

INSPECTION REPORT

WITHINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Withington, Hereford

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116748

Headteacher: Mrs Sheila McEney

Reporting inspector: Robert Greatrex
19924

Dates of inspection: 12th - 15th June 2000

Inspection number: 191524
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 category: Community

Age range of pupils: 3 to 11

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Withington
Hereford
Herefordshire

Postcode: HR1 3QE

Telephone number: 01432 850289

Fax number: 01432 851791

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. Peter Rowberry

Date of previous inspection: 9th to 11th July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Robert Greatrex	Registered inspector	Mathematics	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
			The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Teaching and learning
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
George Braddick	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
Beatrice Cloke	Team inspector	Art	
		Music	
		Religious education	
		Areas of learning for children in the foundation stage	
John Collins	Team inspector	Science	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
		Information technology	
		Design and technology	
		Special educational needs	
Natalie Moss	Team inspector	English	
		Geography	
		History	
		Equality of opportunity	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

Grasshoppers
1 Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Withington Primary is a relatively small village school with 111 boys and girls on roll, from 4 to 11 years of age, and a further 29 who attend the nursery part-time. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range but is generally average. The school has 36 pupils identified as having special educational needs, a larger proportion than the national average. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups, and none speak English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Standards at Withington Primary are improving, although recent test results in English, mathematics and science have been below average. Standards in the technical skills of writing are particularly low. This affects writing across the curriculum. The quality of teaching is good overall with a high proportion of very good teaching. The headteacher, staff and governors are clear about most of what needs to be done if the school is to build upon recent improvements. The school provides a secure and enjoyable learning environment in which pupils are happy, confident and able to make good relationships. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good overall with a relatively high proportion of very good teaching in classes and support groups for pupils with special educational needs.
- The provision for children under five, in the nursery and reception classes, is very good.
- Leadership is good and there is a clear educational direction to the school.
- Relationships between pupils and pupils, and pupils and staff, are very good.
- Provision for pupils' personal and social development is very good.
- The range and quality of extra curricular activities is very good.

What could be improved

- Standards in the technical skills of writing are too low, affecting writing in other subjects, too.
- Monitoring and evaluation are not used sufficiently as a tool for school improvement.
- A more careful check needs to be made of pupils' progress in subjects other than literacy and numeracy, particularly as they move from class-to-class and to help plan each term's work.
- Marking of pupils' work does not help them to see what they are doing well and where they need to improve.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement since it was previously inspected in 1996. However, many of these changes are recent, since the appointment of the present headteacher, and only now impacting upon the quality of education provided and the standards pupils reach. New, nationally-recognised schemes of work are now being introduced to provide a more coherent curriculum. The issue regarding creative writing, and its use across the curriculum, has been successfully resolved. Geography is much improved, but music remains a relative weakness. The new school improvement plan is much better than the previous one. The school is moving along the right lines and, given that many improvements are recent, is judged to have a good capacity for further improvement.

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	A	B	D	C
mathematics	A*	C	E	E
science	A*	E	E	D

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

Standards reached by eleven-year-olds in 1999 were below average in all three subjects. Only in English were standards similar to the average when compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. Whilst about two-thirds of pupils reached the level expected for their age, few pupils exceeded it. Over the last four years, the trend in the school results has shown a gradual improvement, but at a slower rate than in most schools. When this year group's results are compared with the standards they reached when they entered the school and when they took the national tests for seven-year-olds, it is clear the vast majority have made satisfactory progress.

Standards reached by seven-year-olds in the national tests in 1999 were below average in all three subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. When compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, they were average in reading and writing but well below average in mathematics. This year group included a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

The school was well below the targets set for it in 1999. Inspection evidence suggests that this year results will be much closer, though still below, the targets set. Future targets are higher still but, if the present improvement is sustained, they are achievable.

Current standards are much higher and improving, except in use of the basic 'tools' of writing such as grammar and punctuation. Here standards are below average. The improvement in numeracy standards is particularly good. Here, and in literacy, the new national initiatives are implemented effectively. Standards are good in art and in physical education throughout the school and in information technology in older classes. Standards are average in all other subjects, although a judgement was not possible in music or religious education in younger classes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils approach learning positively, with interest and enthusiasm. This contributes significantly to the pace of learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Nearly all pupils behave well in and out of class, and are courteous and friendly towards one another, staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils take initiative, care for one another and show a strong sense of responsibility. Relationships between all members of the school community are very harmonious.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Any absence is checked thoroughly and unauthorised absence is rare. Pupils are punctual and 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	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.

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good overall. Two-thirds of lessons seen were good or better, and one fifth very good or excellent. These are high proportions and important factors in the progress pupils make. Very good teaching was seen in all classes and in small groups taken by the special educational needs coordinator. A very small proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory, because the teacher did not handle the misbehaviour of a small number of boys well. Consequently they produced little work of any quality.

English and mathematics, other than the basic skills of writing, are taught well. Strategies for literacy and numeracy have been successfully implemented. Teachers plan carefully so that the work is graded according to pupils' abilities, and enthuse their pupils. Whilst teachers generally have good subject knowledge, and explain and instruct clearly, a relative weakness throughout the school is the teaching of music.

Teachers use questioning particularly successfully, both to encourage pupils to think logically and work things out for themselves and to check their understanding. Different styles and methods of teaching, and resources are well used to stimulate and motivate pupils. Although oral feedback during lessons is good, marking rarely gives pupils a clear understanding of how they are doing.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The implementation of both the literacy and numeracy strategies is effective. Other recent improvements, for example to provide a more cohesive curriculum through the use of nationally-recognised schemes of work, are beginning to be beneficial. Provision for music is a weakness. Much is done to enrich the curriculum through visits and enhance it through the use of outside expertise. The range and quality of extra curricular activities are very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The quality of support provided, and the structures to support learning, are of high quality. Needs are quickly identified and targets set are appropriate. However, additional support is not matched to where needs are greatest and some classes with a high proportion of these pupils receive too little support and this is detrimental to the progress of all the pupils in them.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Personal development is very good overall. Provision for spiritual development is good and gives pupils many opportunities to gain insight into values and beliefs. Provision for moral development is good. From the earliest age, pupils learn right from wrong and their responsibilities to the school community. Provision for social development is very good. Positive and helpful attitudes and effort and hard work are encouraged. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory and gives pupils insight into their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils feel secure in the warm and trusting environment. Staff encourage self discipline and do much to build self esteem. However, more needs to be done to track pupils' progress, particularly as they move from class-to-class.

School and home work closely together and this strong partnership is to the benefit of all pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	There is a clear educational direction to the school. The headteacher has a good understanding of most of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and has begun to put necessary changes into place. Consequently, standards are rising. She is ably supported by other staff. The school has sufficient, well qualified teachers. Sufficient support staff is provided in the nursery and reception classes, but pupils with special educational needs do not always receive the level of classroom support they need. Accommodation is good, although storage is limited. Good use is made of space to provide a library and computer suite.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give of their time willingly and are active in supporting the school practically. They are beginning to play a more active role in the longer term, for example through the school improvement plan.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is beginning to be more evaluative and look for reasons why, for example, results vary. Monitoring and evaluating its performance, particularly in teaching and learning, could be improved.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are of good quality and range from adequate to good for all subjects. Value for money is always considered before spending decisions are made, although other principles of best value are not yet in place.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour is good. • The school has high expectations of their children. • Their children are helped to become mature and more responsible. • Their children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework does not build as their children move through the school, nor prepare them for secondary school. • There are few activities out of school.

Parents overwhelmingly support the school. Inspectors judge activities out of school to be very good and homework to be satisfactory overall, although more could be done in the areas of parental concern, and this would be beneficial to pupils' learning.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall, standards are rising, although recent test results in English, mathematics and science have been below average. Over the last four years, the trend in school results has shown a gradual improvement, but at a slower rate than is found in schools nationally. Inspection evidence is that standards are currently rising in all subjects except the technical skills of writing and music, and that the vast majority of pupils are working at the expected level for their age. Improvements are due to several factors, such as national initiatives in literacy and numeracy and a more cohesive curriculum generally in the school.

2. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 1999, two-thirds of pupils reached the level expected for their age in English, slightly less in mathematics, and slightly more in science. In all three subjects, this is below the national average. Furthermore, the proportion reaching a higher level in all three subjects was also below the national average, but less so in English than either of the other subjects. When results are compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, they are average in English, well below average in mathematics and below average in science. In English, girls generally reach higher levels than boys. The school did not reach the targets set for it in 1999. Targets set for the next two years are more challenging and inspection evidence suggests that, because of the improvement in standards, the school will be closer to the target set this year than last.

3. Care must be taken when interpreting national test data. Relatively small year groups mean there is considerable year-to-year variation in results. A more useful interpretation of results is to look at each pupil's improvement as they move through the school. In English, seven pupils in every ten who took the national test for eleven-year-olds in 1999 had made a satisfactory rate of progress through the school, and three pupils in every twenty had made good progress. Of the others, the vast majority were on the school's register of pupils with special educational needs and a very high proportion had statements of special educational need. In mathematics, three-quarters of pupils made satisfactory progress and a further three in every ten made good progress. In science, two-thirds of pupils made satisfactory progress and a further two pupils in every ten made good progress.

