their knowledge of living processes is at the expected level. They know the main parts of plants and what helps them to live. They can compare objects and decide whether they have been alive or not, and they know a little about why animals live where they do. The more able pupils are beginning to understand on a simple level what organs like the heart are for, and can identify differences between the bodies of different animals. They also have a good knowledge of how different materials change when they are stretched or heated and cooled, and know their source, such as trees for paper. The more able pupils can also explain how to make and break simple circuits, and know what causes shadows. However, the number of pupils at this high level is below average. Lower attaining pupils are not sufficiently secure in their knowledge and find it difficult to record what they understand on paper.

110. The quality of teaching is good overall, although it ranges from satisfactory to very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when 20 per cent of lessons were

unsatisfactory. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching; over 60 per cent is good and 16 per cent is very good. The effects of this improvement in teaching on pupils' learning are beginning to show in the performance of seven-year-olds, where standards are rising. The improvements to teaching have not been in place long enough to have full impact on the attainment of the eleven-year-olds.

111. Teachers plan their lessons well, and in most cases provide a balance of listening and activity for the pupils; consequently they are attentive to explanations and instructions and concentrate well when carrying out activities. Most lessons begin with a good, interesting introduction. In one, about muscles, brief well-paced revision was followed by observations of contractions and a useful video clip. This stimulated pupils' interest in devising a successful model showing how biceps worked with triceps. However, there are too many lessons where activities are almost completely controlled so that pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to think or to reason for themselves. This means that the more able pupils, in particular, are not challenged enough, and that pupils' experience of applying knowledge and understanding is limited. Opportunities are sometimes missed to use suggestions from pupils, such as when a pupil in Year 2 suggested that items that did not fit exactly the sets of natural or man-made items 'could go in the middle'. This limited the depth of learning, particularly for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to teach the correct scientific words. They pass on their enthusiasm to the pupils by taking time to plan the use of interesting resources. In one lesson pupils commented, 'Teachers make science fun,' when they were presented with a wide variety of audio-visual aids in learning about the heart. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported when a classroom assistant is available to share the teaching, and they make good progress. When this help is not available, their learning is at a satisfactory level, with the teacher providing as much support as possible. Pupils' behaviour is good in all lessons and most of them present their work well. Marking is satisfactory, but pupils are not always given constructive suggestions for improving their work, or asked questions where they have not given enough thought to their work.

112. There have been improvements that have had a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements. The school has adopted the national scheme for science which ensures that pupils' work progresses logically from year to year, with time given for necessary revision. It has also ensured that enough time is given to science in all classrooms. Nevertheless, the curriculum does not yet include enough opportunities for pupils to learn the skills of independent enquiry. Although the co-ordinator has devised an action plan for the subject, the school has not placed science as a priority within the school development plan. Consequently, it has not worked out how it will continue to improve the quality of pupils' learning, or the resources to enable a sufficient level of independent investigation by pupils. There is no planned programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, to enable plans to include any action necessary to support both staff and pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

113. The standard of attainment for seven-year-olds is below national expectations but by the time they are eleven, pupils' achievement has improved and standards are broadly in line with expectations for the age group.

114. Pupils in Year 2 do not experience a sufficiently wide variety of art to help them achieve a satisfactory level of work, especially in painting. They make imaginative extensions to photographs, but do not look carefully enough to use them to improve the quality of their drawing and colouring. They make surface rubbings of wood, stone and bricks but have not developed a repertoire of ways to show textures in their art. Pupils in Year 1 make effective pictures relating to the four seasons and are good at exploring colour and tone in painting.

115. Although the attainment of eleven-year-olds is broadly in line with national expectations, the standard of work varies in classes for eight to eleven year-olds. Some work shows care, such as sketches based on Asian or African patterns in Year 3. This level of care combined with close

observation enables pupils in Year 4 to produce subtleties of tone on pictures of apples made with oil pastels. Pupils in Year 5 obtain a good three-dimensional effect in their drawings of musical instruments. Such work helps pupils to make good progress, so that by the time they are eleven they have developed suitable observational skills. They produce well-proportioned and detailed sketches of trainers, for example. They produce detailed paintings in the style of the Impressionists, showing a sensitive awareness of colour and texture. However, not all pupils in Years 3 to 6 plan their work, partly because they have not developed enough awareness of the possibilities of various media.

