

INSPECTION REPORT

CRACKLEY BANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124108

Headteacher: Mr David Barber

Reporting inspector: Mrs Barbara Crane
21227

Dates of inspection: 3 – 7 April 2000

Inspection number: 191196

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Blackthorn Place Chesterton Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST5 7BE
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Stanway
Date of previous inspection:	20 January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs Barbara Crane	Registered inspector	English, art, areas of learning for children under 5.	The school's results and achievements. How well pupils are taught. How well the school is led and managed.
Mr Robert Folks	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities.	Attendance. Partnership with parents. Care of pupils.
Mr John Brooke	Team inspector	Mathematics, history, geography.	Care of pupils
Mr Bamber Loizou	Team inspector	Science, design and technology, physical education, special educational needs.	The curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils. How well the school is led and managed.
Mr John Williams	Team inspector	Information technology, religious education, music.	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.

The inspection contractor was:

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The Registrar
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is an average size, with 235 pupils on roll aged 3 –11, 26 of whom are children attending the Nursery class part-time. Most children attend the Nursery class for two terms, before transferring to the Reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. The children’s attainment on entry to the Nursery is well-below average and their language is very limited. All but a very few pupils come from white families and all have English as their first language. Families move in and out of the school’s area frequently and, typically, about a third of the school’s population changes each year. Fifty-three per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is well above average. Twenty-one per cent of the pupils are on the school’s register of special educational need, which is broadly average but thirteen pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need which is high.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school. Standards are below average in English and mathematics but the pupils achieve well as a result of the good teaching. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is ably supported by the staff and governors. The pupils come first and the staff encourage them to develop confidence and to do their best. The school provides good value for money

What the school does well

- The pupils achieve good standards in music.
- The very good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to make very good progress.
- The pupils’ behaviour is very good and they develop a strong sense of right and wrong because of the strong moral framework provided by the school.
- The pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem because of the school’s very good provision for their personal and social development.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership and has built a strong team of staff who are working hard to raise standards.
- The school’s partnership with parents is very effective and parents think highly of the school.
- The classroom assistants provide high quality support for the pupils’ learning.

What could be improved

- Standards in information technology could be better.
- The pupils’ do not write independently as often as they could and standards in writing could be higher.
- The pupils have too few opportunities to plan and organise their work.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in 1997. The pupils’ attitudes and behaviour have improved markedly. Standards have improved, with a greater proportion of pupils achieving the standards expected for their age in English, mathematics and science year-on-year. The basic skills are well-taught. There is better use of assessment to plan work for different groups. Homework is provided more consistently. The pupils’ attendance has improved, although it remains well below average. The school has introduced better planning to ensure coverage of the curriculum, but there is still work to do to ensure that information technology is taught well. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The test results for 11 year olds in 1999 indicated that standards were below the national average in English and mathematics and average in science. Compared to similar schools, the results in English and science were well above average, and results in mathematics were above average. The school's trend in the standards over the past three years has been above the national trend, with a marked improvement last year. More pupils have achieved at the level expected for their age year-on-year. The school met its targets for last year and is on course to meet the suitably challenging targets for this year. The test results for seven year olds in 1999 indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below that seen nationally. In comparison with similar schools, standards in reading were below average and those in writing and mathematics were average.

The evidence from the inspection supports the view that standards are below average in English and mathematics and science by the age of seven. By the time the pupils leave the school, standards in English and mathematics are below average and are average in science. Most pupils achieve well in most subjects. Pupils with special educational needs often make very good progress. The standards in religious education are average. A strength is the good standard achieved in music. Standards in information technology are below average. In all other subjects except geography, the pupils attain the standards expected for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The pupils enjoy coming to school and work hard to improve
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The pupils behave very well, both in the classrooms and on the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The pupils work and play very well together.
Attendance	Well below average overall.

The pupils speak about their school with obvious pride and enjoy being part of the school community. The pupils feel valued. They are keen to help each other and willingly take on responsibility. They are sensible, polite and helpful and are mature for their age. The pupils are interested in their lessons, concentrate well and are keen to talk about their work. When they are rewarded for good effort in their work or responsible behaviour, they take pride in their achievements. They develop a strong sense of fairness and are open and friendly. All ages of pupils get on well together and there are warm relationships with the adults in the school. The pupils respond very positively at lunchtimes, when the mid-day supervisors organise activities for

them. The school emphasises the need for attendance and rewards good attendance. The pupils' absence is closely monitored.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

All of the lessons seen were at least satisfactory. In 58% of the lessons the quality of teaching was good or better. In 5% of the lessons the teaching was very good. Children under five get off to a good start because the teaching takes account of their needs.

The good teaching in English and mathematics throughout the school enables the pupils to achieve well and basic skills are well taught. Strengths in teaching and learning include high expectations of the pupils which result in the pupils' good attitudes and behaviour. The teachers use questions that promote the pupils' thinking and accelerate their rate of learning. The pupils' vocabulary is extended by the teachers' good use of language. The very good progress made by pupils with special educational needs is as a result of the effectively planned support in lessons. The good opportunities for pupils to organise and plan their work in science at Key Stage 2 results in a good rate of learning but this is sometimes a weaker aspect in teaching in other subjects. More often, the teachers do not give the pupils opportunities to use their own ideas to plan and organise their own work or to use information technology. The pupils' rate of learning in writing is restricted because they are not sufficiently encouraged to write independently.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The children under five have an appropriate and stimulating curriculum that meets their needs. The older pupils also benefit from a generally broad and relevant curriculum but have too little experience of using computers in some aspects of their work.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The work is well tailored to meet their needs and the pupils are very well supported. The teachers and classroom assistants work closely together to plan their work.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school very effectively promotes the pupils' social and moral development and this is reflected in the very good relationships. The pupils have a strong awareness of their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions. They are encouraged to consider important issues and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. A high level of care is provided. The pupils learn in a warm and supportive atmosphere where their welfare is given a high priority. The staff know the pupils very well as individuals. The teachers assess how well pupils are doing and usually give them work that matches their needs.

The school has built a strong partnership with parents and involves them well in their children's life at school. The headteacher and staff are readily available. The parents have a very high regard for the school's consistent approach to discipline.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school and is well supported by the deputy head and curriculum co-ordinators. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and effective. The staff work well as a team and are committed to looking for ways to improve standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well informed and provide good support for the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The analysis of performance underpins the school's work. The school recognises its weaknesses and plans effectively to overcome them.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources well for the benefit of the pupils. There is an adequate number of teachers and a good number of well qualified classroom assistants. The accommodation is good. Resources are adequate for most areas of the curriculum, but more software is needed to support the pupils' learning in information technology. The governors look for good value in their spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • The teaching is good. • They receive good information about how their children are doing. • The staff are approachable and work closely with them. • The school well led and managed. • There are interesting activities outside lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant concerns were expressed.

