

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **CLARKSON INFANTS SCHOOL**

Wisbech, Cambridgeshire.

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110649

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Clark

Reporting inspector: Tony Taylor  
4262

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2000

Inspection number: 191725

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

© Crown copyright [2000]

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infants
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 7 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Trafford Road, Wisbech. Cambridgeshire.
Postcode:	PE13 2ES
Telephone number:	01945 584867
Fax number:	01945 584867
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. A. Bolden
Date of previous inspection:	28 <sup>th</sup> January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tony Taylor	Registered inspector	Science Art Music Physical education Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? How well is the school led and managed?
Kevin Greateorex	Lay inspector		Equal opportunities. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Mari Powell	Team inspector	English History Religious education Provision for the under fives	How well are the pupils taught?
Lynne Wright	Team inspector	Mathematics Information technology Design and technology Geography	The school's results and achievements. How good are the curricular opportunities offered to the pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

St. Mary's Inspection Unit.  
St. Mary's College.  
Waldegrave Road,  
Strawberry Hill,  
Twickenham.  
TW1 4SX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar  
Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

Paragraph

### PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Information about the school  
How good the school is  
What the school does well  
What could be improved  
How the school has improved since its last inspection  
Standards  
Pupils' attitudes and values  
Teaching and learning  
Other aspects of the school  
How well the school is led and managed  
Parents' and carers' views of the school

### PART B: COMMENTARY

<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>1-14</b>
The school's results and achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>15-19</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?</b>	<b>20-25</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>26-30</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>31-34</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>35-39</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>40</b>

### PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>41-99</b>
---	--------------

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Clarkson Infants' School is situated in the town of Wisbech, in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire. It serves the area surrounding the school, and some pupils attend from outside the direct catchment area. It is a mixed infants school, with a nursery, and is larger than average in size. At the time of the inspection there were two hundred and seventy two girls and boys on roll. The area has been designated as being one of social and economic need. The number of pupils with entitlement to free school meals is higher than average. The school's register of special educational need lists a greater number of pupils than is the average for schools of this type. Seven pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are currently no pupils who have English as an additional language. The attainment of the pupils on entry to the reception class is generally below the average found in other similar schools.

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

Clarkson Infants is a very good school. It has many strengths and many positive features. The school provides a secure, warm and friendly environment, with a very positive ethos. It dedicates itself to ensuring the good progress of the children, who, due to the good teaching, generally achieve at least sound standards in the basic skills of learning, and very good standards in their all-round personal development. At the last inspection, the quality of the education provided by the school was good. It has dealt efficiently with the issues for improvement that arose then. The school shows a strong unity of purpose under the excellent leadership, and has made further significant improvements. The quality of its pastoral care, the excellent relationships, and very good behaviour and attitudes of the children are further strengths. It rightly enjoys the positive support of parents, and provides very good value for money.

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

- The leadership is excellent. It provides a clear vision for the development of the school and there is a firm unity of purpose.
- The school has a very caring ethos. The relationships are excellent.
- The overall quality of the teaching is a significant strength. It meets the needs of the pupils very well, especially of those who have special educational needs.
- The pupils' attitudes to school and to work are very positive. Their behaviour is very good.
- Standards in literacy are good.
- The curriculum the school provides is good. It is matched well to the pupils' needs.
- The pupils make very good progress in the Nursery and good progress at Key Stage 1.
- It values the support and involvement of parents very highly.
- The school provides very good value for money.

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

The inspection noted no major areas for improvement, but there are aspects of the school's work that might be considered for development, in order to raise standards and the quality of education to higher levels:

- Review of the time allocation for religious education to raise standards further.
- The annual reports to parents on their children's progress to indicate levels of attainment and by providing targets for the future.
- Clarification for parents of the school's homework policy.

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

### HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Since then, standards in science and in history have improved, and they continue to improve. The assessment procedures have been improved generally, and the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have strengthened the school's work in developing the pupils' basic skills. Improvements have been made to both teaching and learning in information technology with the school's involvement in the National Grid for Learning initiative. The provision for outdoor play in the Nursery has been extended. The quality of the school's provision for music has declined since the last inspection, due to limitations in funding. However, it remains at a satisfactory level, and the school is acutely aware of the need to raise standards again as soon as possible.

### STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 7 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests and Teacher Assessments

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average    E

The school has significantly improved the standards of pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science. The assessment data shows that the standards in English, mathematics and science are at least satisfactory. The inspection findings not only confirm this picture, but also indicate that aspects of all three subjects are good. The school compares favourably with schools of similar type in the standards it achieves. The trend over the period from 1997 has been one of continued improvement, and the school is well placed to continue this process in the future. Literacy standards are good. The pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory, and improving as the new initiative takes hold. Writing has been a particular focus, and the pupils achieve good standards in this aspect of their work. Spelling is also a strength, and the quality of the pupils' handwriting is outstanding. The school is turning its attention now to reading with the intention of improving the pupils' all-round skills. The school fosters the investigative aspects of science well, and standards are good. The standards in religious education match the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Standards in information technology, design and technology and music match expected levels, and in art, history and physical education they are good. Personal and social education standards are very good. The standards overall are sufficiently high, but not as high as the school intends them to be!

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The pupils' general attitude towards school is very positive. They enjoy their work and play.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the pupils is very good at work and in all other contexts.
Personal development and relationships	The pupils' personal development is very good. The relationships throughout the school are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. The school tries very hard to ensure good attendance.

The pupils show a pride and interest in the school, and in the work that they do. They enjoy doing their work well. They are generally open, friendly and helpful. They behave well in classrooms and in the playground, treating each other, and adults with respect. For example, during the inspection a Year 1 class visited the town to carry out a geography study. The pupils' behaviour was very good throughout. The excellent relationships, very good behaviour, and the very positive attitudes are some of the school's many strengths. Levels of attendance are satisfactory. The school tries hard to encourage good levels of attendance, but more support is needed from parents if this is to be achieved.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall - 27	Very good.	Good, with much very good	Not applicable.

*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 overall quality of the teaching is good. Almost eighty-five per cent of the lessons seen were good, very good, or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was noted during the inspection. Both English and mathematics are taught well, and the pupils' literacy skills are developed very effectively. The teaching of numeracy skills is improving rapidly as the teachers develop the scheme of work for the National Numeracy initiative. The school is particularly good at meeting the needs of the pupils, especially those who have special educational needs, and in matching the requirements of the curriculum to those needs, so that the pupils make good progress. The initial assessment information indicates that many pupils have lower than average general attainment when they start school. The strong quality of the teaching has a very significant effect and promotes the pupils' learning well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum for the children under five is good. It is broad and balanced across all the appropriate areas of learning. The curriculum for Key Stage 1 is also broad and balanced, and of good quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision for the pupils with special educational needs is very good. They are well supported, and they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Not applicable.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The pupils' personal development is fostered very well. The provision for their spiritual, moral and social development is very good. The provision for their cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides excellent pastoral care. It is a considerable strength in the school's work. The support given to the pupils is of high quality.

The curriculum for the pupils at all stages is appropriately broad and balanced and meets their needs well. A strong feature is the efficient blending of the curriculum for the youngest children with that for the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, ensuring the pupils' smooth transition from one stage to another. The curriculum is usefully extended by extra-curricular provision, including the innovative activity of a science club. The school takes its pastoral duties very seriously. The level of care is excellent, and the health, safety and well-being of the pupils is at the forefront in all the school's work. This feature greatly aids their individual and collective progress. Equal opportunities are effectively provided. There is some limitation, because of time restraints, to the provision for religious education. This limits the pupils' attainment to a satisfactory level rather than good. The school is aware of this, and is considering appropriate action to balance its provision. The school works in close partnership with parents, who are generally very supportive. Their involvement in the school and their children's education is generally very good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent. She is very well supported by the dedicated and committed staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors meet their statutory responsibilities efficiently. They have a strong involvement in the school and support it very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school continuously evaluates its performance, and seeks to improve. It has clear aims and criteria for success which it uses to evaluate what it does, and how successful it is.
The strategic use of resources	The resources are used well to enrich the curriculum and the pupils' experiences. Obtaining value for money is a firm consideration in all that the school does.