4. In the national tests for seven-year-olds in 1999, approximately three-quarters of pupils reached the expected level in reading and slightly less in writing and mathematics. This was below the national average in reading and well below in writing and mathematics. The proportion who reached a higher level was the reverse, better in writing and mathematics where it was close to the average than in reading, where it was below. Over the last four years, the performance of boys in all three subjects has been above the national average, whilst that of girls has been below. When results are compared to similar schools, they are average in reading and writing, but well below average in mathematics. The 1999 year group contained a very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. When seen during the inspection, inspectors judged these pupils to be working at levels appropriate to their abilities through work well matched to their attainment levels. Even so, whilst their current standards are in line with national expectations in reading, they are below the standards expected in writing, mathematics and science.

5. Children under five enter the nursery with a wide range of attainment levels that are broadly average overall. Many of these children, often those with higher attainment levels, move on to schools closer to their homes when they are five. Teaching that ranges from good to very good, a well-planned curriculum and good use of assessment to match tasks to individual children, all contribute to the satisfactory progress these children make. By the time they are five, attainment is broadly average and school documentation shows a steady improvement over time. This is largely due to the provision of the nursery, and the good quality of education provided in it. Attainment is in line with national expectations except in knowledge and understanding of the world and personal development, where it is above, and in writing where it is below. The children's maturity is particularly beneficial to their subsequent progress, although their limited writing skills inhibit later progress.

6. Inspection evidence is that current standards reached by eleven-year-olds are much higher than those in the recent past, except in writing. In other aspects of English, mathematics and science, current standards are satisfactory. The vast majority of these pupils are working at the level expected for pupils of their age.

7. The current standards of seven-year-olds have also risen, although inspection evidence, again, is that standards in writing are still a relative weakness. Even so, in reading, writing and mathematics all pupils are working at, or above, the level expected for their age. In reading, inspectors judge the vast majority of pupils to be working at the expected level, and very few above it. In writing, none are working at a higher level. In mathematics, approximately half are working at a higher level and this represents very good improvement. In science, investigative work continues to be a strength, as are standards in work connected to life processes.

8. Standards in literacy are much improved, except in the technical skills of writing, and progress is generally good. Whilst the school gives pupils opportunities to write at length, and the content of much work is of a good standard, insufficient attention is paid to the basic skills of writing such as the use of punctuation and grammar. This impacts adversely upon the standard of pupils' written work across the academic curriculum. In religious education for example, pupils write with powerful meaning and clear understanding, but their use of the 'tools' of writing is unsatisfactory. All elements of the literacy hour are fully in place. The school is becoming far more evaluative, and this is clearly of benefit to the quality of education provided. For example, it has been recognised that standards in Year 6 are lower than they should be because the week's literacy programme is taught by two teachers and the day-by-day progress found in other classes is not as marked. Plans for the new academic year will address this.

9. Standards in numeracy are much improved, but particularly so in the use of number. Progress is generally good throughout the school, although in some groups, such as Year 3, with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the class teacher does not have sufficient support and progress consequently drops. The three-part lesson is used well. The beginning and end, often using quick-fire oral questioning or discussion, is effective in stimulating pupils' interest and moving them on.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Targets are clear and appropriate. When working directly with learning support assistants or teachers, these pupils make good progress. At other times, and in some classes where there is a relatively high proportion of pupils with special needs, there is insufficient help and this slows their rate of progress. The school recognises this and intends to employ more staff, and deploy

them more effectively, in the new term. These pupils are keen to learn and receptive to help, and this is an important factor in their progress.

11. In literacy and numeracy particularly, pupils with high attainment levels are given tasks graded to match their capabilities and make the expected progress. In other subjects, this is not always the case. In science, for example, these pupils are given insufficient opportunities to plan and construct their own investigations. As a result, progress is less.

12. Standards in science are broadly average, although there are few pupils working at higher levels. Standards in information technology are good amongst older pupils and satisfactory amongst younger ones. Recent changes, particularly the specialist area, are leading to significant improvements in standards. Standards in religious education are in line with the locally agreed syllabus by age eleven. Standards are good in art and physical education. Standards in design and technology, geography and history are satisfactory. It was not possible to judge standards by age seven in religious education and throughout the school in music. Even so, the provision made for the latter is insufficient and this suggests there has been little or no improvement since the previous inspection.

13. Pupils' progress through the school varies. Largely because of the number of pupils in each year group and the organisation of the school, the composition of classes vary from year-to-year and pupils often work with different pupils one year from the last. The school's good use of the frameworks for literacy and numeracy means pupils' year-on-year and class-by-class progression is better in these subjects than most others. This weakness was noted in the previous inspection report, and it is only recently that the school has begun to address it sufficiently.

14. Nine parents in every ten who returned the questionnaire are pleased with the progress their children are making. Parents at the meeting felt that the literacy hour had improved standards, particularly in the younger classes and reading throughout the school. They felt that the emphasis on creativity in the eldest two years meant less attention was paid to spelling and grammar, and standards were lower. Inspection evidence confirms parents' views. Parents feel art is a strength, again confirmed by inspectors' judgements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes towards learning, which are stimulated by good teaching. Personal development and relationships are very good and behaviour is generally good. The high standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. These attributes are among the school's strengths and have a positive effect on pupils' progress and contribute to the very good quality of life in the school. The overwhelming majority of parents who replied to the questionnaire agree that behaviour is good and that their children enjoy coming to school.

16. Children who join the school's nursery and reception classes quickly settle into the routines and respond well to the high expectations of staff. They behave well and relate to one another impressively, for example recognising when another child needs help, and offering it. They wait patiently and share willingly.

17. Pupils show good levels of interest in their work, listen well to their teachers and apply themselves diligently to the task in hand. They show enjoyment in learning and are able to sustain concentration. They readily involve themselves in lessons, willingly answer questions, make good use of classroom resources and persevere well with new challenges or to complete tasks. Pupils work well independently and collaboratively, for example during

team games such as cricket. However, whilst they respond well to whatever expectations their teacher has of them, they do not always write neatly or present their work carefully.

18. The good behaviour of the vast majority of pupils, in the classrooms and around the school, has been maintained since the previous inspection. Older pupils show a caring disposition towards the younger ones at all times and pupils play sensibly together. Pupils are polite, respectful, welcoming and friendly to one another, staff and visitors. They respond well to the school's procedures and enjoy earning praise, stickers and acknowledgement at assemblies. Parents are very satisfied with the standards of behaviour and the way the school promotes it.

19. Pupils know right from wrong and respond positively to the school's high expectations. Pupils generally show very good levels of self-discipline, although a small number of older boys do so only when the teacher makes her expectations clear. Bullying is very rare. There were no exclusions during the last academic year.

20. Pupils are courteous and trustworthy and show respect for each other and other people's property. They enjoy good relationships. During the inspection there were several examples of impromptu courtesies to each other and to adults. For example, pupils would move aside to let others pass and if a pupil were near to a door it would be held open to pass through.

21. Pupils take initiative well and carry out responsibilities and tasks they are given diligently. They participate fully in the playground scheme where older pupils help and support those younger than themselves. Pupils show concern for those less fortunate than themselves, for example by suggesting and organising collections for charities.

22. Pupils with special educational needs have equally positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and work hard. They have good relationships with other pupils and the staff who support them.

23. Attendance is satisfactory and unauthorised absence rare. There are good procedures in place so reasons for absence are checked immediately. Pupils are very happy to attend school and arrive punctually. Lateness is insignificant and does not disrupt classes. Registration is carried out efficiently, no time is wasted and lessons begin promptly. The school calls upon the services of the Education Welfare Officer when necessary.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching is good overall. Two-thirds of lessons observed were good or better, and one-fifth very good or excellent. These are high proportions and much of the teaching in classes is of very good quality. Very good teaching was seen throughout the school. However, although teachers' oral feedback to pupils is of similarly high standard, the marking of work is often thin in comment and fails to give pupils the information that they need in order to know what they are doing well and areas where they need to improve. Marking is an important aspect of teaching, and consequently this lowers the overall impact of teaching on pupils' learning. A very small proportion of lessons are unsatisfactory because the teacher does not manage the behaviour of a small number of pupils effectively nor ensure they work productively.

25. The quality of teaching is of a similarly high standard to that found when the school was previously inspected. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agree teaching is good and feel that staff have high expectations of their children.

26. Teaching of children under five is consistently good in both the nursery and reception classes, with a good proportion of very good teaching particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons and tasks. Staff know when to intervene and offer support, and when to stand back and let the children learn for themselves. Children's interest, concentration and perseverance are stimulated and nurtured. Teaching is enthusiastic and lively. No opportunity wasted to teach. When children in the nursery have their biscuits, for example, they say how many spots of icing are left as they eat each one. All staff work closely together and provide good role models.

27. The teaching of literacy is good overall. Strengths are careful planning, so tasks are well matched to pupils' varying abilities; a good grasp of the subject and enthusiastic teaching. Vocabulary, such as 'myth' in a Year 5 lesson, is carefully explained and pupils are expected to use it correctly and in appropriate situations subsequently. Whilst reading is well taught, and pupils are introduced to a good range of genres of writing, basic skills of writing are not taught as effectively. Where very good attention is paid to basic skills, such as in Reception and Year 1, pupils learn about the use of speech marks and capital letters successfully. Such teaching, however, is not common.

28. The three-part mathematics lesson is well taught. Lesson introductions and ends are particularly well managed by teachers to involve all pupils in meaningful and challenging discussions, for example of the range of strategies that could be used to find the answer, and which might be best.

29. Except in music, teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to explain clearly and resolve misunderstandings, particularly when pupils struggle with a new concept. In a Year 4 and 5 literacy lesson, the teacher's good knowledge enabled her to explain the different cultures found in the texts the pupils study. This clearly led to better understanding by the pupils. Good use is made of outside specialist teachers with very good levels of knowledge, for example to teach cricket and fencing skills.