The inspection findings support the parents' views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The test results for 11 year olds in 1999 indicate that standards are below the national average in English and mathematics and average in science. Compared to similar schools, the results in English and science are well above average, and results in mathematics were above average. The test results for seven year olds in 1999 indicate that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are well below average. In comparison with similar schools, standards in reading were below average and those in writing and mathematics were average.
2. The school's trend in the standards over the past three years has been above the national trend. More pupils have achieved at the level expected for eleven year olds year-on-year, but comparatively few pupils achieve at a higher level. Last year's results by eleven year olds showed a marked improvement. The school met its targets for last year and is on course to meet the suitably challenging targets for this year. The pupils enter the school with poor levels of language and while their vocabulary improves as they become older, their limited facility with language affects much of their work.
3. The evidence from the inspection supports the view that standards are below average in English and mathematics and science by the age of seven. By the time they leave the school, although they have made good progress, standards in English and mathematics remain below average. Standards in science reach an average level by the age of eleven and this is mainly due to the good opportunities that pupils have to develop their investigative skills, think for themselves and plan their own work.
4. Most pupils achieve well in most subjects, but standards could be higher in writing and information technology. Pupils with special educational needs often make very good progress because of closely focused teaching and the very good support provided by the classroom assistants. The few more able pupils generally achieve a good standard, but there are a few occasions when they could do better if they were given more opportunities to try out their own ideas.
5. Children under five in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in all of the areas of learning, but most are unlikely to reach the standards expected by the time they are five.
6. The younger pupils have a very limited vocabulary and find it difficult to express their ideas or opinions in any detail. Their listening skills are better and most pupils listen well to the teacher. Both listening and speaking improve year-on-year, but the pupils' attainment in speaking remains below that expected for their age by the time they leave the school. Most of pupils use short sentences or phrases and require prompting to express themselves more fully.
7. The pupils make good progress in reading and approach text confidently. Reception pupils look at the pictures and make up the story but find it difficult to predict what might happen. In Key Stage 1 the pupils build up a good range of words that they recognise or can work out by the sounds of letters. Most pupils attempt to use expression to represent speech when reading aloud. Older pupils discuss different types of stories and express preferences. They read for pleasure and information but many find it hard to infer from what they read and their understanding of complex texts is limited. Year 6 pupils, for example, can read a list of opinions on the topic of school uniform but find it hard to decide whether these represent arguments for or against wearing it.
8. The pupils make satisfactory progress in writing in English lessons. Most Year 2 pupils use simple punctuation accurately and write a few sentences to describe an event or start a story but very few pupils write extended pieces. A significant minority of the pupils do not form their letters correctly. The pupils in Key Stage 2 use more formal language in writing letters and narrative accounts but they find it difficult to express their ideas at any length. The Year 5 and 6 pupils make notes and use bullet

points. Their spelling is often accurate and they know how to punctuate speech but they do not always routinely check their work. 9. Very few pupils use grammatically complex sentences or sustain and develop their ideas. The scope and quality of their vocabulary and ideas are limited. The pupils have too few opportunities to write on their own in other subjects, using their own ideas about how to present the work. Too often it is the teacher who decides what will be written and this restricts the pupils scope in practising the skills they have learned. The standard of handwriting is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 2 .

10. By the end of Key Stage 1 the pupils have a range of strategies for calculating with numbers up to twenty. They are able to explain simple number patterns such as that made by adding 10. They count in 2s,5s and 10s and use their knowledge to calculate mentally and present their findings in the form of sets or Venn diagrams. The pupils are able to work out the smallest number of coins needed to make a given amount under fifty pence. They have a sound knowledge of shapes and are able to measure accurately in centimetres.

11. In Year 3 pupils begin to develop an awareness of equivalent fractions and use partitioning when adding a pair of two digit numbers. In Year 4 the pupils understand the terms numerator and denominator when discussing fractions and use rounding to estimate the sum of two, three figure numbers. In Year 6 pupils display a sound knowledge of place value up to six figures. The majority of the year group has sound number table recall and pupils understand square numbers and their patterns. They know the factors of a range of given numbers, what constitutes a prime number and are able to identify such numbers between 1 and 100. Pupils convert vulgar fractions to decimals and can see the relationship between percentages and fractions. They measure angles accurately and describe the difference amongst acute, obtuse, reflex and right angles. Data is presented in line graphs and pictograms. Pupils are not, however, generally as confident at reading information from diagrams and handling data, as they are with other aspects of mathematics. The pupils are given too few opportunities to find their own solutions to problems.

12. In science, the Key Stage 1 pupils observe how plants grow and understand that plants need water and light. They label the different parts of plants such as the roots and stem. In Year 1 the pupils undertake simple investigations to show how forces affect movement. In Year 2 the pupils investigate different ways of making sounds, including using bottles filled with different amounts of water and then blowing across the top to produce a range of high and low sounds. The pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and are developing their understanding of what constitutes a fair test during their simple class investigations and observations but do not use their own ideas to plan experiments.

13. In Key Stage 2 the pupils make good progress as they are more involved in planning and organising their own investigations and experiments. This leads to the pupils in Years 5 and 6 having a better understanding of what conditions need to be established to devise a fair test. In Year 5 the pupils have discussed how to test the permeability of different types of rocks by carefully applying water droplets on to the rocks and measuring how much water runs off or passes through. During the inspection the Year 6 pupils were planning and devising their own experiments to test different ways of measuring the pitch, intensity and strength of sounds. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 are engaged in investigations which enable them to organise their thinking and apply their knowledge and understanding to a range of problems. This is successful in enabling the pupils to reach the expected standards for their age by the time they are eleven years of age.

14. The standards in religious education are average at age seven and eleven. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are familiar with a range of religious ideas and themes and have had the opportunity to compare and contrast some of the major features of Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

15. A strength is the good standard achieved in music. Many pupils learn to play a musical instrument and the quality of singing is a very good feature throughout the school. Standards in information technology are below average. The pupils have not had sufficient experience of control, monitoring and simulation, by the age of eleven, to achieve the standards expected. In all other subjects except geography, the pupils attain the standards expected for their age.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The pupils' attitudes to school life are very positive. Parents report that their children enjoy going to school. Pupils know they are there to learn. They settle down quickly and are keen to get started. They listen attentively and are usually eager to answer questions. They enjoy the challenge of learning, showing a high level of interest and motivation. Pupils work hard with good levels of concentration. They speak proudly of their school and take care of its resources

17. Parents' positive views about behaviour are confirmed by the inspection. Standards of behaviour in and around the school are very good. Pupils behave particularly well in lessons. The school has a clear behaviour code and pupils know what behaviour is expected. Behaviour in assemblies, in the playground and the dining room is particularly impressive. Movement around the school is orderly. The pupils do not consider bullying a problem and they know who to turn to if an incident occurs. There have been no exclusions. There has been a discernible improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour since the last inspection.