The headteacher of Clarkson Infants' School has a very clear vision for its overall development that is shared by the staff, governors and parents alike. The fulfilment of its aims leads directly to it being a very good school. The senior staff and the governors support the headteacher very effectively, and the hard-working and committed staff make very strong contributions. The ethos of the school is positive and purposeful. Based on excellent pastoral care, the continuous progress and development of the pupils is seen as the chief purpose. A further strong feature is that of constant evaluation of how well things are working and consideration of how they can be improved. The significant improvements made since the last inspection are testimony to this. The governors support the school very effectively. They are knowledgeable and involved, and fulfil their statutory duties well. The principles of best value are firmly applied, for example, in the investment in increased classroom support, which has extended the learning opportunities of the pupils. The level of staffing is very good, and is used well to promote the children's progress. The accommodation is well cared for, and managed efficiently to provide a welcoming and purposeful environment. The learning resources are good and they are very effectively used.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents consider that their children make good progress and become increasingly mature and responsible.</li> <li>That the teaching is good.</li> <li>That the school is very approachable if parents have questions, or a problem to resolve.</li> <li>That the school expects the children to work hard.</li> <li>That the school works closely with them.</li> <li>That the school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some parents are uncertain about the school's homework policy, and what constitutes homework.</li> <li>Some parents would like further information about how well their children are doing.</li> <li>A significant number of parents do not consider that the range of extra-curricular activities is sufficient.</li> </ul>

The parents are justified in their positive views of the school. The openness, warm relationships, and the positive and hard-working ethos, coupled with the good and often very good teaching, ensure that the children make good, and often very good progress. The inspection team agrees that the homework policy, which is a good one, should be clarified further to ensure that the parents understand it. It also agrees that the annual reports on children's progress, which are currently satisfactory, should contain more specific information about the stage in learning the children have reached, and targets for the future. The inspection team does not agree that the range of extra-curricular activities is limited. The provision for this aspect is judged to be good overall.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Standards at the Clarkson Infants School, as shown in national tests and assessments data, have risen sharply over the past four years and are now satisfactory overall and often good. This improvement has largely been brought about by the thorough and very well managed introduction of national and school initiatives. For instance, the introduction of workshops successfully addressed the sharp downturn in mathematics standards in the 1997 tests. All staff and governors have demonstrated their commitment to giving the pupils the best education possible.
2. Children enter the Nursery class with significantly low levels of achievement. The attainment of children entering the reception class is below average overall, with a significant proportion attaining scores that are well below average. Very few children attain higher levels than average. The children's writing and speaking and listening skills are the most strongly developed aspects, and their personal and social skills the least well developed. The school has excellent systems for monitoring children's progress across all aspects of the Early Years curriculum. Well-structured curriculum and lesson plans and good quality teaching in contexts that interest, engage and challenge the children ensure that they make good, and often very good progress, so that by the time they are five they are achieving at levels expected nationally. The development of their literacy, creative and personal and social skills is particularly good.
3. The 1999 National Curriculum tests and assessments for seven-year-olds indicate that standards in reading, mathematics and science broadly match the national average and the average for similar schools. Standards in number and algebra are good because the school has placed considerable emphasis on teaching this aspect of the mathematics curriculum. Results in writing tests and tasks show this to be a strength of the school. Attainment is above average, both at the expected and the higher levels. This is largely due to well-targeted support for the teaching of writing. In science, the pupils' attainment shows considerable improvement and now matches the national average.
4. The inspection findings confirm that standards are at least satisfactory overall. There are many good elements. Standards have been at least maintained, and in some cases improved since the last inspection. The demands made by teachers are appropriate, and ensure that the good progress made by children under five is continued through Key Stage 1. The majority of the pupils achieve at least national expectations in English by the age of seven. The pupils are willing speakers in social and working contexts but their rather limited vocabulary somewhat constrains the range of their discussions in informal situations. They read satisfactorily, and with an increasing awareness of word structure and textual clues. The teaching promotes reading and writing across the curriculum effectively. This contributes to the development of good standards in spelling, where pupils make very good progress, and to the good standards and very good progress in writing. The pupils write with technical accuracy across the curriculum, and use punctuation especially well. Their handwriting is excellent. It is even and confident, and shows maturity of style.
5. In mathematics, standards meet expectations across all aspects, with particular strengths in number work, and in the pupils' accurate use and understanding of mathematical vocabulary. The attainment of boys has been significantly improved by the introduction of more oral mathematics work and a faster pace to lessons. Overall standards in science match expectations and pupils' progress is good. The attention teachers give to the investigative nature of science activities, their well-focused questioning and the rigour of planned observational work, has ensured steady improvement since the previous inspection.
6. The school is developing target-setting procedures in English, especially writing, and in mathematics. Targets are made clear to the pupils and are beginning to contribute to the strengthening of standards.