30. Questioning is used very effectively by all teachers. Many of the skills used in literacy and numeracy introductions and ends are transferred with equal effectiveness to other subjects. All pupils are fully involved. In a Year 5 and 6 class the teacher recognised those pupils not participating and targeted questions to them. Questions were carefully graded to match all pupils' capabilities. Similarly, in a Reception and Year 1 lesson, quick, sharp and well-targeted questions involved everyone and kept the pace of learning brisk.

31. Parents' views, that teachers generally have high expectations, is confirmed by the inspection. A Year 1 and 2 class, where the teacher responded to a pupil's short reply by asking for more detail, is typical of the high standard of response teachers expect. Similarly, in a Year 3 and 4 class, when the pupil demonstrated roughly half, the teacher asked for greater accuracy. Where expectations slip, it is in the standard of presentation of pupils' work and, occasionally, in their behaviour. When teachers have high expectations, pupils respond positively to produce neat work or behave well. When teachers do not make their expectations clear, or do not mark all work, pupils often produce an untidy end product. A small proportion of older pupils lack self discipline but respond to the teachers' requirements. When one teacher expects very good behaviour, they respond accordingly, but when another does not, they misbehave and produce little work of any quality.

32. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good generally and very good when these pupils are taught by the coordinator. Planning is detailed, thorough and relevant to the needs of each individual. Lessons are carefully structured and tailored to meet the needs and aptitudes of the pupils, so that a Year 1 and 2 group for example fully understand what tasks they are undertaking and why they are important to their learning. At the meeting, parents of these pupils commented favourably on the individual teaching given to them. Learning support assistants, too, give good support and work closely with teachers to ensure these pupils do as well as they can.

33. Resources are well used to stimulate learning. Difficult concepts are explained through real and relevant activities, such as when Year 3 and 4 study angles, degrees and turns. Pupils worked orally, on paper and through practical activities to understand more clearly. Despite the length of the lesson and the high proportion of this class with special educational needs, the stimulating variety of interesting activities kept them motivated and interested. They enjoyed their learning.

34. Although oral feedback in lessons is of good quality, marking is not. In class, teachers give clear guidance to pupils. They carefully explain what pupils need to do to improve, and explain misunderstandings thoroughly. When marking pupils' written work, comments are often positive but bland. Pupils are given too little guidance on where improvement is needed. In addition, the analysis of pupils' work suggests that marking is often thin.

35. Suitable homework activities are set in some lessons, but there is not a methodical policy so that homework builds year-on-year as pupils move through the school.

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

36. The breadth and balance of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The emphasis on the teaching and learning of literacy is satisfactory and on numeracy it is good. The range and quality of planned learning opportunities for children under five are good. All subject areas have schemes of work, an improvement since the previous inspection, although some are comparatively new. These nationally-recognised schemes of work are being used with increasing effectiveness across the school, although more needs to be done to ensure all pupils make smooth progress from class-to-class and year-to-year. The issues concerning the use of extended writing across all subjects of the curriculum identified in the previous report have largely been met, although there are new weaknesses in the basic skills of writing. Religious education is taught satisfactorily using the locally agreed syllabus. The planned curriculum for personal, social and health education is also satisfactory and fully includes sex education, drugs and substance awareness. Good use is made of special events such as 'Health and Fitness Week'. Whilst the time allocated to most subjects is appropriate, the teaching time allocated for music throughout the school and teaching of pupils aged seven to eleven generally is below the recommended minimum figure. Given that teaching is of good quality, this is bound to adversely affect pupils' learning.

37. The implementation of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are increasingly effective, although too little provision is made for basic writing skills, particularly in older classes. The school has recognised the relative weakness in writing and specific lessons are provided. These lessons, however, lack balance with too much emphasis on creativity at the expense of the basic skills.

38. All pupils have good access to the curriculum. Parents at the meeting stated that the school strives hard to ensure this. The equal opportunities policy makes clear the school's commitment. Good provision is made for pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs. Work is set at appropriate levels of difficulty and there are initiatives to extend pupils of higher ability through extra activities with other schools in the area. Teachers plan effectively for pupils of different years in the mixed age classes. Boys and girls follow the same curriculum and play the same games harmoniously.

39. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of a good range of extra-curricular activities. There are good quality sport, dance, drama and music clubs which are well supported by boys and girls. The school fully participates in events and competitions with other schools. These include football, netball and boating. There are residential visits for older pupils. Eight out of every ten parents who returned the questionnaire felt that the range of activities outside of lessons is good, whilst a small minority did not. Inspection evidence is that provision exceeds that found in most other schools of a similar size.

40. There are good links with playgroups and other nurseries so that pupils settle easily to school. Links to one secondary school are very good, and specialist expertise and equipment is used to the benefit of pupils' learning. Links with the local community enable expertise to be used effectively, such as in music tuition, to support the school staff. Pupils gain an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of individuals in a community by contributing to village events and activities.

41. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, an improvement since the previous inspection. Religious education provides many opportunities for insight into values and beliefs, as do assemblies. Daily acts of corporate worship include opportunities for personal reflection. Examples of the school's emphasis on the importance of a spiritual element were seen in the nursery. Children's joy in their activities was evident. In Year 1 and 2, pupils watched a diving beetle devouring a tadpole with awe, during a visit to a local environmental centre. Pupils have visited a local exhibition and participated with pleasure in the 'Millennium Live Music Day'.

42. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good. Pupils are clear what is right and wrong, and what is socially acceptable. School rules are discussed with pupils, and are constantly reinforced. They are referred to in lessons when necessary and are used constructively to help pupils develop a clear understanding of their responsibilities towards others. Regular awards' assemblies encourage pupils' good social development. A wide range of pupils' efforts are acknowledged. Pupils help in many ways with daily routines. In the wider community, pupils demonstrate good care for others through activities such as charity fund-raising.

43. The school provides satisfactory provision for pupils to learn about their own culture and that of others. Visiting performers make pupils aware of social and cultural topics, such as the plight of refugees. African culture informs work in art and music and displays of the costumes of other cultures and collages of ceremonies at Benares help them to appreciate the ways of life of others. The school now does well in extending pupils' appreciation of other cultures. Pupils' understanding of the beliefs and customs of other cultures is satisfactorily addressed. Aspects of sex, health and drug awareness education allow pupils to reflect on their own culture and the pressures they face as they grow up. Music, such as that played at assemblies, helps them to recognise the importance of their own cultural heritage.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school makes good provision for the support, guidance and welfare of its pupils, and this has been maintained since the previous inspection. The headteacher, staff and governing body are very conscious of their collective responsibility for the well being of the pupils and respond to this in a positive, thorough and sympathetic way.

45. All staff know their pupils well and are fully mindful of their needs. The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good, which enables them to interact well together both inside and outside the classroom.

46. The school is a very caring environment and staff do all they can to ensure the welfare, health and safety of their pupils. Arrangements for child protection are satisfactory and all staff are fully aware of procedures and their responsibilities. The parents spoken to during the inspection and the majority at the pre-inspection meeting stated that the school cares well for their children.

47. Children under five are given good support so they settle quickly and easily. Parents state they are helped to prepare their children for school. The Nursery is very well equipped with good teaching support, where learning and personal development is very good. This is one of the strengths of the school. Older children are also well catered for and generally transfer to secondary school smoothly.

48. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils are well integrated into the school. Needs are quickly recognised so that support can be given as soon as possible. Staff provide good guidance, which has a positive impact on pupils' progress towards achieving the targets set in their individual educational plans. The recommendations of the Code of Practice are fully met. Parents are informed and involved. Those attending the meeting were pleased with the 'open door' approach adopted by the school, which encourages and enables them to share information about any difficulties their children may be experiencing.

49. The procedures for promoting good behaviour are good. Good behaviour is encouraged, rewarded and celebrated through the use of praise, certificates, stars, stickers and at a special weekly assembly. The staff generally implement the policy consistently. When children are reprimanded, teachers carefully explain why this is necessary, what other choices the pupil had, and what are the consequences of their behaviour to themselves or on others. This positively contributes to the good standards of behaviour in the school. Rare incidents of bullying are handled promptly and efficiently.

50. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory but improving. The assessment of pupils' progress and ensuring that teachers' planning takes account of assessment information to plan future work were key issues in the previous inspection. There has been sufficient development in assessing English and mathematics since that time, largely because of the introduction of the national initiatives and the related training, and in using assessment of one lesson when planning the next. There are also good procedures for assessing attainment and progress in the nursery; learning is carefully monitored on a day-to-day basis and used by staff to plan future work. In other subjects and years, little has been done until recently. Test results have begun to be analysed and this information is now used more effectively. For example, areas of weakness led to teachers discussing and improving their use of questioning. There is no systematic assessment of pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. Currently staff are beginning to try different forms of assessment to provide

the information which will enable them to track pupils' progress more closely. Portfolios of work are also being developed. However, these are recent initiatives that are not fully in place. Consequently they make little impact on pupils' learning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. There is a strong alliance between the school and the parents, which has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning. Parents at the meeting and through their replies to the questionnaires, show an overwhelming support for the school. Parents consider that the school works closely with them and keeps them well informed about their children's progress. The vast majority are comfortable raising questions or problems with the school.