18. Pupils show a very good level of maturity and confidence for their age. They are developing essential social skills. They are very polite and friendly. The quality of relationships is very good and is a strength of the school. The pupils get on very well with each other and with the adults in the school. Relationships between many of the pupils and the lunchtime supervisory and classroom assistants are very close. Dining is a civilised social occasion with easy conversation. Table manners are good. Pupils work well together and are prepared to listen to each other's views. They know the importance of taking turns and sharing. When they have the opportunity, the pupils show a good level of independence, with many prepared to work hard on their tasks without too much direct supervision; for example, in the literacy hour when pupils generally work well at their independent tasks. Extra responsibilities, like taking the register to the office are accepted enthusiastically. The school has a system of House Captains and prefects through which a sizeable number of pupils take responsibility for many of the school's routines. For instance, the whole school for assembly is a smooth and orderly operation because the pupils open doors, and lead in younger pupils. Throughout the school, equipment and books are handled with respect. Pupils willingly take responsibility for keeping their classrooms tidy.

19. Attendance is well below the national average but unauthorised absences are better than the national average. Attendance was a key issues at the last inspection and has improved with the assistance of the Educational Welfare Officer since then. Registration is carried out promptly and efficiently first thing in the morning and afternoon. Lessons start and finish on time and there is little lateness.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

20. The school benefits from a strong team of teachers. They work effectively as a team and are committed to looking for ways to improve what they do. In just over half of the lessons, teaching is good and very good teaching is evident in a small number of lessons.

21. The teaching of children under five in the Nursery is satisfactory, with some good features. It is good in the Reception class. The staff are sensitive to the emotional and social needs of young children in both classes and create a stimulating and supportive environment for learning. The children develop confidence as a result of the adults' warm manner and their good knowledge of each child. The children's vocabulary is extended more effectively in the Reception class through the teacher's more consistently good use of language. The children's good rate of learning is promoted through the staff's effective use of the children's own experience in both classes.

22. Teaching in English and mathematics is good and the teachers prepare their work thoroughly. The teachers' planning builds well on what the pupils have done before. The pupils know what will be learned during the lesson because the teachers make this clear at the outset. The teachers' competency

in teaching phonics and other basic skills in reading is good and promotes a good rate of learning. The teaching of target and booster groups in English and mathematics addresses the precise needs of the pupils effectively. Pupils with special educational needs usually make very good progress as a result of effective teaching that takes account of their needs and the high quality of the support provided by the classroom assistants.

23. The teachers' positive and consistently high expectations of behaviour contribute significantly to the good progress made by the pupils. This strength in teaching ensures that there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in the classrooms. The teachers' very good management of pupils is reflected in the way in which the pupils settle quickly to work and maintain their concentration, even when not directly supervised. Those pupils who display challenging behaviour are managed very well. The pupils are keen to learn and improve because of the interesting work and the lively way in which it is presented and the good relationships. The pupils are serious about their work and know how they can improve because of the guidance given by the teachers in their marking in books and comments in lessons.

24. The classroom assistants and teachers work closely together and this has a very positive impact on the pupils' learning. They assess the progress that groups of pupils have made at the end of each day and adapt the following day's planning to take account of individual needs. The classroom assistants are well briefed and work hard to provide support in literacy and numeracy sessions.

25. The weaker aspects of teaching are that too few opportunities are planned for the pupils to use their initiative in planning their work. Too often, the teachers tell the pupils how to set out their work or what to do, rather than giving the pupils the opportunity to try out their own ideas. This is evident in design and technology, history and geography and mathematics at both key stages and science in Key Stage 1. Teachers do not use information technology to support the pupils learning as well as they might. There are too few opportunities for the pupils to write about their own ideas or decide on the way in which they will present their writing.

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

26. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection and the school provides the pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum. The school also follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education with appropriate programmes of study to teach the subject across the school. The children under five in the nursery and reception class receive a good range of activities based on the recommended areas of learning for young children.

27. All curriculum subjects, as well as personal, social and health education, have schemes of work which help the teachers plan lessons that build effectively on what the pupils already know and can do. This enables the pupils to make good progress in most subjects. However, whilst the full curriculum is planned, some aspects of the information technology curriculum are not yet fully represented in the work covered and, as a result, the majority of pupils across the school are not achieving the standards expected for their age. The curriculum in music is a strength and many pupils in Key Stage 2 are learning to play musical instruments. Younger pupils learn to play recorders and in Key Stage 2 some pupils choose to play the flute. The music curriculum is having a very positive impact on the standards the pupils achieve in music as well as the quality of singing across the school.

28. Teachers' planning is detailed and includes information that helps them to make assessments about the pupils' progress as well as prepare tasks for different groups of pupils. There are, however, a few occasions when the work provided for higher attaining pupils does not always meet their specific needs or challenge them. The school has implemented the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy effectively and all of the pupils have equal access to the curriculum. There is a good balance of relevant activities but in some lessons writing skills are not sufficiently used because of over-direction by the teachers. In these lessons the writing is usually limited to filling in worksheets, completing

sentences or colouring in pictures with few opportunities to write freely or to prepare reports on what they have learned. In Key Stage 2 there are too many examples of pupils copying from text books in history and geography lessons which does not provide enough opportunities for them to attempt to write their own reports.

29. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for the pupils. These include a number of competitive and non-competitive sporting activities in football, netball, cross-country, kwick-cricket and hockey. Some pupils also receive additional instrumental musical tuition.

30. The school identifies pupils with special educational needs at an early stage. There is very good provision for these pupils. The school has deployed classroom assistants in every class to support individual pupils and groups who need extra help. This level of support ensures that specific learning needs are met and are reviewed regularly. Additional literacy support is also provided for groups of pupils during literacy lessons and it is very well organised to enable these pupils to make very good progress in reading.

31. The school is very successful in providing a planned programme of personal, moral, social and health education. This is incorporated into the curriculum and is consistently reinforced in lessons, at lunchtimes and in school assemblies. The school places a high priority on teaching the difference between right and wrong. This is clearly reflected in the school's code of conduct and the high expectations the staff set for behaviour. The staff value the pupils very much. This is a school which always puts the pupils first and relationships are very strong. During lessons the pupils learn to work together and co-operate in small groups. The headteacher has introduced a very successful series of playground activities which are planned so that the pupils develop very good social skills. Assistants and supervisors plan and organise games and activities and this is very successful in promoting responsible behaviour and productive relationships outside lessons and enhances the pupils' positive attitudes to learning. The school has a well established system of rewards with team captains, house points, certificates for achievement and good behaviour, as well as a very successful system which nominates some pupils to act as good role models for younger pupils. There are very good opportunities for the older pupils to develop their social skills during residential educational visits, for example, a visit to a country park helped the pupils develop good co-operative skills in activities such as orienteering. All of these features are interwoven into the personal, social and health education programme which is having a very positive effect on the pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to school.

32. The provision for the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good. The pupils learn to appreciate poetry, music and art and they study the work of well-known artists and musicians. There are good opportunities for the pupils to reflect on what they have learned and to consider important issues in religious education lessons. The pupils learn about their own culture in history and extend their understanding of other cultures through a range of visits and visitors. For example, a Japanese student helped to extend the pupils' knowledge of different customs and traditions and the pupils visit a local synagogue.