7. Standards match expectations in all aspects of information technology, design and technology, music, and in geography, where they continue to improve. They are above expectations in history due to the development of a well-structured curriculum. This is a much improved picture since the last inspection. Standards are above expectations in art and in physical education, where pupils demonstrate high levels of involvement and increasing skills and independence in their work. The required standards for religious education are met. In all these subjects pupils' progress is good. Standards in music are satisfactory, but have declined since the last inspection due to the lack of specialist teaching.
8. In many lessons seen, standards were good. The teachers take great care to ensure that new learning is consolidated very thoroughly, especially in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The pupils use their literacy skills effectively to support learning in all subjects and, as a result, standards in literacy are good across the curriculum. In numeracy, standards are satisfactory overall, and are beginning to be used increasingly and appropriately, in other subjects, such as traffic and incidence surveys in geography.
9. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress and generally achieve standards in line with their potential.

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

10. The pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They are enthusiastic about their work, and eager to succeed. They show high levels of interest and concentration because the teachers plan tasks that interest and motivate them. They grow in confidence, take pride in their work and enjoy doing it well.
11. The pupils' behaviour is consistently very good in lessons, in assemblies, at lunchtimes, and at playtimes. This confirms the views expressed by parents. The pupils move around the school in a quiet and orderly manner, showing a very clear understanding of the standards expected of them. There is no evidence of bullying, nor lack of respect for property. The pupils work cooperatively, listen with interest to one another and to adults. Relationships are excellent, and tolerance, patience and understanding appear to be the watchwords of the whole school community.
12. The pupils' personal development is very good. The school provides numerous opportunities for the pupils to show initiative, and to take responsibility. The trust is well placed. The pupils regularly perform jobs within the classroom and around the school. As they progress through the school, greater degrees of independence and initiative are encouraged from the pupils, demonstrated by the Year 2 pupils who attend to the telephone during lunchtimes. Older pupils regularly help younger ones in a variety of ways, and the pupils are eager to be involved in fund-raising for charities.
13. Despite the school's emphasis on improving attendance, this aspect remains satisfactory rather than good. There is some unauthorised absence, and the school refuses to condone invalid reasons for absence. However, the pupils are generally very punctual, many arriving early, and they come happily to school, ensuring a prompt and efficient start to the sessions.
14. The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, the excellent relationships, the very high standards of behaviour, and the very good opportunities for personal development, are significant strengths of the school and have a very positive effect on the quality of the teaching and the learning.

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

15. The teaching is good. In the lessons seen during the inspection, it was never less than satisfactory and in more than eighty-five per cent of them it was good or better. In almost forty per cent it was very good. The teaching across the school is of a consistently high standard and contributes significantly to the good, and often very good progress made by the pupils. The teaching of English, mathematics, science and physical education is particularly strong. In the one lesson seen in religious education, the teaching was of very high quality. In the nursery and reception classes, the teaching is mostly very good and some is excellent. The quality of provision ensures that the

children in the foundation stage make a very good start before they begin the statutory National Curriculum. The last inspection report described the teaching as being sound and also having several strengths. These have been consolidated and extended very successfully through the very effective team work which ensures that each lesson builds on the pupils' previous learning and links very well to their subsequent work.