116. Due to timetable arrangements, insufficient lessons were seen to make an overall judgement on teaching and the consequent learning. Nonetheless, a review of pupils' past work shows that standards are broadly maintained since the last inspection for eleven-year-olds, but not for seven year-olds. The range of media made available to pupils is limited and there is little work based on the pupils' imagination. The school has ensured that teachers receive guidance from co-ordinators, but not enough consideration has been given to how to improve standards further through a progressive development of skills. Pupils study the work of famous artists, such as Lowry, and what they learn is beginning to have an impact on their work. Pupils with special educational needs are suitably supported by teachers and learning support assistants and often achieve at least as well, and sometimes better than others do. In the small number of lessons seen, all pupils applied themselves well because they enjoyed what they were doing. The quality of teaching and learning achieved in a lesson observed in Year 6 was satisfactory. The lesson was part of a well thought out series, linking a study of the work of L. S. Lowry to pupils' two-dimensional picture making and three-dimensional modelling work, using a suitably wide range of materials. The teacher encouraged a good learning atmosphere where experimentation was valued, then led forward by useful questioning to help pupils to decide on their preferences and intentions for future development of their work. Although the teacher was exploring possibilities at the same time as pupils, she had sufficient confidence and knowledge in the subject to take learning forward. In contrast, the lesson observed in Year 2 was unsatisfactory. The teacher's subject knowledge was weak and the objectives for the lesson were not sufficiently clear for learning to progress at an appropriate pace. The practical part of the lesson was too short for work to be reviewed and developed to a suitable level for the pupils' ages. Most pupils made insufficient progress although enjoying working with the materials made available.

117. The subject has a co-ordinator for each key stage and both are focused upon establishing systematic planning for progression through each year group. However, the school is having difficulty in adopting the national scheme due to teachers' limited subject knowledge. Until this matter is resolved, achievement will vary according to the skills in the subject of individual teachers.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

118. Standards of attainment for both seven and eleven-year-olds are in line with expectations nationally. This indicates a good improvement from the last inspection, when standards were judged to be below those suitable for the pupils' ages because the school did not provide an adequate curriculum. A review of past work provides evidence that the introduction of an agreed programme of activities has ensured that pupils cover the requirements of the National Curriculum, and that there is much less variation in teachers' expectations than at the time of the last inspection.

119. In Year 1, pupils are learning about the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables in preparation for planning healthy recipes and the teacher's enthusiasm and good use of terminology raises achievement to a good level. Pupils in Year 2 design and make a vehicle with wheels and axles. Although they use a teacher's worksheet to give structure to their ideas, sufficient independence is allowed and pupils sort out for themselves what they have to do. They look carefully at vehicles and make satisfactory diagrams of their main features. This helps them to consider whom their vehicle is for as well as its purpose. Pupils can write about what they have to remember when making their vehicle, such as attaching wheels in such a way that they can run

freely. Pupils use a satisfactory variety of materials and tools to make their products. Although the finished articles vary in quality, they are generally well made and carefully decorated.

120. In Year 3, pupils design and make printing blocks for use within their geography project in recording weather. The links with geography allow them to test fitness for purpose. Pupils in Year 4, produce effective Saxon brooches by indenting and colouring clay, while pupils in Year 5 make interesting story books using pop-up pages, as well as moving pictures involving slides and levered mechanisms. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils design and make sufficiently sophisticated products for their age, such as a model that incorporates a box in which lights are controlled. Pupils go through all the appropriate stages of planning, designing and making, and the result is an appropriate variety of products, all carefully thought out and satisfactorily finished off. By Year 6, pupils evaluate their work in good detail.