33. The school has a high profile in the community and has forged excellent links with the local community over the last few years. These links include the local industries, the Residents' Association, Housing Associations, the police, the church, local colleges and partner schools. The local housing association sponsors the printing of the school brochure. There is very close liaison with the Stoke-on-Trent, Alsager and Newcastle-under-Lyme Colleges. The school acts as a training venue for students at the colleges and uses the colleges' services to provide courses for parents and pupils. For example, computer courses have been run at the school. The school is very much involved in community matters and works with other agencies to improve the local environment, for example, being involved in matters that affect the community, such as traffic calming measures on roads near to the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. The monitoring of the pupils' academic progress is satisfactory. The school has worked hard to devise good, manageable systems to track the progress of individual pupils. These are beginning to pay dividends in pinpointing possible underachievement by groups or individuals. The analysis of the information gained through assessments is generally well used to inform planning but more able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in writing. Standardised tests are used to monitor attainment in mathematics and reading and optional National Curriculum tests are being introduced throughout Key Stage 2. Target setting is in place at Key Stage 2.

35. The staff have very high expectations of the pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school and teaching staff keep useful records of individual pupils' personal development. All the staff work together to implement the school's policy and this has a marked effect on the atmosphere in the classrooms and around the school. The issues discussed in classrooms and during assembly make a positive contribution to the ethos of the school and the pupils' personal development.

36. The school has good welfare, safety and child protection arrangements for its pupils. The staff know the pupils very well and show a high level of care for them. This is well illustrated by the work of the lunch-time supervisors who lead enjoyable playground games and activities.

37. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance have improved since the last inspection. With the help of the Educational Welfare Officer, the provision of awards for good attendance and improved monitoring, the attendance has improved.

38. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. School rules, which are evident around the school, are obeyed and rewards and sanctions are given out consistently by all staff throughout the school. The parents commented at the pre-inspection meeting that they valued the way in which behaviour had improved considerably in the last few years due to the school's consistent approach.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. The parents' views from the pre-inspection meeting and analysis of the questionnaires show that they have a high regard for the school and are happy with what it provides for their children.

40. The school has excellent links with the parents who have many opportunities to take part in the life of the school. Many of them help in classrooms and several who started as volunteer helpers were encouraged by the school and have become qualified classroom assistants. The support that they give in this and many other ways is of considerable help to the school and to the achievement of the pupils.

41. There is a very successful and well attended programme of frequent after-school work-shops for parents and their children. During the week of the inspection, for example, the deputy headteacher organised a science and mathematics workshop which was led by a member of staff from a local university and was well attended by parents and their children. These workshops are very successful in promoting very good links with parents as well as providing them with an insight into their children's learning experiences in school.

42. The school works hard to establish a good relationship with parents, right from the start and communication is very good. The staff are very accessible and this is appreciated by the parents who feel comfortable to contact them with any concerns. The parents are encouraged to become involved in hearing their child read at home and are given good guidelines to help them. The parents feel that they are well informed and the quality of information in, for example, the 'Welcome to the Nursery' and 'Welcome to Reception' documents is very good. However, although parents are happy with the annual reports on pupils, there is too little detail about the pupils' attainment in information technology.

43. The many events and concerts organised by the school are very well supported by the parents. The Parents', Teachers' and Friends' Association raise funds through social events and enable the school to buy equipment like computers, learning resources and an extension to the school stage.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The headteacher provides a very good direction for the school. He has a clear idea of what needs to be done, based on an objective analysis of the school's performance. His influence on the school is evident in its daily work and he maintains very close contact with the parents. He knows what is happening in classrooms and the monitoring of teaching and learning is used rigorously to bring about improvement. The teachers are given detailed, useful feedback on the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and this is having a marked impact on the standards achieved by the pupils. The school has a very good ethos and good quality planning to bring about improvement. The staff share a commitment to raising standards and put the pupils first.

45. The staff work well as a team. All teachers with management responsibilities have a clear view of the part they play in taking the school forward. The deputy headteacher, for example, has completed a great deal of effective work in improving the planning of the curriculum. The curriculum co-ordinators are effective. They provide good support to colleagues through the detailed monitoring of planning. The feedback to individual teachers focuses on areas for improvement. The introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has been well managed and teachers have been supported effectively; this has resulted in a good level of confidence and expertise.

46. The governors have an appropriate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They work hard and provide good support for the school. They are clear about the school's priorities and how these will be achieved. The school's finances are well managed and its income, including specific grants, are used effectively to support the school's priorities in raising standards. The principles of best value are securely enshrined in the governors' approach, both when purchasing goods and services and in evaluating the impact of major spending to support the school's initiatives in raising standards. An example of this is the careful consideration given to the expenditure on classroom assistants and the impact that this has on the pupils' learning.

47. The school has an adequate number of teachers and a good number of support staff. New staff, students and voluntary helpers are provided with clear guidelines that enable them to support the school's work effectively. The professional development of teachers is supported through appraisal and in-service training that is planned effectively to focus both on individual needs and the school's priorities. The accommodation is good and is well maintained. Effective use is made of information technology to support the management of the school. Resources for most subjects are adequate but more computer software is needed to support learning in several subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In addition to maintaining the drive to raise standards in English and mathematics, the headteacher, governing body and teachers now need to:

1) Improve standards in information technology by:

ensuring that the pupils have opportunities to use control, simulation and modelling;
planning better opportunities for the pupils to use computers to support their learning;
extending the range of software.

(Paragraphs 15, 25, 27, 47, 90, 91)

2) Improve standards in writing by:

ensuring that the teachers plan better opportunities for the pupils to write independently;
ensuring that the teachers' assessments of what higher attaining pupils can do are used more effectively in planning suitably challenging work.

(Paragraphs 8, 25, 28, 34, 56, 60)

3) Improve the pupils' ability to plan and organise their own work by:

providing more opportunities for the pupils to try out their own ideas and solve problems in mathematics and design technology;

enabling the Key Stage 1 pupils to use their initiative in planning and organising experiments in science;

ensuring that the pupils find out information for themselves and decide how to present their work in history and geography.

(Paragraphs 11, 12, 25, 28, 67, 72, 81, 85)

In addition to the key issues above, the less important weaknesses relating to the lack of breadth in the curriculum for geography (paragraph 84) and the quality of the reports to parents (paragraph 42) should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	39
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	22

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5%	53%	42%	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	13	222
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	117

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	46
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	13

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	36
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	40

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.5
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	15	10	25

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	11
	Girls	5	7	9
	Total	15	17	20
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	60 (32)	68 (36)	80 (45)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	12
	Girls	6	9	9
	Total	17	21	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	68 (43)	84 (55)	84 (53)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	10	18	28

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	6	6	10
	Girls	11	10	14
	Total	17	16	24
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	61 (41)	57 (19)	86 (41)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	5	6	10
	Girls	12	11	13
	Total	17	17	21
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	63 (63)	61 (76)	75 (59)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	194
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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)	9.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	24.6 : 1
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	266.5

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0

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

Number of pupils per FTE adult	13
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	395507
Total expenditure	377187
Expenditure per pupil	1457
Balance brought forward from previous year	42970
Balance carried forward to next year	61290

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	248
Number of questionnaires returned	112

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	21	3	0	1
My child is making good progress in school.	73	24	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	71	26	2	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	52	36	4	2	4
The teaching is good.	86	14	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	74	22	4	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	10	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87	13	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	81	15	1	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	88	9	2	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	18	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	29	5	0	10

At the meeting for parents before the inspection and in written responses on the questionnaires, the parents commented very warmly on the quality of the headteacher's influence on the school. His accessibility and strong stance on establishing good discipline were particularly commended.