16. The teaching of the youngest children is generally very good and consequently they make very rapid progress. As a result, the children, many of whom enter school with below average skills in important aspects, make very rapid progress. The teachers understand the learning needs of young children very well. They use the carefully gathered and analysed information about their early capabilities to plan a good range of interesting activities, well matched to their various needs. For example, language games, which are used to develop literacy skills, are skilfully graded to meet the needs of individual children. Activities to develop speech are carefully devised and are well guided and supported by the many well-trained adults in the classrooms. Sorting and matching activities in mathematics are skilfully structured to match the levels of numeracy development of different children. The children's progress across the different areas of learning is closely tracked and the resulting information is used to plan future activities. The children are very well managed and cared for so that they feel very secure. Consequently, they rapidly develop good social skills which enable them to work collaboratively when appropriate.
17. The teaching in Key Stage 1 is good with a significant proportion which is very good. Very dedicated and effective team-work has resulted in good quality planning which is increasingly taking account of recent, nationally produced, curriculum guidelines. The learning support staff are effectively involved in the planning of work and, consequently, have a good understanding of how to support the pupils' learning. This is particularly effective in the case of pupils with special educational needs, who make very good progress. All staff have a good understanding of how to teach the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. In particular, writing skills, which influence the development of handwriting, punctuation and spelling, are taught in a highly structured but effective way. This has a very positive impact on the development of the pupils' confidence in approaching the technical aspects of writing. In lessons in mathematics, clearly focused mental arithmetic practice challenges the pupils to think mathematically and sharpens their calculation skills.
18. The assessment of the pupils' work is increasingly effective in the core subjects and the information is used to help with the planning of activities. Work is marked and often, in the case of English for example, useful comments are recorded which identify strengths and aspects of writing that need to be improved. Careful thought is given to the use of resources to promote learning and motivate the pupils to take an interest in their activities. At times, the use of resources is cautious as new approaches to teaching are introduced. During literacy hour, for example, the teachers' confidence in developing sentence and word level work is now sufficiently high to devise tasks supported by resources that are more challenging still in order to develop the pupils' skills further. In science, many older pupils are ready to take upon themselves the identification of investigations and decide the resources necessary to test various hypotheses with which they are presented. The lessons have good pace. The pupils show a high level of interest and enjoyment of their work. They take pride in presenting it well. The youngest children show remarkably high levels of concentration as a result of the very good management of activities, and the clearly expressed expectations of the adults.
19. The school supports the pupils' learning by setting appropriate work, such as reading and spelling for them to pursue at home. However, parents are not always clear about what is expected. In order to further develop the pupils' progress in reading the school needs to review the frequency with which pupils are allowed to take reading books home. Taken overall, the high quality of the teaching has a very positive effect on the good, and often very good progress made by the pupils.

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

20. The school curriculum at Key Stage 1 meets all the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Its breadth and balance has been improved since the last inspection. Due emphasis is given to key learning skills. The teaching programmes for science and history have been carefully

restructured to ensure full coverage and depth. In history this has been particularly successful and contributes to the achievement of high standards. The religious education curriculum, based on the locally Agreed Syllabus, has recently been reshaped and adapted in order to extend the pupils' knowledge, and there are early signs that this is a successful development. However, insufficient time has been allocated, and despite often very good teaching, this limits attainment to a satisfactory level.

21. The quality and range of the curriculum for children under five is good overall. It is well balanced across all the areas of learning. Careful planning and teaching, excellent relationships and the good use of resources in a stimulating environment promote the very positive development of all the children. It is integrated very well with the good quality Key Stage 1 curriculum, which is specifically based on the identified needs of the pupils, thus ensuring their continued good progress. The curriculum at this stage has been very carefully developed in a thoughtful way to provide pupils with a firm awareness of the school and local culture, and their place within it. This is achieved by blending subjects together very effectively and interestingly within topics, such as work on the local environment. Good community links are made. The pupils are introduced to the history of Wisbech, and the characteristics of where they live compared to other places. Their interest and enjoyment is evident in their writing, drawings and conversations.
22. The good range of extra curricular opportunities further develops this aspect of the pupils' development through clubs and visits, and notably through the residential experience. The parents' views on extra-curricular activity are not supported by inspection findings. From the outset, there is carefully planned provision for pupils who have special educational needs, enabling them to work purposefully alongside their peers. Equality of opportunity is ensured through very careful monitoring and the valuing of all pupils is central to the school's philosophy and ethos.
23. The school has developed very effective strategies for teaching literacy, and the pupils use their literacy skills successfully across the curriculum. Strategies for teaching numeracy are developing soundly. These national strategies have helped the teachers to develop a consistent way of planning for learning, which clearly identifies the purposes of lessons, and what pupils are to learn. This further promotes their good progress in lessons. As these strategies are taking effect, the school is beginning to develop more effective assessment procedures, and is now setting targets for improved learning. This is beginning to raise overall standards.
24. The provision for the pupils' health education, including appropriate sex education and information about drugs misuse, is good. The school is one of the local education authority's 'Health Promoting Schools' and in this it is very active. The pupils learn very effectively about personal safety in regular circle time sessions. Strong links are developing with the adjacent junior school, and pupils are well prepared for transfer to it.
25. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is very good. The pupils' growing awareness of spirituality is developed sensitively and positively in collective worship and in religious education, as well as through art, poetry and environmental experiences. All adults in the school community provide very good role models, and the pupils are made fully aware of their responsibilities within the community. There are clear expectations that pupils will take full responsibility for their actions and demonstrate that they understand the difference between right and wrong in all their dealings. The pupils' social development is fostered very effectively through school and community involvement. Most of the pupils appreciate the role they play in school life and they take their part in working towards promoting the clear, agreed school aims. The provision for the pupils' cultural development is good. The school takes many opportunities to promote an awareness of local culture through stories, rhymes and field trips. This work is extended into other cultures wherever possible, but distance and opportunity tend to limit the pupils' experiences to the distinct local culture.