52. The school attaches a high priority to working closely with parents. Parents are encouraged to approach the school to discuss their children's progress and problems. They take an active part in school life and those who have the time respond enthusiastically by helping in the classroom, hearing readers, or helping at swimming, sporting events and on educational visits. There is an active school association which makes a positive contribution through social and fundraising events. The school staff and governors are appreciative of their efforts and support.

53. Most parents take an active part in supporting their children's work at home and eight parents in every ten who responded to the questionnaire are happy with the amount of homework the school provides. At the meeting, however, a number of concerns were raised. Some parents feel the amount of homework does not increase as pupils move through the school, that it does not prepare them adequately for their secondary education, and that it is not well matched to their children's different abilities. Inspection confirms that homework does not build year-on-year, and that the teachers in Year 6 have different expectations.

54. The information provided to parents is of a good quality, range and frequency. The school has introduced an interim school report in the spring term, which is greatly appreciated by parents. They particularly find the targets set helpful in enabling them to most effectively support their children's learning through the rest of the year. Parents are informed in advance of what will be taught each term and this, too, they find helpful. The most recent governors' annual report to parents is an example of the good information provided, being well-written and easily read.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The school is well led. The headteacher, staff, governors and parents share a common commitment to offering pupils a caring environment in which they can feel secure. There is a positive ethos and the school's aims are central to all it does. In the recent past there has been a growing realisation of the need to focus more closely on raising standards, and, although more remains to be done, improvement is clearly evident. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Currently, and recently, much has been done. Previously, it is clear that the school has put greater energy into some key issues rather than others, depending upon the school's view of their relative worth. This is not a satisfactory response.

56. Teamwork amongst staff is good, but the systems to monitor the work of the school are insufficient. The school is aware of this and recent changes are clearly beginning to be beneficial. Teaching is now monitored and the headteacher uses this information to plan training. Even so, the monitoring is relatively rare and informal. Many subject coordinators

are only recently in post. Whilst this is an appropriate improvement and coordinators are generally very knowledgeable about their subject, they have very few opportunities to effectively influence teaching and learning. They do not, for example, regularly see teachers' planning, to make suggestions for improvement or check that the necessary work is covered. Nor do they look at the quality of pupils' learning or the teachers' teaching. Expertise is not shared routinely, and these skilled practitioners do not have all the information they need to plan improvements in their subjects. Again, this is recognised by the school and plans exist to develop a more systematic and thorough approach.

57. The governing body is playing an increasing role in the school, and this is appropriate. For example, they are actively involved in formulating the new school improvement plan, whereas their role previously was far more passive. Partly because governors recognise that the last plan was insufficiently monitored, a particular governor has responsibility for ensuring the new plan is implemented fully, monitored regularly and reviewed periodically. This is innovative and, in the opinion of staff and governors, valuable. Generally, governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Even so, much of governors' monitoring is informal and the opportunity for governors to actively contribute to the development of teaching and learning is less effective.

58. The new school improvement plan is currently being written, following a process that involves staff and governors fully. Planning, including the cost involved, the time needed and how success will be measured, is much better. Even so, more use could be made of the expertise of governors with experience of designing and implementing such plans. The school's current priorities for development are generally the right ones. Whilst there is clearly a shared commitment to implementing the changes necessary to bring these improvements about, action taken to do this is largely recent.

59. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is well managed. Co-ordination is good, reviews and assessments diligently undertaken. Funds allocated for special educational needs are used for that purpose.

60. Financial planning is satisfactory and regular checks of expenditure are made. Value for money is carefully considered before any new project or large expenditure is approved. Future planning is good, and the school thinks very carefully about how to manage variations in pupil numbers. The principles of best value are understood and, largely, applied. Information technology is used effectively.

61. The school has sufficient teachers who are well qualified to teach pupils of this age. There is a good range of experience but not enough expertise in some subjects, especially music and science, to ensure that the whole curriculum is taught effectively and standards improve. Staff do not have job descriptions that clearly outline what is expected and the role they should play. Professional development is well planned to meet the needs of staff and school alike. Induction procedures are good. There is a good level of support staff in the nursery and reception class. Support for pupils with special educational needs in the nursery is very good. Elsewhere, pupils with special educational needs do not always have enough support in the classrooms, especially in Year 3. Furthermore, the limited amount of support available is not always deployed where need is greatest.

62. The school has adequate accommodation but storage of large equipment is difficult. The nursery accommodation is good; a separate outdoor area promotes good physical development. The school is well maintained and attractive. The grounds are an asset, not only to the school but also to the local community. The library area provides a place for personal study and a similar area is well used as a computer suite.

63. The school has adequate resources for all subjects. Resources for children under five, special educational needs, art and religious education are good. There are also good quality resources to support literacy and numeracy.

64. Overall, the resources available, the environment in which pupils are taught and the staff who teach and support them, have a positive impact on pupils' learning.

65. School administration is very good. Efficiency is combined with a warm and friendly welcome to all who enter the school. Much is done to enable the school to run smoothly, which is particularly valuable given the headteacher's teaching commitment.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. In order to build upon, and sustain, the good recent improvement the school should:

- (1) Raise standards in writing by:
 - paying greater attention to the technical skills of spelling, punctuation,
 - handwriting and sentence structure;
 - ensuring that the teaching of the literacy hour includes a stronger focus
 - on the techniques of writing;(Paragraphs: 1, 5-8, 14, 17, 27, 31, 36, 37, 68, 73, 74, 90, 93, 95, 98, 113, 157)
- (2) Use monitoring and evaluation more effectively as a tool for self review and school improvement by:
 - monitoring teaching and learning more systematically and rigorously, to recognise strengths to build upon and weaknesses to develop;
 - monitoring teachers' planning more regularly to ensure smooth transition from year-to-year and class-to-class;
 - giving subject coordinators the information they need to perform their roles more effectively;(Paragraphs: 13, 56, 61, 98, 115, 121, 126, 129, 130, 144, 155)
- (3) Supporting pupils' academic progress better by putting in place systems to track and check pupils' progress more closely, particularly as they move from class-to-class, and using this information when planning each term's curriculum;
(Paragraphs: 36, 50, 69, 97, 104, 117, 122, 160)
- (4) Improving the quality of marking of pupils' work so that pupils have a clear understanding of where they are succeeding and where they need to improve.
(Paragraphs: 24, 31, 34, 95, 114)

Other issues which should be considered by the school:

- The length of the taught week in Key Stage 2 is less than the recommended minimum;
(Paragraph: 36)
- Provision for music is unsatisfactory.
(Paragraphs: 1, 12, 29, 61, 145, 147)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

36

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	9	19	6	1	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)	14.5	111
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	33

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR – Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	3	32

English as an additional language

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	12	5	17

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	10	10	10
	Girls	3	2	2
	Total	13	12	12
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (91)	71 (95)	71 (91)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	9	10	11
	Girls	2	2	3
	Total	11	12	14
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	65 (91)	71 (87)	82 (87)
	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	13	5	18

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	9
	Girls	4	2	4
	Total	12	11	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (74)	61 (58)	72 (41)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	9	10	9
	Girls	4	3	4
	Total	13	13	13
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	72 (91)	72 (83)	72 (58)
	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	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	110
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	5.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.5
Average class size	22.2

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	7

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	29

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Number of pupils per FTE adult	9.7
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	251 873
Total expenditure	264 234
Expenditure per pupil	2 258
Balance brought forward from previous year	30 553
Balance carried forward to next year	18 192

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	136
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	37	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	43	6	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	61	4	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	40	10	8	2
The teaching is good.	55	39	6	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	45	9	2	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	28	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	41	2	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	30	57	7	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	39	50	7	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	51	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	31	9	7	0

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. No separate judgements were made concerning children under five during the previous inspection. Since that time, a nursery class has opened. Children join the nursery on a part-time basis from their third birthday and transfer to the reception class full-time in the September of the year in which they are five. Attainment on entry to the nursery is very diverse in nature. Many children have been to a playgroup. A relatively high proportion are on the school's register of special educational needs. Very good support is provided for them.

68. Overall, attainment is broadly average when children start in the nursery class. Most pupils make satisfactory progress, although those with special educational needs make good progress because of the high quality support they receive. Attainment remains broadly average when they enter the reception class. What the children know, understand and can do by the time they are five is broadly in line with what is expected nationally. Exceptions are in knowledge and understanding of the world and personal and social development, in which it is above average, and in the skills in writing, in which it is below. Attainment is rising compared with previous years, largely because of the provision of nursery education.

69. The quality of teaching overall is consistently good in both nursery and reception classes. Good use is made of support staff. The work is effectively planned by all staff, who co-operate well together as a team to promote high standards and effective learning. Staff use the wide range of resources to good effect. The nursery class provision is a strength of the school. The school has adapted quickly to both having a nursery class and consequently much younger children in the reception class. All children have opportunities to enjoy the nursery environment. Despite these efforts, the transfer from the areas of learning for children under five to the National Curriculum, and from the nursery to the reception class, is as yet not completely smooth and causes progress to slow down. Staff are aware of this and a more cohesive curriculum is planned.

Personal and social development

70. Children's personal and social development is good by the time they are five and they make good progress.

71. They settle well into the routines of the nursery and reception classes and are happy to come to school. They know the importance of classroom routines like lining up and listening quietly to the teacher. They work and play well together and, by the time those in the nursery transfer to the reception class, they are independent in dressing, hygiene, fastening shoes and doing up buttons. The more able can also make choices, select resources and complete their work independently. Children sustain interest for some time, such as when they work with a computer, manage the nursery garden centre or try new dance movements in the reception class. They can take turns and share fairly, for example when using wheeled toys in the playground or waiting for attention. Relationships with other children and with staff are very good. Pupils are well behaved and show great respect for the feelings of others. They care deeply for a deaf child in the nursery and often work hard to communicate with her. In an assembly, reception class children were enthralled by the story and wide-eyed when the 'Rainbow Fish' gave away his beautiful shiny scales. They understood the importance of sharing and clapped a child who had just learned to share a

precious toy. They respond eagerly to festivals celebrated in school, such as Christmas and Diwali.