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

48. Children enter the Nursery class when they are three years and four months old. Most attend for two terms and transfer to the Reception class in the September of the year in which they are five. Ten children were under five in the Reception class, in addition to those in the Nursery class during the inspection. The children's attainment on entry to the school is well below average. Their language is very limited. The children achieve well in both classes, but few are likely to meet the national expectations by the age of five, in any of the areas of learning, apart from their physical development.

Personal and social development

49. The good routines and clear, consistent expectations in both classes ensure that the children know what is required and consequently they respond very well. In the Nursery and Reception classes the teaching is good and the staff take every opportunity to promote the children's understanding of themselves and others and the need to get on together. In the Nursery class, for example, the nursery nurse encourages the children to think about others when they take turns in 'directing traffic' in the outdoor play area. The children learn to work and play together. A good example of this was seen when two Nursery children created a game of 'driving a bus' from a box, a steering wheel and two dolls. They happily exchanged roles as driver and passenger. The warm and supportive relationships evident in both classes give the children a sense of security and confidence. The children in the Reception class move calmly from one activity to another and settle quickly to their work.

Language and literacy

50. The Nursery children listen to stories and look at the pictures in books. Their language is very limited and few talk spontaneously about the books. The nursery nurse gives plenty of prompts but does not always provide the vocabulary to enable the children to reply to her questions. Few of the children answer questions with more than one word. The Reception children learn the sounds of letters and how to write them. They understand that stories have a beginning, middle and end. Some pupils recognise the rhyming pattern of groups of words. Most children can write their name correctly. The teaching in the Reception class is good. The staff are clear about the children's needs and what will be learned in each session. The staff read stories in a lively manner that grips the children's interest and so they pay close attention. The adults talk to the children about their work and encourage them to express their ideas and some good opportunities are provided to record these in the 'shop' and more formal activities. The classroom displays are designed to help the children to read words that are linked to topics, but there is little of the children's own writing on display.

Mathematical

51. Some of the children in the Nursery class can count up to five and know the names of colours. Some recognise a few symbols for numbers. They can sort objects by colour. Their mathematical language is very limited. Teaching is good in both classes. The staff plan a good range of practical activities to deepen the children's understanding of number and shape. The Nursery children count the pieces of fruit and straws as they are given out at snack time and sing number rhymes. The Reception children can count to ten and recognise the numbers from one to five. A few can add one or two to numbers under ten. They use the terms 'big' and 'small' and know that 100 is a 'big number'. Most children recognise a circle, triangle and square. The Reception teacher provides good opportunities to develop the children's mental facility with numbers. She is sensitive to the needs of higher attaining children and uses well-directed questions to extend their understanding.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

52. The teaching in this area of learning is good in both classes. The children extend their understanding of the world through a good range of activities that build on their own experience. The Nursery children explore the taste, texture and smell of exotic fruit. They are delighted with the experience but few can describe more than the colour. Most of the children know the names of some farm animals and know that animals need food and water. The Reception children know that the weather changes with the seasons and observe changes in their environment. They know that plants grow from seeds and that they need water. Some confuse the terms for the different parts of a plant when they try to describe how the water gets to the flower from the roots. They understand how they have changed since they were babies.

Creative

53. The teaching in this area of learning is satisfactory in both classes. The children are given opportunities to explore a good range of media and create pictures with paint and collage. The children in the Nursery make butterflies by cutting and sticking paper and fabric. The Reception children paint in the style of Monet, after looking at his work, and mix colours to achieve a good effect. They draw pictures of themselves playing instruments. In role play, the children in both classes use a very limited vocabulary when playing together. The children sing tunefully and learn a good repertoire of songs by heart.

Physical development

54. The Nursery children have a daily outdoor play session in a well-equipped area and have a satisfactory awareness of space. They use tools in painting, modelling and writing with satisfactory control but have some lack of control when gluing. The Reception pupils show a better level of manipulative skill in fastening and joining materials. They show an appropriate level of poise, balance and control in their movements in physical education and can run and stop on command and change the direction of their travel. The teaching is good; in both classes the staff plan a broad range of activities to extend the children's physical development.

ENGLISH

55. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Standards in speaking and listening, reading and writing are below average by the end of Year 2. The pupils' attainment in reading is slightly below average by the time they leave the school and their attainment in writing is below average. The percentage of pupils working within Level 4 is close to the national average, but very few pupils are working at a higher level. Attainment in listening reaches an average standard by the time they leave the school, but very few of the pupils reach an average standard in speaking.

56. The pupils' achieve well in relation to their starting point in reading and speaking and listening. A good rate of learning is evident in most lessons and over time. This is seen in the way in which the pupils use their skills in other subjects. They read for information as well as pleasure and join in discussions confidently. The pupils' progress in writing in their English lessons is satisfactory. However, in spite of demonstrating good progress in a broad range of writing tasks in their English books, they are given too few opportunities to use these skills in their work in other subjects. The few higher attaining pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks in writing and rarely organise or plan their own work.

57. The younger pupils use a very limited vocabulary and most find it difficult to express their ideas or opinions in any detail. Their listening skills are better and most pupils listen well to the teacher. Both listening and speaking improve year-on-year, but the pupils' attainment in speaking remains below that expected for their age by the time they leave the school. The few higher attaining pupils can support

their views in discussion and talk in detail about their work, but the majority of pupils use short sentences or phrases and require prompting to express themselves more fully.

58. The pupils make good progress in reading and approach text confidently. Reception pupils recognise most letters and a few words. They look at the pictures and make up the story but find it difficult to predict what might happen. The Year 1 pupils use a limited range of adjectives to describe a character in a story. They recognise the features of a traditional story. Year 2 pupils recognise rhyming words and offer other suggestions. They understand that 'key words' are important. Most pupils attempt to use expression to represent speech when reading aloud. Year 3 and 4 pupils identify the adjectives used to build up a character. Older pupils discuss different types of stories and express preferences. The pupils can locate and use reference material effectively to support their work in history. Year 6 pupils effectively skim text to pick out the essential points and recognise the main characters and events in a broad range of texts. The majority of pupils have difficulty in inferring information from what they read. Year 6 pupils, for example, read a list of opinions about school uniform, but find it hard to decide whether these represent arguments for or against wearing it.