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

26. The school provides support and guidance of the highest quality. It effectively promotes the welfare, health and safety of the pupils in a warm, caring and stable environment. The extremely caring ethic

stems directly from the leadership and percolates the whole school. The staff show great concern for the well-being of the pupils and actively promotes its development. The teachers are sensitive to the needs of the pupils and consistently monitor their ability to cope on a day-to-day basis. The school uses the classroom learning assistants very well to support the pupils, particularly those with special educational needs.

27. Effective assessment is seen as a priority task and the school's approach is pragmatic. Careful initial (Baseline) assessment is used positively in planning the learning programmes for the youngest children. The subsequent assessment systems are manageable and the information gained is efficiently used. The systems are used effectively in English, mathematics, and for special needs, and are becoming more widely developed across the range of the curriculum.
28. The staff have continued the successful promotion of the high standards of pupils' behaviour since the last inspection. The policy is consistently applied by all staff, who pre-empt possible incidents with firm, calm intervention, and maintain tight control.
29. The health and safety of the pupils is promoted well. Potential hazards are identified and appropriate remedial action is taken promptly. All the staff are safety conscious and watchful for the security of the pupils. Child protection procedures are followed well. The staff are aware of the need for vigilance, and of the steps to take if suspicions are aroused. The school has effective systems in place to monitor attendance and does much to promote it. Registers are marked speedily and efficiently at the start of each session. Absences are properly noted and contact is made with parents to justify any absence. The school works closely with the local education authority to try to improve the attendance rates, but has not been wholly successful in raising them to a good level thus far. The annual figures for attendance are correctly aggregated and reported in the governor's annual report to the parents, and in the school's prospectus.
30. Overall, the school works extremely hard to create a caring environment where the interests of the pupils are promoted. In this it is very successful.

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

31. The parents confirm that the school has many strengths. The questionnaire returns indicate that the parents are supportive and appreciative of what the school does for their children. All of the returns indicated that their children like school, that they make good progress, and that the school is led and managed well. The parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. They consider the standards of behaviour to be good, that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible, and that the school works closely with them.
32. A few parents expressed some concern regarding the information provided about their children's progress, and about the range of activities provided outside normal lessons. Some considered that the amount of homework was not enough. The inspection team noted these concerns. The annual reports on individual pupils' progress are satisfactory. However, it was considered that they could be improved by the school indicating more clearly, the stage of development the pupils reach, and by offering targets for future development. The homework policy is good, but it needs to be made clearer to parents what it entails. The range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school is good. The inspection team does not uphold the parents' views on this aspect.
33. The parents and other adults are encouraged to become involved in the life of the school. Many respond enthusiastically, participating in a wide range of activities. Many also help regularly in the classrooms and around the school, as well as on trips and sports days. Their help is structured to provide the maximum support; they are given clear directions for tasks, and are deployed effectively. Most parents are very supportive of the work that their children are expected to do at home. There is no parent/teacher association, but many parents support a range of fund-raising activities. The school values highly the contributions made by parents, which materially and socially enhance the pupils' learning opportunities and personal development.

34. The parents are well informed about the school and their children's activities through a good range of letters, newsletters, reports, and meetings. Reports on the pupils' individual progress are at least of a satisfactory standard, and give much detailed information about what the children know and can do. However, they neither make sufficiently clear the stage the children have reached, nor what they need to do next to improve. Two parents evenings are held each year and the school's 'open-door' policy offers parents ample opportunity to discuss any concerns with the school staff. Overall, the quality of information provided and the ready access for parents are good.

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

35. The leadership provided for the school by the headteacher is excellent. She has a very clear vision of the purposes of the school, and of how it should develop. Her skills in sharing that vision with staff, governors and parents are first rate, and lead to a unity of purpose that has become the 'Clarkson way'. Her approach is positive, sensitive and firm, and thoughtful and considerate. She ensures that the best interests of the pupils are the over-riding ethic for the school's work. Every aspect of the school's work is carefully considered, and developments are thoroughly planned. The headteacher is very well supported by the strong and committed senior managers, and by the hardworking and receptive staff. The deputy headteacher has helped effectively to promote good initiatives for the extension of the curriculum, and for the development of staff.