72. Teaching is good. Staff work well together and present good role models. They have a good understanding of when to intervene and instruct or guide the child, and when to stand back and allow children to develop independence.

Language and literacy

73. Most children are on line to achieve the standards expected nationally by the time they are five in speaking, listening and reading. There are, however, a significant number who are below these standards in aspects of writing.

74. Every opportunity is taken to involve children in speaking and teaching them to listen carefully. At the beginning of the day in the nursery, children talk freely to staff about things that interest them. In the reception class, they identify the kind of weather and the day of the week. Children join in enthusiastically in response to stories. Nursery children can repeat familiar words in the story and suggest good descriptive vocabulary for their age, such as 'twinkling stars' or 'tiny bells', in response to a piece of music. By the time they are five, most children speak in sentences and can discuss experiences. Younger children enjoy sharing a book and understand that the words and pictures tell a story. They often pretend to read in the role-play area. By the time they are five, the most able are beginning to read simple texts accurately. Children love to talk about their books and show a great interest in reading. Most children can read a few familiar words and their own names. They are learning to recognise letters by their shape and to know what sound they make. In the reception class, children make use of the first sound in a word to help them read. In writing, younger children use their own symbols and pictures, usually moving from left to right. They learn to write their names in paint or seeds as well as with a pencil. By the time they are five, most children write letters and words and can write underneath the teacher's writing. A few can write a sentence independently. Their dexterity in the use of a pencil, however, does not progress as is expected. They often form letters incorrectly and do not vary their writing according to purpose, for example to write lists, directions or stories.

75. Teaching is good. Enthusiastic and lively teaching interests and inspires the children to respond and role-play is used effectively to promote learning. Adults structure good questions to encourage children to interact. They speak in sentences and expect children to do the same. However, older children in the nursery do not have enough opportunities to develop their writing skills.

Mathematics

76. By the time they are five, children achieve the standards that are expected nationally.

77. Children make satisfactory progress through a good range of activities, such as matching colours of beads and making a pattern. Nursery children can count the number of children standing in line, with help from the teacher, and count four spots of icing on a biscuit. They know and understand number rhymes and songs. In the reception class, most recognise written numbers to ten. Most are acquiring a sound understanding of mathematical vocabulary, such as long and short, heavy and light, big and small. They can recite the days of the week and know the names of shapes, such as circle or square. By the time they are five, children are beginning to solve simple problems, such as 'one more than', 'fewer than', 'count on', and can write numbers with the correct formation.

78. Good teaching and adult intervention encourage children to think for themselves

and use what they already know in new situations. A good variety of activities becomes more structured in the reception class, giving children the range of stimulating tasks they need. Teachers effectively promote the development of mathematical language.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

79. By the time they are five, the majority of children exceed the standards expected nationally.

80. Younger children talk about and recognise some of the features of where they live. They draw pictures of their families. Older children are learning their address and can compare themselves now with when they were babies. They explore living things, such as plants, and have a good understanding of what a plant needs to grow and how plants can be cultivated. In the reception class, children find out what makes a healthy meal. Through various festivals, children understand how other people live and relate to each other. They celebrate Hanukah, Chinese New Year, Christmas and Diwali. Children ask searching questions about their environment or how things work. They learn to control a computer screen using the mouse and by the time they are five, can do this accurately. They acquire good skills in exploring and selecting materials and equipment. By the time they are five, they can cut out accurately, for example from magazine pictures, and use brushes and glue sticks to decorate a plant pot. Children build structures with construction kits, demonstrating good co-ordination.

81. Teaching is good and promotes good progress through careful planning and direct involvement in children's activities.

Physical development

82. Most children attain the expected levels by the time they are five.

83. In the nursery, children have daily opportunities for outdoor play. They develop a sound awareness of space and there are few stumbles and falls when they use wheeled vehicles. Children take part well in circle games, such as 'Mulberry Bush' or 'Farmer's in his Den' and learn how to turn and balance and move in time to music. A few children have above average skills in throwing and catching for this age. Most children can run, jump, play with hoops and skip confidently. In the reception class, children are aware of safe practices in the hall and can dress themselves quickly. They listen carefully to instructions and perform a simple dance to African drumming.

84. Teaching is very good. The high expectations of adults in both classes encourage the children to develop satisfactory physical skills. Staff are aware of the need to warm up before children engage in physical activity and give them opportunities for vigorous exercise.

Creative development

85. Most children attain the expected levels by the time they are five.

86. In the nursery class, children engage in a wide range of creative activities. They recognise colours and select appropriate combinations to decorate a flowerpot or paint a picture. They make cards for Christmas or Mother's Day, use Hindu designs for Rangoli patterns and make divas and little mice in clay. They have daily opportunities to practice their manipulation skills. Many choose to play percussion instruments and keep time to recorded music. Children sing in simple songs, learning the words eagerly. In the reception class, children make collages of cats, symmetrical plate faces and butterflies. By the time they are five, the more able are beginning to draw from direct observation. Children

respond with imagination in role-play and are engaged with the characters in stories.

87. Teaching is good. Teachers give good opportunity to experiment with a range of media and encourage children to use their imagination. Direct involvement with small groups of children, clear instructions and good questions ensure that children's language broadens in indoor and outdoor activities.

ENGLISH

88. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average. Similarly, the proportion reaching a higher level was also below the national average. When results are compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, they are average. Girls generally reach higher levels than boys, and a higher degree of inattention was observed during the inspection in boys from seven to eleven years of age. Over the last two years there has been a fall in standards, after a sharp rise in 1997. Over the last four years, there has been a small improvement.

89. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for seven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average in reading and well below in writing. The proportion reaching a higher level was below average in reading but close to the average in writing. When results are compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, once again they are average. In three of the last four years results in both reading and writing have been above average. In 1999 they fell sharply. This is largely because this was a comparatively small year group, a relatively high proportion of whom had special educational needs. When these pupils were seen on inspection, they were judged still to be below average, but working at levels appropriate for their abilities. In each of the last four years, boys have reached higher levels than boys nationally. Girls, on the other hand, have not done as well as girls nationally in two of the last four years.

90. Standards of attainment overall seen during the inspection are close to those expected nationally in speaking and listening and in reading, but below them in writing throughout the school. The previous inspection report judged that standards in English were in line with the national average and progress was satisfactory. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment suggest that standards in reading, in particular, are rising and that the literacy hour implemented in the last two years is having a beneficial effect on all areas of the subject except for writing. Here, whilst content is improving, pupils have too little expertise in the technical skills of writing and, consequently, lack the ability to express their ideas with accuracy. The needs of older pupils in the split age classes are met adequately in lessons, as well as those of higher ability pupils.

91. The school rightly emphasises speaking and listening and many tasks encourage pupils to hone these skills. Pupils often speak willingly and relevantly, though not all have the ability to structure their speech well or to speak at any length. Many can illustrate their ideas effectively, as seen in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were comparing descriptions of two 'grandpas' they had been reading about. Pupils listen well and respond to teachers and to each other readily, though they do not always converse at length. A very few pupils lose concentration in lessons and fail to listen to teachers. Most acquire a range of styles to cover formal and informal modes of question and answer and learn to listen attentively to others' ideas. By the time pupils are eleven, there is clear development in the skills of clarity of communication, helped by the techniques of question and answer used well by teachers.

92. Pupils read with interest and many with motivation. Most start school with some

phonic skills and understanding of the use of books. Pupils from five to seven years of age develop strategies which enable them to correct their own mistakes and to approach unfamiliar words with ease. Many pupils from seven to eleven years of age develop other strategies to help them acquire the more advanced skills in reading. Pupils of lower attainment levels read slowly, but with a good degree of comprehension. Because of the good implementation of the national strategy, pupils are acquiring phonic skills at a more rapid rate. As a result, reading is showing signs of greater maturity and is sometimes good, as heard in a Year 6 pupil's reading of an Anne Fine novel. Reading aloud is sometimes without a great deal of expression, though some pupils read with a good degree of understanding and are able to reason sensibly from evidence. For example, a Year 2 pupil read a Roald Dahl story with enthusiasm and discussed it critically and constructively. Library and study skills are good, largely because they are encouraged and systematically taught by most teachers. The range and quantity of fiction pupils choose from is good, though older more able pupils would benefit from guidance in reading more demanding novels.