59. The pupils make satisfactory progress in writing in lessons. Most Year 2 pupils use simple punctuation accurately and write a few sentences to describe an event or start a story but very few pupils write extended pieces. A significant minority of the pupils do not form their letters correctly. The pupils in Key Stage 2 use more formal language in writing letters and narrative accounts but they find it difficult to express their ideas at any length. The Year 5 and 6 pupils make notes when they undertake personal research. Their spelling is often accurate and they know how to punctuate speech but they do not always routinely check their work. Very few pupils use grammatically complex sentences or sustain and develop their ideas. The scope and quality of their vocabulary and ideas are limited. The standard of handwriting is generally satisfactory at Key Stage 2.

60. The quality of teaching is good. The teachers have a good understanding of how to teach phonics and this enables the pupils to approach text confidently. Lessons are planned to reflect the Literacy Strategy and are well organised and resourced. The teachers make it clear to the pupils what they will learn and so the pupils settle quickly to the work. In a Year 4 session on forming adjectives from nouns, for example, a very good rate of learning resulted from the teacher's clear explanations and the fact that he built carefully on what the pupils already knew. The pupils quickly grasped the principle and came up with alternative suggestions. The teachers provide good opportunities for discussion and extend the pupils' vocabulary through their own use of language. In the Reception class, for example, the teacher used a session on the sound of 'y' to introduce the pupils to several new words and this resulted in a more able pupil making up several sentences using a new vocabulary. The teachers choose suitable and interesting texts and so the pupils are well motivated. They use questioning effectively to revise previous work. The teachers read aloud in a lively and expressive manner and this sets a good example for the pupils. In a good introductory session with Year 2 pupils, the teacher's enthusiasm for the story was quickly picked up by the pupils. The teacher's close eye on the level of individual participation in the discussion and well-directed questions kept everyone involved. The pupils are encouraged to think about why the writer uses particular words or structures to create an effect. In a lesson with Year 6 pupils, the teacher worked with a group on identifying the characteristics of persuasive writing and successfully extended their understanding by re-phrasing questions. The group reading sessions effectively extend the pupils' understanding and skills and the teachers assess the pupils' performance effectively, making notes for improvement. The plenary session is often well used to assess learning. A weakness in the teaching at both key stages is that the pupils are given too few opportunities to organise their own writing in other subjects. Too often, the pupils are given the format in which to write and this restricts their rate of progress.

61. The teaching of pupils in the booster groups and target groups effectively promotes a good rate of learning. The work is planned to focus closely on areas of weakness and reflects the needs of individual pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Classroom assistants provide good support for the pupils' learning.

62. The teachers' assessment of reading is well used to inform the pupils' next work. The teachers' identify precisely what the pupils need to do to improve when they hear them read individually or in groups. The assessment of writing is less effective and the teachers often record what the pupils can do, but rarely what they need to do next to improve. This has been identified as a weakness by the school.

63. The good co-ordination of the subject and the monitoring of teachers' planning and lessons have supported the improvement in standards. The careful analysis of the pupils' performance in tests has enabled the school to focus effectively on areas of weakness and address these through appropriately targeted teaching. The co-ordinator has a good overview of provision and standards throughout the school and has a comprehensive action plan for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

64. Standards in mathematics have improved since the last inspection and although still below the national average, the trend over the past three years has been one of steady improvement. Progress throughout the school is good, including that made by pupils with special educational needs. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented effectively by the school.

65. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are beginning to develop a range of strategies for calculating with numbers up to twenty. They are able to explain how numbers grow and talk about the patterns that are created when adding 10. They count in multiples of 2, 5 and 10 and use their knowledge to calculate mentally and present their findings in the form of sets or simple Venn diagrams. The pupils are able to explain the smallest number of coins needed to make a given amount under 50p. They have a sound knowledge of a range of two and three-dimensional shapes and are able to measure accurately to 20cms. They use arbitrary measures such as hands and feet when the need arises. They know the number of days in a week, the months in a year and the seasons, and the majority of pupils are able to list these chronologically.

66. At the end of Key Stage 2 numeracy continues to be emphasised and pupils are able to build on the foundations established. In Year 3 the pupils begin to develop an awareness of equivalent fractions and use partitioning when adding a pair of two digit numbers. In Year 4 pupils are developing an understanding of words such as numerator and denominator when discussing fractions and use rounding to estimate the sum of two three figure numbers. In Year 6 pupils display a sound knowledge of place value up to six figures and use this knowledge in their pencil and paper calculations. The majority of the year group has sound number table recall and pupils are gaining an appreciation of square numbers and their patterns. They know the factors of a range of given numbers, what constitutes a prime number and are able to identify such numbers between 1 and 100. Pupils convert vulgar fractions to decimals and can see the relationship between percentages and fractions. They measure angles accurately and describe the difference amongst acute, obtuse, reflex and right angles. Data collected from a variety of sources is presented in line graphs and pictograms. Pupils are not, however, generally as confident at reading information from diagrams and handling data, as they are with other aspects of mathematics.

67. Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and never less than satisfactory. This has done much to raise standards in the subject. Teachers display a good subject knowledge, manage the pupils well and do much to support and encourage them. Very good use is made of classroom support staff. In the best lessons seen the teachers demonstrated a good rapport with the class, teaching was brisk and appropriately challenging with clear explanations, and the activities matched to the pupils' differing abilities. This is noticeable across the age ranges and begins during the pupils' first year in school, and this in turn inspires the pupils to work hard and make good progress. Less progress is made when the introductory session is too long, and work discussed or set fails to match the needs of all the pupils. Pupils are often given the way to work through solving problems and have too few opportunities to explore their own ideas.

68. The subject is well co-ordinated and the introduction of the Numeracy Strategy has been well managed. Information technology is not used sufficiently to support the pupils' learning in the subject. Much has been done to develop the subject in recent years and the school is now well placed to improve further.

SCIENCE

69. Standards have improved consistently over the last three years in the tests for eleven year olds. In Key Stage 1 standards have remained well below average over the last three years. From the evidence gathered during the inspection, standards in science at the end of Key Stage 1 are below average and they are average at the end of Key Stage 2.

70. There has been a significant improvement in the way that science is planned and taught across the school. In Key Stage 1 the pupils investigate the conditions necessary for the growth of beans. They understand that plants need water and light. The pupils know the parts of plants such as the roots and stem. In Year 1 the pupils study the way that toys move in simple investigations to show how forces affect movement. In Year 2 the pupils listen to recorded animal sounds and select the appropriate name of the animal. They investigate different ways of making sounds, including using bottles filled with different amounts of water and then blowing across the top to produce a range of high and low sounds. The pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 and are developing their understanding of what constitutes a fair test during their simple class investigations and observations.

71. In Key Stage 2 the pupils make good progress as they are more involved in planning and organising their own investigations and experiments. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a better understanding of what conditions need to be established to devise a fair test. In a Year 5 lesson, the pupils discuss how to test the permeability of different types of rocks by carefully applying water droplets on to the rocks and measuring how much water runs off or passes through. In Year 6, the pupils have been involved in a series of science lessons investigating sound waves. During the inspection the pupils were planning and devising their own experiments to test different ways of measuring the pitch, intensity and strength of sounds. In Year 4 the pupils observe the changes to different materials after melting chocolate or ice and then discuss whether these changes can be reversed. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 are engaged in investigations which enable them to organise their thinking and apply their knowledge and understanding to a range of problems. This is successful in enabling the pupils to reach the expected standards for their age by the time they are eleven years of age.

72. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and is good in Key Stage 2 with some very good features in Years 5 and 6. In Key Stage 1 the science lessons usually involve adult-led investigations with prescribed outcomes and observations. Although the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and the pupils experience a broad range of topics, there are not enough opportunities for the pupils to plan and organise their own work. In contrast, in Key Stage 2, the teaching is more challenging and varied, enabling the pupils to plan and organise their experiments so that they have a clear understanding of the concepts and skills being taught. The scrutiny of science workbooks shows that in Key Stage 1 science lessons usually involve the completion of worksheets, colouring in exercises and simple labelling with the pupils completing missing words from a prescribed list. In Key Stage 2 there is more evidence of pupils engaged in practical experiments with a clear step-by-step approach to planning and organising their own investigations.

73. The teaching in Key Stage 2 is clearly improving the standards reached in the national tests. There has been a marked improvement in test results which demonstrates that the way that the science teaching is organised has a direct bearing on how the pupils learn scientific concepts and skills. The more opportunities provided for the pupils to plan, organise and prepare their own investigations with skilled intervention and questioning by the teachers helps to accelerate the progress that the pupils make. When the pupils join Key Stage 2 their level of knowledge and understanding in science is well below average. By the time they reach the end of Key Stage 2 they are achieving standards in line with those expected for their age and a significant number of pupils reach above average levels.

74. The science co-ordinator has successfully reviewed how science is taught and prepared an effective curriculum with programmes of study to help teachers with their planning. She leads by her own good example and this has helped to raise the profile of science teaching across the school. Information technology is not well used to support the pupils' learning in science and this is recognised by the school as an area for further development.

ART

75. The pupils achieve the standards expected for their ages at both key stages. There is some good quality work in painting and drawing in all year groups and the pupils study a good range of artists' work. Their experience of three-dimensional work is more restricted.

76. Reception pupils show good representation of form in the curving stems of tulips, painted after looking at the work of Ha Van Vuong. Year 1 pupils use colour mixing to good effect in painting sunflowers. The paintings by Year 2 pupils, based on Miro's work show close observation of detail, colour and balanced composition. Year 4 pupils produce sensitive work based on Lowry's portraits and city scenes. The pupils' work indicates a careful consideration of proportion and use of colour to create atmosphere. Year 6 pupils work in subtle shades of pencil crayon to create leaf patterns after looking at Rousseau's work.

77. No lessons were observed during the inspection and so no judgement is made on teaching. The subject is supported by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who provides valuable support to colleagues. A strength in the subject is the good range of artists studied, from both different times and cultures. Good links are made to other areas of the curriculum, such as science and history.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

78. The pupils make satisfactory progress in design and technology in Key Stage 1 and good progress in Key Stage 2. The school provides a structured programme of design and technology, and standards have improved since the last inspection.

79. In Key Stage 1 the pupils learn to make finger puppets using textiles. In Year 1 food technology lessons help the pupils to learn about the different ingredients when making fruit salads and healthy eating. Reception children have made flowers from templates and Year 2 pupils have made birds with tissue paper wings. The pupils make satisfactory progress as they follow clearly defined steps to produce a range of simple products. Most of the work in Key Stage 1 relates to topics or themes and many also follow stories from books or nursery rhymes. Although the pupils write simple explanations about how they make their models, there is little evidence that the pupils have been given time to explore different methods or to plan their projects. Most of the work is prescribed and adult-led with little time given to investigating or evaluating different methods during the design element of their work.

80. There is more evidence in Key Stage 2 of pupils being engaged in the design and making process. Their design and technology workbooks show that the pupils have completed a series of projects that also involve disassembly and evaluations. This is helping the pupils to develop a better understanding of design and how to make improvements to their products by taking them apart and re-designing. In Key Stage 2 the pupils investigate different mechanisms and, during the planning stage, they apply their knowledge of materials and different mechanisms to produce moving parts. For example, in Year 5 the pupils have produced simple designs of Humpty Dumpty with moving arms and legs to present to younger children in the Nursery. In Year 4, the pupils have used paper-weaving techniques to produce Easter baskets.

81. The design and technology curriculum is now better planned to build on the pupils' existing skills. More emphasis is being given to the design element in each topic. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 1 and good at Key Stage 2. The teaching at Key Stage 2, enables the pupils to start with clear learning

objectives that aim to take them through a process of planning, design, evaluation and production. The design and technology co-ordinator has begun to review the curriculum and is well placed to make further improvements to raise standards across the school. She recognises that there is a need to develop the subject further so that pupils across the school are more involved in open-ended investigations rather than adult-led art and craft projects.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

82. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection, a geography lesson. Evidence is drawn the scrutiny of work and discussions with staff and pupils. Standards in history are broadly average at the ages of seven and eleven. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In geography, the pupils do not reach the standards expected for their ages because of the lack of time given to the subject.

83. By the end of the Key Stage 1, in history, the pupils are able to compare old and new toys, and talk about a range of issues related to life before they were born. Pupils are developing an understanding of the advantages of many modern items and what life was like in their great-grandparents' time. At the end of Key Stage 2 the pupils understand the impact of the growth of towns in the 19th century and the effect the railways had on canal and coach companies. They appreciate what domestic life was like during the Tudor period following a visit to a local hall and can put forward a number of reasons why they are glad that they were born in the 20th century. Year 4 pupils know that the Romans invaded Britain because they were angry with the Britons after they had helped the Gauls. Year 5 pupils have gained much from the study of local maps that cover different periods and from a miner who worked in one of the pits that operated in the area until recently. This helped them to appreciate that first hand evidence such as old documents, and talking to people, is a good way of finding out about the past.

84. Geography is timetabled but has received insufficient attention to make it a worthwhile experience. Pupils' progress is constrained by the lack of time being given to the subject and the lack of evaluative or original writing. There is little written work in Key Stage 1. The pupils label the countries of the United Kingdom on an outline map, reflect on life in another country and write postcards to imaginary friends living there. They talk about their journey to the school, the local shops and identify the street furniture in the area. Pupils in Key Stage 2 consider the local environment and Year 3 pupils express some thoughtful views about how it could be improved. By the end of the key stage they know a range of terms associated with the study of rivers, such as tributary, delta and estuary; match rivers of the world to oceans and describe the yearly life of a farmer in India through an imaginary diary.

85. In both history and geography too much emphasis is placed on copied work, the filling in of missing words in text produced by the teacher and the colouring in of commercially produced outline drawings. Work is often left unfinished. There is little evidence of pupils' original work or the opportunity for pupils to express an opinion and much of the work set is at a superficial level. Teachers do have sound subject knowledge but opportunities are missed for work in geography such as the development of mapping skills, and the in the deeper study of a period in history involving pupils in research skills and the opportunity to express opinions.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

86. Standards in information and control technology are below average in both key stages. In the 1997 inspection attainment was judged to be "barely satisfactory."