121. Insufficient lessons were observed across the school to make an overall judgement on teaching and consequent learning. Teaching in the four lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. All lessons included the designing and making elements necessary for the subject and at a suitable level for the pupils' ages. In the very good lesson, preparations in understanding were made, as is required by the scheme of work, for future food technology work. It is evident that pupils sometimes need to be given more scope for individual thinking. For example, much of the work in pupils' books at seven is copied from the teacher's model. The good practice of establishing a note and sketchbook is not carried on into later years. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, progress satisfactorily at all stages, and their work is often usefully linked to other subjects. A suitable action plan is established to review the success of the developing scheme of work but this does not include the co-ordinator in sufficient monitoring of teaching and learning to ensure that standards continue to develop.

GEOGRAPHY

122. As at the time of the last inspection, standards are judged to be in line with those found nationally and pupils, including those with special educational needs, follow an appropriate curriculum in which they make sound gains in knowledge. There is generally less emphasis on the development of enquiry skills and fieldwork and so less progress is made in these aspects.

123. In the infants, pupils gain some insight into their local area. They compare the different types of houses in the locality and learn simple mapping skills when locating their own home on a street map of the area. With adult support, most can orientate their maps correctly and trace their route to school. Higher attaining pupils observe that the shortest route to a place is not always the quickest because traffic conditions vary. The pupils' understanding of maps is at an early stage as they have had limited practical experience in the local environment to consolidate and reinforce their understanding. Pupils in the juniors make increasing gains in knowledge of physical features such as rivers. By Year 6, pupils have a secure knowledge of the location of some places in the world and can find them on a map. They have good knowledge of mountainous regions for example, and the majority can explain some of the typical features of the terrain. Good use is made of ICT to develop research skills and good links are made with literacy when pupils record what they have learned and complete written tasks.

124. Pupils' attitudes to their work are generally good and they behave well. They are attentive and most confidently recall what has been learned in a lesson or answer teachers' questions. Many use correct geographical vocabulary when describing what they have learned. In a lesson in Year 6, pupils pursued independent research using computers. They worked maturely and collaboratively in groups, sharing information and developing their social skills well.

125. Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are good features in lessons that are planned to involve practical work and give pupils an opportunity to develop skills of enquiry, for example when older pupils in the juniors conducted a traffic survey and used the data they had collected to make

observations and draw conclusions. In general teachers have sound subject knowledge and they choose resources well for practical tasks. When lessons are satisfactory rather than good, it is usually because all pupils in the class are given a common task to pursue with the result that activities are too difficult for some but too easy for others. Teaching is less successful when it relies too heavily on the use of worksheets and tasks require pupils to do little more than fill in missing words. Such activities do little to promote enjoyment or the practical nature of the subject, particularly when the focus of the lesson is mainly on the completion of the sheet rather than the development of specific geographical skills. Pupils with special education needs in literacy find difficulty in reading worksheets and writing responses, although usually sensitively supported by the teacher and other pupils.

126. The school has rightly concentrated on numeracy and literacy in recent years. As a result, the development of geography has not been a priority and little emphasis has been placed on developing the curriculum or improving teaching and learning in the subject. The curriculum is based on national documents, which ensure that all elements of the National Curriculum are taught. The impact of these has yet to be felt as they have only recently been introduced and have yet to be evaluated or customised to meet the needs of the school. Monitoring of the subject is minimal and consequently provides insufficient direction for the future development of the subject. Staff have adopted a simple but adequate format for recording what has been taught and assessing pupils' progress. Older pupils benefit from an annual residential visit to Barley, where they are able to develop their knowledge of a contrasting environment.

HISTORY

127. During the inspection only three lessons were observed. It was not possible therefore to make a judgement on the quality of teaching overall. However, from evidence in pupils' work samples, from a review of teachers' plans and displays of work in classrooms, standards in both key stages are judged to be typical of those seen in schools nationally and are similar to those found at the time of the last inspection. In relation to their prior attainment the pupils achieve appropriately and make satisfactory gains in knowledge and in their development of historical skills.

128. Samples of work in pupils' books show the development of a sound range of historical skills over time. There are some particularly good examples of well-chosen activities, such as in Year 6 when pupils used artefacts such as newspapers of the day and ration books to gain an understanding of World War II and the era since the 1930's. They formed opinions about the changing role of women, considered the viewpoints of children at the time and demonstrated empathy in their evocative letters from unemployed shipyard workers, making good links with literacy. Pupils in Year 5 have good factual knowledge about the Tudor period and explain with relish why Henry VIII had so many wives.