93. Standards of writing in relation to technical skills are below average and pupils' work is often full of inaccuracies and unstructured. This means that they are not prepared well for the written component of the national tests, as they have not acquired the ability to express their ideas with precision and full competence. Pupils write freely, and often at length, some with an evident desire to communicate their ideas and with sensible or imaginative content. Apart from that of a few higher ability pupils, writing is often without accuracy in punctuation, grammar and spelling. Sentence structure, too, is often unsatisfactory. Handwriting and general presentation, vary greatly and are not always the pupils' best endeavours. Some pupils communicate coherently in writing, as seen in a Year 6 class writing an account of an incident in the style used on 'Flour Babies', but generally the basic skills of good writing are neglected and concentration is focused on content alone. By the age of seven, writing skills cover an appropriate range of styles and some pupils write at length and with sustained account or description. However, few make consistent and correct use of capital letters and full stops and sentence structure is often rambling and disorganised. By the age of eleven, pupils write in a suitable variety of genres, including letters, diaries and playscripts, often using well-chosen literary stimuli from poetry and prose. This was well exemplified in a Year 3 lesson in which pupils were writing letters of appreciation to an author. The school has recognised the weakness in writing and wisely initiated a regular weekly lesson in creative writing, in which pupils are able to develop writing at length and in different genres. However, even in these lessons, technical skills are not well developed, spelling is often inaccurate, punctuation is random and sentence structure lacks precision and coherence. Pupils' use of extended vocabulary is often inhibited by the difficulties they experience in spelling correctly.

94. Progress is satisfactory for pupils with special educational needs, through the good work of support staff and the graded work provided by classroom teachers. There are, however, too few support staff to ensure that all pupils who need help are supported adequately, particularly during literacy lessons. Graded and extension work for higher attaining pupils is often provided at a level which challenges them to their full potential.

95. The quality of teaching is good. Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better and in over half of lessons observed it was very good. This is a high proportion. In one lesson seen, teaching was unsatisfactory. At its best, teaching is characterised by grasp and understanding of the subject, interest, enthusiasm and good lesson planning which employs an appropriate variety of activities in the classroom. A strength of much of the teaching is the consistent, skilful and challenging use of question and answer, which assesses the degree of understanding of pupils and allows the teacher to reinforce

previous teaching. This was clearly to be seen in a Year 1 class where pupils were enthusiastically grasping the power of the language used in 'Big Bad Bill', with the help of the teacher's probing questions. Literature is frequently used in lessons, both prose and poetry, and teachers stress the power of words to convey emotion and pleasure. There is now a high degree of emphasis on reading and comprehension skills through the successful use of the national strategy. This is being productively used by teachers to aid work on reading and to study the structures of stories and other genre. Too often, however, teaching is rendered less effective than it should be by a lack of expectation of thorough technical skills in writing and focus only on the content of what pupils write. Work graded in difficulty is used to suit the needs of pupils of different levels of attainment. Good support and attention is given to pupils with special educational needs. Most teachers possess good subject knowledge and focus well on all aspects of English, other than some writing skills. They present a good example to the pupils and reinforce the ethos of the school. Marking is still too thin in comment and poorly used by the majority of teachers. Rarely does it give pupils the information they need to know what they have done well, or where they need to improve their work. The lack of correction of mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar contributes to pupils poor standards in these areas. Homework is effectively used to reinforce work done in class.

96. Pupils are co-operative in their attitudes to their work, their teachers and each other. Most behave well and respond readily, with interest, enthusiasm and some energy to the interesting tasks they are given. A few, usually older boys, can become restless when not checked by teachers and can be distracting to the rest of the class. Many pupils show sustained concentration and self-motivation, such as the Year 1 pupil who told another who was distracting her attention to, 'Go away. Can't you see I'm working'. Relationships in classes are generally good and pupils are quick to help and support each other, with enthusiasm and good humour. They respond well to the good role models set for them by their teachers, and the encouragement they are given, for example with their reading. The presentation of work is inconsistent, varying from class to class, largely because of the teachers' different expectations. Pupils work at a good pace, enjoy many of the tasks they are set and strive hard to complete them. When given the opportunities, they redraft their work and persevere to achieve a good standard.

97. The curriculum is generally well planned and organised although there is scope for more planning to be written in parallel across the mixed year groups, thus ensuring the same coverage of the subject for all pupils. Assessment and reading records are usefully employed to check progress and to plan future lessons. A portfolio of pupils' graded work to help teachers with assessment is in process of being assembled.

98. Leadership is good. Strenuous efforts to integrate schemes of work into the National Literacy Strategy have been made, to the benefit of teachers and pupils. Class teachers are given advice and help, but there is insufficient monitoring of teaching to ensure the sharing of good practice and a consistency of progress from year-to-year. Pupils' work is beginning to be monitored constructively, and the action plan for the subject has already identified the need for emphasis on writing skills. The school's priorities are the right ones, and the actions being taken to meet the targets set for this year are satisfactory, except in writing. Resources are good within the classrooms, which are well supplied with inviting fiction. The library has an adequate supply of reference books to meet the needs of the curriculum and to encourage pupils to research for themselves. Information technology is now satisfactorily integrated into the teaching of the subject.

MATHEMATICS

99. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average. Similarly, the proportion reaching a higher level was also below the national average. Boys generally reach higher levels than girls, and particularly so in 1999 when girls results showed them to be about four terms behind the standards achieved by girls nationally. Overall, 1999 results were well below both the national average and the average achieved by schools with pupils from similar backgrounds. This represents a decline in standards since both the previous year and the previous inspection report. It is largely due to two factors. Firstly, these pupils had relatively low attainment levels when they entered the school. Although the vast majority have made the progress expected of them since then, they still remain below the national average. Secondly, the year group tested included a relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.

100. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for seven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was well below the national average, although the proportion exceeding it was much closer to the national average. When results are compared with those of schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, they are well below average. The relatively high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in this year group was a significant factor in these results. When seen on inspection, many of these pupils continue to work at a level below that expected for their age. However, the inspection judgement is that all are working at a level appropriate to their ability. Although neither boys nor girls did as well as pupils nationally in 1999, over the last four years boys have achieved levels similar to the national average. Girls, on the other hand, have not done as well as girls nationally in each of the last four years.

101. Standards seen during the inspection are much higher for both eleven and seven year olds. The majority of eleven-year-old pupils are working at the level expected for their age, whilst a satisfactory proportion are working at a higher level. About half the seven-year-olds are judged to be working at the level expected for their age, whilst the remainder are working at a higher level. Pupils are judged to be working at the correct level, with good extension activities for the most able and well-tailored tasks to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. The most able occasionally work with pupils of similar abilities from other schools. This is advantageous. Other significant factors in this improvement are the good quality teaching based upon a very clear understanding of how to teach the national strategy effectively. Pupils, through their positive attitudes, also play their part.

102. Throughout the school, pupils develop good mental agility and recall of number, particularly through the first part of the numeracy lesson. They are using this knowledge with increasing confidence and success when faced with problems to solve or new tasks. This is beneficial to their progress in all aspects of mathematics and numeracy is well used in other subjects. Year 3 and 4 pupils measure distances run and times taken with good accuracy. More able Year 4 pupils demonstrate how comfortable they are with number when using a programmable floor turtle. They estimate and measure both angles and distances successfully.

103. The quality of teaching is good. Training, and useful discussions about why assessment and test results are low, have enabled teachers to focus clearly on areas for improvement, such as the use of questioning. In all lessons seen, teachers engaged pupils in discussions that challenged them appropriately, for example to apply what they already know to a new problem. In a very good Year 5 and 6 lesson, a carefully-chosen problem

gave pupils of all ability levels plenty of opportunities to discuss what information was relevant to the question, and what could be discarded. The teacher's questions were closely matched to pupils' ability levels and the teacher made sure all pupils were actively involved. This is reinforced by teachers' high expectations. In a Year 1 and 2 lesson, the teacher responded to a short reply by asking for, and getting, greater detail from the pupil.

In a Year 3 and 4 lesson, when the pupil demonstrated 'half' the teacher asked for greater precision. Where the pupils' progress dips, it is generally because the teacher has too little support. In a Year 3 and 4 class, for example, the teacher works alone with a relatively large class and a very high number of pupils with special educational needs. Despite the very good quality teaching, meeting the needs of all ability levels in the class is very difficult and the progress of some suffers.

104. The little use made of assessment reported at the previous inspection has now been improved. Much more information is gathered, although the extent to which it is analysed and usefully employed to check each pupil's progress and plan the next steps in learning varies from teacher to teacher and is therefore of limited effectiveness overall.

105. The good quality and quantity of resources reported by the previous inspection has been maintained, and pupils have all the equipment they need to undertake the tasks they are given.

SCIENCE

106. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels for eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average. The proportion reaching the higher level was also below the national average. When compared to similar schools, attainment was also below average. There was no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls. Over the previous four years, results varied greatly from year-to-year, as often happens when the size of the year groups taking the tests is relatively small. In 1999 levels reached were about the same as in 1996.

107. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels for seven-year-olds in 1999 assessments by their teachers was below the national average. However, the proportion assessed as reaching a higher level was above the national average. Experimental and investigative science, as well as knowledge and understanding of physical processes, were comparative strengths.

108. Three lessons were seen during the present inspection and the following judgements are based upon this evidence and that collected through analysis of previous work, discussions with the coordinator and other teachers.

109. A factor affecting overall levels of attainment is the higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs now moving through the school.

110. The attainment levels of the current Year 6 are judged to be in line with the national average. However, there is still a smaller proportion working at the higher levels of the National Curriculum than is found in most schools. The attainment levels of the current Year 2 are judged to be in line with the national average but analysis of previous work does not support teacher assessments of the proportion of pupils working at the higher than expected levels.

111. Whilst investigative skills develop well for the majority of pupils as they move through the school, this is not true for the most able. Tasks for these pupils are rarely demanding or challenging enough. In particular, these pupils are given few opportunities to set up their own investigations rather than following a teacher-directed experiment. The school is currently adopting a nationally approved scheme of work which, when fully established, has the capacity to resolve this.

112. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils show a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the life processes of humans, plants and animals. They can name accurately the main external parts of the body and a plant and have studied how frogs live and grow. They have collected and identified a number of 'minibeasts' after a 'safari' in the school grounds and are able to sort materials, deciding whether they float or sink or are magnetic or not. This body of scientific knowledge is further developed in the older classes. For example, in studying forces Year 3 pupils can identify pushes and pulls in their everyday environment, Year 4 pupils have a good understanding of gravity and air resistance and Year 5 pupils know the effects of magnetism as an invisible force. There is similar progression of learning evident in pupils' general work on life processes and physical forces. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a fair test and can make appropriate predictions before testing.

113. The good quality of teaching reported at the previous inspection has been maintained. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts and use this effectively, particularly when questioning pupils and giving explanations. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and manage the lessons well, making good use of resources and time. Although a good level of practical work is provided, and this is beneficial to pupils' understanding, there are few opportunities for the written recording of observations. Furthermore, all pupils, including the most able, are expected to follow the format suggested by the teacher.

114. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs are always fully involved in science lessons. Teachers are careful to target them with appropriate questions that ensure their full participation. All pupils are taught to co-operate when working in groups and value each others contributions. However, the use of marking is inconsistent and does not always give pupils information on how well they have done or what they must do to improve.

115. Management of the subject is restricted because there is too little use of monitoring to recognise what is effective and where change is needed. The recently-appointed coordinator has begun to make plans for developments, and these are generally along the right lines. Useful informal advice is given to teachers by the coordinator who looks at teachers' planning if they are concerned. Even so, this is insufficient to recognise and respond to strengths and weaknesses.

116. The curriculum is satisfactory. When fully implemented, the new scheme of work will help to address all the requirements of the National Curriculum in a more systematic way and give more support to teaching and learning. In particular, it will help to assess pupil's progress more closely than at present.

ART

117. Throughout the school, standards are good. The school has maintained standards reported in the previous inspection report. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and the more able, make good progress over time, although they do not always move smoothly from class-to-class or year-to-year. Consequently, their progress is not always continuous. Displays of paintings, collage, pottery, textiles and three-dimensional art throughout the school demonstrate the wide range of media used and good progress made.

118. In Year 1, pupils experiment with colours and paint, using leaves as a stimulus. They use different widths of brush with dexterity and the resulting splatter paintings are attractive representations of leaves. Clay flowers and half apples with pips clearly shown are of good quality. In Year 1 and 2, pupils paint imaginative pictures in the style of Van Gogh, and have made a large 'Iron Man' from recycled materials. Photographs of their wind sculptures, based on American Indian art, demonstrate the good range of cultures and times used. In Year 3 and 4, cut oranges made in clay have texture and accurate patterns. Their three-dimensional masks in clay over crushed newspaper show good levels of creativity and careful attention to detail. In a good Year 4 and 5 lesson, pupils were preparing their contribution to a school mosaic. They are skilled in rolling clay. The contribution of partner schools in Prague and Germany, as well as local young people, enhances the value of this work. This class has also produced a design for a brooch or shield in Celtic style. In Year 5 and 6, pupils start by drawing a track shoe using pencil. These drawings have a good sense of perspective. They then make a three-dimensional shoe in clay. Their pencil drawings show good progress in the use of shading, such as in creating a three-dimensional effect on paper. They design and make necklets in the style of Omani jewellery. Printing using blocks and screens is good and the resulting T-shirts attractive, while woven hangings are of good quality.

119. Pupils are very interested in artwork and proud of their achievements. They work hard, with good concentration, and enjoy their experiences. Behaviour is good in the lessons seen. Pupils work effectively on their own or in pairs. In a recent collage club, they co-operated to make a large and dramatic collage of 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe'.

120. Teaching of art is good. Planning is effective and tasks stimulating so that pupils are encouraged to learn and achieve the objectives set. Supported by the skills of the co-ordinator, teachers are confident and secure in their understanding of the subject. Lessons are prepared thoroughly and pupils managed effectively. Skills are taught well and sufficient time is given for pupils to experiment and to be creative. In a good Year 4 and 5 lesson, pupils were encouraged to discuss their work and think about how to improve it. Sketchbooks are introduced at an early stage and, when used, are effective.

121. The curriculum offers a good range of activities. However, there is an imbalance so that opportunities for learning from famous artists and working in their style are limited. Furthermore, there is no procedure for evaluating pupils' work and using this information to help teachers to plan the next stage in their learning.

122. Coordination is good and teacher expertise well used. However, there is no scheme of work to ensure that the curriculum is introducing skills progressively as pupils move through the school. Particularly when pupils change classes, their progress can suffer. Resources for art are good in quality and quantity and have a positive impact on learning. The school has a small kiln room that is a great asset.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. The organisation of the school's timetable meant it was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection. No judgement of the quality of teaching is therefore possible. The following judgements are based upon a study of teachers' planning, discussions with staff and an analysis of pupils' previous work.

124. Standards throughout the school are satisfactory. As they progress through the school, pupils have access to a range of materials and construction processes which help to develop their skills to an appropriate level. For example, Year 2 pupils made good quality stick puppets involving felt, cloth and card using cutting and sticking techniques. Year 5 and 6 pupils made some innovative and generally practical slippers involving the use of similar materials, but their construction methods included sewing and stitching. Evidence from the completed topics seen shows that the development of the design process itself is satisfactory, but more emphasis could be given to the actual designs and plans of the products. Pupils thoroughly and systematically evaluate and assess their final products against the initial design brief. Both projects showed clear evidence of the way in which pupils evaluated their products and assessed the improvements they would make.

125. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. Then, there was no planned progression of skills. By using the nationally-recognised scheme of work effectively, the school has begun to resolve this problem. Planning is now systematic. The school intends to use the associated assessment systems to check more accurately the progress that pupils make. Current resources are adequate for the present curriculum but insufficient for the new scheme of work.

GEOGRAPHY

126. Throughout the school, standards in geography are satisfactory. This is an improvement in Year 6 since the previous inspection, where the work done was judged to fall short of the requirements of the National Curriculum, with too little attention paid to geographical features of the local area. Planning was not detailed enough to ensure a comprehensive coverage of the curriculum and was not supported by systematic assessment of pupils' learning. These shortcomings have recently been rectified, with the provision of a full curriculum map of topics to be covered over two years closely following the National Curriculum. The new assessment forms also conform to requirements. There is still, however, no monitoring of teaching.

127. Pupils aged five to seven work practically in the local area. They know the names of places such as local villages and Hereford, and have begun to understand the differences between villages, towns and cities. They draw pictures to illustrate significant features such as the church, war memorial and post office in their village. They are beginning to use maps to describe journeys, for instance plotting their route to school on a large-scale picture map of the area. They make simple comparisons between seaside and inland towns and identify modes of transport, as well as beginning work on the environment. Pupils aged seven to eleven develop further their knowledge of their own area, identifying different types of houses and local amenities such as the doctors' surgeries. Some pupils made good use of aerial photographs to help them decide which features to include in their work. They use maps of the world to show major physical features such as rivers and mountains. From lessons observed and work samples seen, pupils become absorbed in the features they discover and study. Written work shows pupils' interest in the environment and other features of their work and is of satisfactory quality.

128. In the limited number of lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. Lessons were well planned, and enabled pupils to make good use of their knowledge of the area around the school. Good questioning and class discussion early on ensured that pupils understood what they had to do. Classes were well managed. Resources were well prepared, including additional prompts on worksheets to help pupils of lower attainment levels and those with special educational needs to set out their work correctly and complete tasks successfully. The curriculum is good. Tasks give a good balance and the nationally-recognised scheme of work is implemented effectively, ensuring good progression. The curriculum is enhanced through local and residential field trips.

129. The coordinator has been in post for only a short time. Current improvements, largely centred upon the implementation of a scheme of work, are good. Samples of pupils' work are being collected to provide a portfolio of graded work to aid teachers in their assessment of progress. This, too, is appropriate and is the first step towards clearer and more accurate monitoring of pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the curriculum.

HISTORY

130. Throughout the school, standards in history are satisfactory, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Planning is coherent and uses a good variety of methods and strategies which encourage the acquisition and use of the skills of thought and deduction through direct learning and practical activity. Assessment, too, is satisfactory, though there is no monitoring of teaching.

131. Do to the organisation of the time table, little teaching of history was observed. As well as the good lesson observed, judgements are based upon teachers' planning, an analysis of pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils.

132. Pupils from five to seven successfully distinguish between past and present and develop a sense of chronology. They study the lives and works of famous people, such as Florence Nightingale and events such as the Great Fire of London. Pupils from seven to eleven identify and date features in the past, evaluate evidence and begin to examine source material effectively. They study the Victorians, Tudors, Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece, with interest and enthusiasm. Throughout the school, pupils are able to absorb facts well and express an empathetic response both to the period under study and people associated with it. This was underlined in a Year 5 and 6 lesson observed, where pupils were using research techniques to examine schooling in Ancient Greece and compare it with their own experiences. There is some evidence of independent research skills being promoted well, using a range of sources.

133. The curriculum is good. New schemes of work ensure a good and wide coverage of topics and provide a stimulating variety of activities to support the teaching. Emphasis is firmly laid on helping pupils to think for themselves and on the use of primary and secondary source material to aid this process. Work is deliberately planned with effectively graded levels to ensure that more able pupils can extend their work by undertaking personal research and that pupils with special educational needs are always involved and progress at a satisfactory rate.