87. Although no direct teaching was seen during the week of the inspection, evidence is gained from examining samples of pupils' work, from a close scrutiny of the school's documentation and from discussions with members of staff and pupils.

88. At the end of Key Stage 1 more able pupils can identify the main features of the computer, including the screen, mouse and keyboard. They know how to type in their work, how to use the space bar and how to type capital letters. They can correct their work using backspace. Some of them know

which icon to click on to print their work. They know that CD ROMs can be used to play games or to find information and are aware of many uses of technology in the world around them such as playstations, stereo systems, televisions and videos. They use the computer to word process short stories and poems. However these skills are not generally well developed and standards are below average overall.

89. By the end of Key Stage 2 higher attaining pupils can use the keyboard and identify the space bar, shift key, caps lock, backspace and delete keys. They know how to print their work and can save to disk. They can explain how to edit their work using cut and paste technique. They can change the font size during word processing and have a sound knowledge of how to access information on a CD-ROM. Year 6 pupils, for example, access a CD-ROM to research light and sound as part of their science topic. They use a program to help them to learn to spell. They word process stories and publish posters using a variety of font sizes and styles.

90. In both key stages the pupils have not had sufficient experience of using computers for data handling, monitoring, control and modelling. Information technology is insufficiently used to support the work in other subject areas.

91. The school acknowledges that more needs to be done to raise standards in information and control technology. It has an extensive development programme based on the new scheme of work. The conversion of a cloakroom will provide a new computer suite large enough for at least half a class. Funding has been earmarked for a stock of new computers. More software is needed to support the pupils' learning. The school acknowledges that some teachers lack sufficient expertise and confidence to extend pupils' learning and provide the higher levels of capability and a programme of in-service training has been arranged.

MUSIC

92. Standards in music are above average in both key stages. Music forms an important part in the daily school routine; for instance when entering or leaving assembly, or as the signal for younger pupils of a change of activity. The school has a justifiably good reputation for the quality of its concerts at Christmas and Easter. The good quality of singing is a notable feature of assemblies. Standards have therefore been maintained in Key Stage 1 and improved in Key Stage 2, since the last inspection.

93. Key Stage 1 pupils listen to a well-chosen series of pieces of music. They are encouraged to say how the music makes them feel and respond appropriately to the sadness of Tchaikovsky and the happiness of pop music! They listen very carefully to the music and make sensible comments. They devise their own accompaniment to songs in which a good sense of rhythm and dynamics is evident.

94. Younger Key Stage 2 pupils learn songs from different regions of the United Kingdom including Suffolk, Tyneside and Scotland. They learn that 'Migildi Magildi' is a Welsh folk song and that the words match the sounds of the blacksmith's hammer. They sing tunefully and with good pitch, tapping out the rhythm accurately as they do so. The pupils have sweet voices and show obvious enjoyment in performing together. They sing the three part round 'Dona Nobis Pacem' tunefully and with clear articulation. They learn a new gospel song and quickly grasp the need to tap out the rhythm on the 'off beat.' The school provides the services of a specialist teacher who teaches groups of Key Stage 2 pupils the flute and recorder. These pupils provide good quality performances in the school assemblies.

95. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and in one lesson in Key Stage 1 it was very good. In the best lessons the teachers' expertise, secure subject knowledge and detailed planning ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and the minority who find it difficult to concentrate, make significant progress in lessons. Good use of encouragement and support enables pupils to ask pertinent questions and all pupils are fully involved in the lesson. Teachers choose a good variety of interesting music from many cultures and times for pupils to sing and to appraise; this broadens their experience and aids their cultural development. Teachers share their own enjoyment of music with the pupils and this is reflected in the pupils' enthusiasm for the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

96. It was only possible to see two lessons in Key Stage 1. The pupils make good progress in physical education. There is a full range of activities and standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

97. In a Year 1 gymnastics lesson the majority of the pupils were able to devise different ways of travelling along benches, mats and small apparatus, adapting their body shapes. Many pupils were able to roll, jump, balance and then link some movements with good posture and control. In a Year 2 indoor games session the pupils could throw and catch quoits and small balls with reasonable accuracy and control. Many pupils can throw a ball and strike it with a small bat. They can also balance a ball on different parts of the body changing their balance and posture.

98. In Key Stage 2 nearly all of the pupils are able to swim to the standards expected for their age. Evidence from photographs and discussions with the staff and pupils shows that there is a broad range of activities planned for the pupils. These include outdoor education with educational visits planned every term to include orienteering, large and small scale games.

99. The teaching is good and is helped by a very structured scheme of work that enables the teachers to plan a series of lessons that help the pupils to build on their previous skills. Teachers provide clear instructions and resources are well used to enable the pupils to practise their skills. A good range of extra-curricular activities help to develop games skills and these include, football, cricket, netball, basketball, orienteering, cross-country, dance and gymnastics. The pupils thoroughly enjoy these activities and develop a healthy and balanced attitude towards winning and losing that prepares them well for the future.

100. The subject is very well managed. There is a good balance of movement, dance, gymnastics and games activities every term. The school also participates in competitive swimming galas with a degree of success that reflects the high standard of swimming achieved by the pupils in the school.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

101. Pupils achieve standards in line with those expected for their age. This represents an improvement in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection.

102. Key Stage 1 pupils learn about the events leading up to the Crucifixion. Skilful teaching helps them to imagine how Jesus' friends would have felt when He was crucified. They write a prayer for Easter and consider a vase of daffodils as a symbol of Easter joy.

103. Pupils in Key Stage 2 learn about Judaism and different religious observances. They learn effectively about the 'Mitzvah,' coming of age. Strong links are made with Christianity through Jesus' visits to the temple, the story of Moses, and the Ten Commandments, with which pupils are familiar. End of key stage pupils also study the Easter story considering how the sorrow and despair of Good Friday is turned to the joy of Easter Sunday. They empathise effectively with the disciples discussing how they felt and how their lives were changed. Then go on to consider how the lives of so many were altered by the events of Easter.

104. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are familiar with a range of religious ideas and themes and have had the opportunity to compare and contrast some of the major features of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. They are familiar with the life of Jesus and other major religious leaders. The skilfully led discussion enable them to present some of their own developing religious ideas and beliefs. This together with the well-planned religious content of school assemblies makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

105. Most of the teaching is good. Teachers display good subject knowledge and this means that they confidently answer the pupils' questions. In the best lessons the teachers plan their lessons thoroughly

and there are activities designed to challenge pupils of all abilities. Most lessons involve discussion and other practical activities. Teachers keep good control of their classes and give very clear explanations so that the pupils know exactly what they have to do. The high expectations that teachers share with their pupils entuses them and gives them confidence. Well-trained and enthusiastic classroom assistants give good support to the pupils' learning.