129. In Year 1 pupils make thoughtful comparisons between their toys and those used by children in bygone days. Throughout the school, the work sampled shows that there is generally too much use of work sheets and these vary considerably in their quality. At best, they challenge pupils to think but many are undemanding, sometimes requiring little more than colouring or copying the text. Such activities do little to challenge or inspire pupils, especially the brightest. Pupils with special educational needs rarely benefit from suitably modified work matched to their abilities. This issue was a concern at the time of the previous inspection and remains so in some, but not all year groups.

130. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good in two of the lessons and unsatisfactory in a third. Lessons in each year group are planned identically for parallel classes but the resulting quality of teaching can vary considerably. An example of this was seen in Year 5, when pupils in both classes discussed possible reasons why Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries. Where teaching was good in one of the classes, there was enthusiasm for the subject and the teacher had confident subject knowledge to lead a thoughtful discussion. The pupils were encouraged to share their own thoughts and ideas and draw upon their knowledge of the era to

speculate about events. They made good gains in learning because all the time was used productively. In contrast, in the other class led by a temporary member of staff, teaching was unsatisfactory. There was too little support and encouragement for pupils as they pursued their tasks and a significant number lost interest in their work, wasted time and resorted to immature behaviour. When good use is made of artefacts, pupils in the infants begin to establish an inquisitive awareness of the past and they develop early research skills. For example, following a visit to a local toy museum, pupils contributed to their own class museum and investigated how their parents' favourite toys compared to their own.

131. The subject has not had a high profile within the curriculum in recent years as the school has rightly concentrated on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. As a result, there has been very little staff development or monitoring to help teachers to broaden their skills, neither is there any formal assessment to gauge the progress pupils have made. There is a shortage of stimulating resources and artefacts to assist teachers in presenting history in a lively way, although the school does make visits to nearby Townley Hall as a historical resource.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. Throughout the school pupils achieve the standards appropriate for their age and have sufficient experience in each component of the National Curriculum to enable them to keep up with their counterparts in other schools in this rapidly developing subject.

133. Since the last inspection, when standards were judged to be in line with national expectation, the school has made considerable headway in developing the subject. The lack of resources available in the school at that time, together with limited staff expertise in the subject, were constraining factors. Since then the school has installed an ICT suite, which provides good opportunities for the direct teaching of computer skills. All classes benefit from regular access to the suite and the skills they learn are effectively applied to tasks undertaken back in the classroom. The expertise of the staff is developing well, although some teachers remain more confident with computers than others.

134. A particular strength throughout the school is the way in which ICT is used to enhance teaching in other subjects such as science and mathematics. For example, in Year 1 a text chosen for work in the literacy hour was used as a vehicle for developing word-processing skills, while in Year 6, pupils used a CD-ROM to find out more about mountain regions in their geography.

135. In the infants, most pupils have growing confidence in manipulating the 'mouse' and are familiar with the keyboard. The majority can proficiently select words from a word bank to enter into a simple text. With minimal adult support most can create a simple graph to depict data, such as the proportion of pupils who live in houses made of stone, brick or pebbledash. Higher attaining pupils can take this further to produce two or three different types of graphs and explain lucidly how they produced their graph and what it depicts. Word processing skills are developing well and by the age of seven, most pupils can change the size, colour and style of font in a text. In the juniors, pupils have an increasingly sophisticated repertoire of skills. They enhance their written texts with a range of fonts, attractive borders and imported pictures. By the age of eleven, they present data on spreadsheets and use formulae for calculations, to find the cost of multiples of items for example.

136. Pupil's attitudes to their work and their behaviour are usually good. Throughout the school most pupils are keen to learn and handle expensive machinery sensibly and with considerable confidence. In most lessons there is a quiet buzz of activity as pupils work together co-operatively, follow instructions and discuss their work. The concentration of a minority of pupils, usually younger pupils, sometimes wanes when three are required to work together at a terminal. The time wasted in awaiting their turn sometimes strains their patience and as a result they do not always listen attentively to instructions when they are preoccupied with getting their fair share of the keyboard.

137. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory; there are pockets of good and very good teaching in the juniors. Throughout the school there are considerable variations in the confidence and expertise of the teachers, although all are able to meet the requirements for their classes comfortably. Where teachers lack confidence, their explanations tend to be tentative and brief. In contrast, those with good subject knowledge present the lesson in a lively way, plan interesting activities and provide good support to pupils with learning difficulties and those who require more challenge. As a result, pupils are clear about what they are doing and work well. Pupils are generally committed to their work and enjoy learning because their teachers are good at working with individuals and groups of pupils to assess their understanding and clarify any misunderstandings. This is something which has improved considerably since the last inspection, when teachers were said to provide too little intervention with pupils. In the best lessons, there is plenty of additional challenge for higher attaining pupils. In a lesson in Year 4, for example, pupils learning how to give instructions to a screen turtle were given three activities of increasing difficulty and an open-ended task to further extend the brightest pupils. As a result, most pupils in the class were challenged at an appropriate level for their needs and made good progress. Similarly, pupils in Year 6 made good progress with spreadsheets because there was scope in the task for pupils to achieve well at all levels. Lessons tend to be less successful when all pupils are given a common task to do because for some, the work is too easy and for others, it is too difficult and consequently learning is more limited. The practice whereby brighter pupils are paired to work with those who require more support is inappropriate because it holds back the learning of both pupils and frequently the more dominant personalities tend to overshadow their partners. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by their teachers and support assistants who ensure that they are encouraged and helped to succeed and they make good progress.

138. The subject co-ordinator is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and gives good support to staff. She has overseen the effective introduction of the computer suite, which has helped to raise standards in the subject. The school is now adequately equipped with computers and software to meet the demands of the curriculum although some difficulties arise when pupils share machines. The school has recently introduced a national scheme of work, which ensures that all strands of the National Curriculum are covered and that skills build on past experiences. The school does not yet have an established system to monitor teaching and learning or the progress of pupils, although there are plans for this to be remedied. In the meantime, there is a simple but effective system whereby pupils themselves record their accomplishments and this is working well.

MUSIC

139. Due to timetable arrangements, insufficient lessons were observed to judge the attainment of seven-year-olds. Within the one lesson observed in Year 6, standards were within the level expected nationally for eleven-year-olds and above the level expected for a few pupils who receive specialist instrument tuition. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection for Year 6.

140. In assemblies and hymn singing sessions for both the infants and the juniors, the older pupils sing tunefully and perform well. A number of pupils who are naturally gifted in the infant singing session lifted the quality and accuracy of the pitch and supported those pupils who found it more difficult to sing tunefully. Most pupils articulate the words well and a number of higher attaining pupils in Year 2 used their good sense of rhythm to lead the singing of a two-part hymn. Numerous moments of reflection about the nature and purpose of the words sung supported the pupils' spiritual development very well. They clearly enjoy singing and listen carefully to the guitar accompaniment and to the teachers lead. Younger pupils are given regular opportunities to sing and so develop an appropriate sense of performance in relation to others. Most sing simple songs and rhymes well from memory.

141. In the Year 6 class observed, most groups of pupils were able to use simple notations to perform their compositions linked to a verse of a poem. A group of more able pupils, some of

whom play other instruments, demonstrated greater skill in linking the rhythms of both speech and sound. A group of less able pupils persevered in order to develop a cohesive overall effect.

142. It was not possible to make an overall judgement on the quality of teaching due to the small number of lessons seen. Consistent features observed show that the teachers are using the recently adopted scheme of work well to support teaching and learning. A weakness identified in the last inspection referred to an over reliance on pre-recorded lessons. This was no longer evident in the lessons observed or in the planning seen. The co-ordinators report an improvement since the last inspection in the teachers' confidence, particularly in the composing aspect of the curriculum. In the lesson observed in Year 1, the teacher's outline to the pupils of her well-planned lesson engaged their interest and eager co-operation from the outset. Using an interesting game, she challenged them to explore and use sounds expressively in preparation for composing simple accompaniments to illustrate a story. More advanced pupils demonstrated greater skill in recognising and naming a hidden sound source whilst less advanced pupils progressed well during the lesson in playing untuned instruments more rhythmically. In Year 3, the teacher's very clear introduction and the effectively structured and brisk lesson meant that the pupils were engrossed throughout and concentrating hard in order to clap different rhythmic patterns. By the end of the lesson, with the teacher's enthusiastic and skilled support, most pupils, including the pupils identified as having special educational needs, made rapid progress in repeating rhythm patterns using a range of instruments.

143. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The subject is jointly co-ordinated by two teachers, one supporting each key stage. They work together effectively to increase the subject knowledge of the other staff and to support planning for the different elements of the curriculum. Teachers are presently piloting an assessment sheet provided by the co-ordinators. Resources are satisfactory overall and include instruments from other cultures, although the quality and quantity of instruments available for the infant pupils requires development. Individual pupils benefit from tuition in a variety of instruments although there is no after-school club in the subject. Recent visitors to the school, such as a professional songwriter and a multi-cultural storyteller, successfully extend the pupils' experiences. This raises the profile of the subject and in addition school performances, such as at Christmas, support the pupils' personal development effectively.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Pupils' attainment at the end of both key stages is in line with national expectations, maintaining the standards identified in the last inspection. Standards in swimming are good with over 95 per cent of pupils able to swim a length by the time they leave school. Pupils are offered a good range of after school sports activities, which include football, netball, cross country running, cricket, lacrosse and tennis. The school is also involved in a programme of competitive games with other local schools, and these opportunities have a positive impact on the development of pupils' physical and social skills, as does the opportunity to take part in a residential outdoor activity holiday.

145. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve as well as they can, due mainly to the good level of support given by teachers to individual pupils during the lessons.

146. By the end of Year 2, pupils can combine stretching and rolling movement in a short sequence on the mats and the majority are sufficiently confident to adapt their sequences when working on the apparatus. They move with control and co-ordination and with an awareness of safety. A strong feature is the standards in dance achieved by pupils in Year 1. They gallop with a partner in time to the music and can follow a sequence of sixteen gallops and sixteen claps with great skill. They know a wide range of folk dances and are developing a good awareness of the expressive qualities of dance. Pupils generally respond well to the teachers' high level of expectation for behaviour and performance.

147. By eleven years of age, most pupils develop an appropriate range of skills for net games through the emphasis placed on the teaching of skills in lessons. Most can use a bat or racquet and ball with increasing accuracy. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate good controlled, stretching movement in their exercises to warm up muscles and they understand the effects that exercise has on their body. Pupils observe each other's work and are able to make sensible suggestions for improving skills. Pupils co-operate well in pairs and groups and applaud success. The school places great emphasis on pupils learning how to swim with good effect. Pupils have swimming lessons in Year 3, and again in Year 5 to give another opportunity for non-swimmers to succeed.

148. The quality of teaching observed was good in both the infant and the junior classes. All the lessons observed in the infants were at least good and one was very good. Of the four lessons observed in the juniors, three were good and one lesson was unsatisfactory. The teaching was unsatisfactory because of the high proportion of inactivity for pupils during the lesson and the lack of development of their skills. All teachers are appropriately dressed for physical development lessons and expect similar standards from the pupils. Most lessons have a good structure, with suitable warm up exercises and the opportunity to cool down after vigorous activity. In the best lessons, very clear instructions and demonstrations improve pupils' performance and skills. Good use is made of pupils to exemplify good practice and in some lessons, pupils have the opportunity to evaluate each other's performance in a constructive way. Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations of respect for each other and co-operation when working in groups. These opportunities for pupils to evaluate and to work together are significant factors in the improvement of teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is enhanced by coaching provided from a local football club and by members of the local tennis club who teach short tennis to pupils from Year 1 to Year 4.

149. The recently appointed co-ordinators have co-operated well to introduce a new scheme of work. This is improving the quality of teaching and learning, but has yet to show evidence of improved overall standards in the subject. In common with other foundation subjects, they have monitored teachers' planning but have not yet had the opportunity to monitor learning in lessons.