134. In the one lesson observed, pupils behaved well, busying themselves with enthusiasm and some with real effort. Most pupils worked with pleasure and co-operated well with their teacher and other pupils. From the lesson and discussions with pupils, it is clear most enjoy the subject and all find some aspect of it absorbing.

135. Teaching in the Year 5 and 6 lesson observed was good. Exposition and recapitulation were done with energy and very good recall. Question and answer methods were used very effectively, both to stretch pupils to their full potential and to help them to empathise with people and period with ease and interest. Management of pupils was good, though there were occasional signs of restlessness from a small group of boys, soon checked by the teacher. From an analysis of pupils' work, it is clear that teachers are secure in their knowledge of the subject and are able to communicate that knowledge to their pupils. Lessons are well planned. Cross-curricular skills are also well developed and planned, in the areas of literacy and geography.

136. The curriculum now conforms to the requirements of the National Curriculum and is well balanced in its coverage of appropriate attainment targets. Pupils' personal development is well extended through the teaching and learning of the subject, as pupils study the ways of life of other cultures, their beliefs and values and learn to understand how the past has affected the present. Visits to sites of historical interest help to enhance the curriculum, as do walks in the local community and study of the local church and canal. All pupils have equal access to the subject and provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Resources, such as historical artefacts, are satisfactory and are well used.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

137. The following judgements are based upon the few lessons of direct teaching seen, discussions with the teachers and an analysis of previous work.

138. Standards in information technology are good by the age of eleven and satisfactory by the age of seven.

139. The provision for information technology has been greatly improved since the time of the previous inspection. This, along with the adoption of the nationally-recognised scheme of work, has had a positive impact on the overall attainment of pupils. The issues over progression and continuity in the teaching of information skills and the coverage of all the requirements of the National Curriculum have now been successfully resolved. These are all good improvements since the previous inspection.

140. Although each classroom has a computer, during the inspection these were rarely in use and the school has not yet resolved how they are to be efficiently used now that more direct teaching takes place using the specialist suite.

141. The use and practise of information technology skills builds well through the school. The youngest pupils learn to manipulate the mouse quickly and accurately. By Year 2 most pupils demonstrate satisfactory word processing skills when writing about the human body. These skills are particularly well developed as pupils move through the school, so that by Year 5 they use the computer skillfully to draft and improve poems about animals. The vast majority of older pupils can use information technology to research information, such as Year 3 and 4's work on dangerous animals. These pupils understand the internet and also use it to find information. Older pupils have designed and set up a web-site for the school which shows clear evidence of their skills in combining text and graphics. Most pupils use a floor turtle well. In Years 3 and 4 they program it to draw letters such as 'F', older pupils to move about a set course. The more able can combine these instructions into a successful sequence. In some of these tasks numeracy skills are practised, but generally this remains an area for development.

142. In the limited number of lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. Teachers

are confident and competent, an improvement since the previous inspection. They are able to give clear instructions and, should things go wrong, can generally lead pupils successfully through the steps necessary to correct the fault. All pupils are enthusiastic about information technology. They share resources fairly, take turns and work collaboratively to support each other as required.

143. The curriculum is good, closely following the nationally-recognised scheme of work. The assessment of skills is satisfactory and plans to further improve this aspect of provision are appropriate. Particularly good use is made of skills assessment cards to maintain a up-to-date record of pupils' progress.

144. Recent improvements are largely because the coordinator is enthusiastic and skilled. Good training since the previous inspection has increased staff confidence and competence. Even so, insufficient use is made of the coordinator's expertise and, because there is no monitoring, she has insufficient information on which to base judgements about where the subject needs to improve next.

MUSIC

145. Because of the organisation of the timetable, very little music was observed during the inspection. Consequently, it is not possible to make an overall judgement about pupils' standards nor the quality of teaching and learning. No judgement was made during the previous inspection and provision for music has not improved since that time.

146. Pupils sing in assembly with satisfactory pitch, tone and rhythm, although in the one lesson observed the standard of singing was unsatisfactory. The sample of work included a little evidence that older pupils have the opportunity to listen to and appraise music. In the Year 4 and 5 class, pupils explained appropriately the music they listened to. In assembly, pupils were encouraged to talk about the music played, and some expressed how it made them feel.

147. The music curriculum provided is unsatisfactory and pupils do not receive their full entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Insufficient time is given to the subject. Many teachers are still not confident in teaching or planning for music, although the school has tried to organise training for them. The school no longer uses the published scheme of work that was criticised during the previous inspection as limiting continuity and progression. It is being replaced by the nationally-recognised scheme of work, which includes good progression in the teaching of musical skills and understanding. Even so, staff training is necessary to help to raise the confidence and knowledge of teachers and so provide a good basis for raising standards in music and for evaluating pupils' achievements.

148. In other ways, the school supports music as well as it can. A small group of pupils are learning to play violin, brass instruments and clarinet and they are making good progress. A choir is formed for special events and productions. Professional musicians such as a percussionist come to school to enhance pupils' experiences. There is a good range of resources in school, including different styles, times and cultures. These resources are underused at present.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Standards in physical education are good throughout the school, an improvement since the previous inspection. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic participants in the broad and balanced physical education programme provided. Also of particular significance to the good progress and standards pupils reach are their positive attitudes to lessons and good teaching they receive.

150. By the time they are eleven, pupils demonstrate good skills and techniques. Partly because of their good concentration and perseverance, they often improve as the result of practise. All can swim competently.

151. By the time they are seven, pupils throw competently both overarm and underarm. They make simple judgements about their performances, and sensibly discuss what they and others have done. Generally this results in improvement the next time they perform a task. They work very co-operatively as a class, team or pair.

152. Numeracy skills are well used, for example when Year 3 and 4 pupils measure time and distance. They carefully use equipment such as 'trundle wheels', ensuring they start measuring from the correct point. When counting the seconds taken for a slalom run, most understand hundredths of a second and round up or down to the nearest whole second accurately.

153. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the skills and techniques they teach, particularly helpful when explaining refinements to pupils who listen closely and learn much. Pupils are well behaved, show interest in the activities offered and take part enthusiastically, as they did at the time of the previous inspection. Consequently, teachers are able to spend comparatively long periods giving particular individuals and groups close attention. This often helps these pupils improve markedly. Teachers skilfully use pupils' responses to demonstrate both successful responses and common flaws in performance.

154. Although Withington Primary is a comparatively small school, a good range of extra curricular sports activities are provided. These are further enhanced by the very good use made of outside expertise, for example to teach cricket and fencing. The school also organises events such as boating and athletics and participates in competitions with other schools, an improvement since the previous inspection. Older pupils have the opportunity to participate in adventurous activities such as abseiling and orienteering. An imaginative 'health and fitness week' stressed the advantages of a healthy lifestyle successfully.

155. Management is very effective. The curriculum is carefully planned and teachers and pupils have the good quality and quantity of resources they need to support lessons. Dance lessons are supported by a very good range of music. A Year 1 class, for example, used African drumming effectively. Where assessments are made, such as in swimming and athletics, they enable staff to monitor progress and pupils to recognise how well they are doing. Although the curriculum is largely successful, the coordinator has little information about relative strengths and areas for improvement on which to base future plans. Furthermore, little use is made of her expertise in drawing up lesson plans, or to offer comments for improvement or extension work.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

156. Standards in religious education are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus by the age of eleven. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress. It is not possible to judge overall standards when pupils are seven years old as no lessons were seen or samples of written work available for analysis, because much of the work undertaken in the school at this age is oral. No overall judgement of pupils' standards nor the quality of teaching or learning was made in the previous inspection report.

157. Pupils generally have good understanding of how religion can affect the life and experience of people and in relating religious beliefs to their own life, and this is a recent improvement. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are beginning to understand that prayer is communication with a divine being. They can make up their own prayers and show an understanding of why people pray. Pupils make thoughtful comments when considering moral issues, such as looking after the environmental, and different creation stories. They have satisfactory knowledge about the importance of symbols in worship in several world faiths, and of religious festivals, such as Harvest, Christmas and Diwali. They are beginning to understand the importance of celebration and sharing together. In Years 5 and 6, pupils study the 'Lord's Prayer' from the bible and consider some of the ways people pray in other religions. They also write their own prayers. Pupils make Rangoli and Mendhi patterns to celebrate Diwali and learn about the Hindu story of Rama and Sita. When studying Advent and Christmas, they consider the Old Testament prophecies of the birth of Jesus and compare Christian and Hindu symbolism associated with 'light'. In the one lesson observed, pupils linked the story of Moses and the Exodus to modern famine situations. They consider ideas about obedience and commitment and why the Jews complained to Moses. Pupils used good descriptive language when thinking about how the Israelites felt when they escaped across the Red Sea and their worries when they had no food. This lesson and poetry and prayers in the sample of work give evidence of good spiritual development. In assemblies during the inspection, pupils learned through story about moral issues, such as changing your mind in the light of experience and the impact of your actions on others. Pupils' writing in the subject is full of meaning and understanding but handwriting, spelling and presentation are below what is expected by pupils of this age.

158. No overall judgement is possible about the quality of teaching. In the one lesson observed, teaching was good. Teachers plan a suitably broad curriculum in line with the Agreed Syllabus.

159. In the one lesson seen and in assemblies, pupils' attitudes are good. They show eagerness to contribute and listen attentively to other people's ideas. Pupils generally behave well.

160. The continuity of learning between classes is unsatisfactory. The new scheme of work, when fully implemented, will help to address this and improve the progress of pupils' skills and understanding as they move through the school. Visits, for example to the local church, are well used to support and extend learning in the classroom. There is a good range of resources.