36. The governors meet their statutory duties well. The chair and vice-chair are informed, appropriately critical, and committed to the school and the welfare of all within it. They share the values of the headteacher and staff, and work individually and collectively to the benefit of the school. During the inspection, a number of the governors were noted working in support of teachers, and providing general help. Many visit the school regularly, and they know what is happening. The governors, like the senior staff, are involved very effectively in the monitoring processes. They know the school's strengths, and the aspects that could be improved, and are active in its overall development.

37. The leadership is conscious of the need to ensure that the best value for money is gained from its purchases. A recent increase in the numbers of learning support staff and time given to their training, have followed on from some careful planning based on an educational priority. The investment is paying good dividends in terms of support for the pupils and increasing their rate of progress. The governors are also not averse to doing jobs around the school themselves, such as planting hedges, if they consider they can do it more cheaply than a contractor. Specific grants are used very effectively to pursue initiatives, or to provide additional support, for example, for information technology and special educational needs. The overspend indicated in the 1999 finance data is due to an error created by the local authority's accounting, which cannot be corrected until the next statement of accounts. By careful planning, the school actually achieved a small underspend in 1999 of one and a half per cent of its basic budget.

38. The administrative assistants are very efficient. They ensure that the headteacher and staff are well supported in the day-to-day work of the school. Other non-teaching staff, including the site-manager, support the school very well. The level of staffing is very good. The accommodation is clean, tidy and welcoming, and the grounds are well maintained and attractive. The learning resources are good in range and quality, and are efficiently and effectively used.

39. The school has made further considerable improvements since the favourable report of the last inspection. Excellent leadership, and careful planning have led to the successful introduction of a range of local and national initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy strategies. These initiatives continue to have positive effects on the quality of education provided by the school and on the standards that the pupils are achieving. Along with other improvements, they significantly advance the limited range of skills that the children generally have on entry to the nursery class. Standards in the national tests have also risen, and are now in line with the national average and above that of schools of similar intake. Bearing all these factors in mind, it is clear that the school provides very good value for money.

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

40. The inspection noted no major areas for improvement, but there are aspects of the school's work that should be considered for development, in order to raise standards and the quality of education to higher levels.
- review of the time allocation for religious education to raise standards further.  
**(Paragraph: 98)**
  - Improve further the annual reports to parents about their children's progress by indicating levels of attainment, and by providing appropriate targets for future improvement;  
**(Paragraph: 32)**
  - clarify for parents the school's homework policy.  
**(Paragraph: 32)**

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	27
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	18

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4.1	29.2	50.0	16.7	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	43	185
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	54

FTE means full-time equivalent.

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	13	45

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	5.4

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2
National comparative data	0.5

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	1999	30	32	62

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	24	26	29
	Girls	26	30	27
	Total	50	56	56
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	80 (73)	91 (89)	90 (82)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	26	28	27
	Girls	28	29	28
	Total	54	57	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	87 (69)	92 (72)	89 (83)
	National	82 (81)	86 (85)	87 (86)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	2
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	183
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 – Y2**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	28.3
Average class size	30.8

**Education support staff: YR – Y2**

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	284

**Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.5

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	104

Number of pupils per FTE adult	7.2
--------------------------------	-----

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	1998/9
----------------	--------

	£
Total income	409049
Total expenditure	417967
Expenditure per pupil	2236
Balance brought forward from previous year	8863
Balance carried forward to next year	-55

Figures provided to school at end of year not correct, due to LEA error. Actual **underspend**: 5527 pounds.

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	228
Number of questionnaires returned	59

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	24	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	80	20	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	75	22	3	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	44	2	2	14
The teaching is good.	88	10	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	69	20	10	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	12	0	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	17	0	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	69	29	0	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	90	10	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	78	17	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	29	14	0	20

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The returns indicate that parents are generally very supportive of the school. A percentage of the parents who indicated that they 'Don't know' have children in the nursery for whom homework and extra activities are not yet applicable. The inspection found that the school's homework policy is good, and the findings do not uphold the parents' views. However, there is a need for the school to make the homework policy clear to parents, and to define what constitutes homework. The range of additional activities provided by the school is good. The inspection findings do not uphold the parents' views that these are limited. The information provided for parents is generally very good. However, the parents would be helped to gain a clearer insight into how their children are doing if the annual reports on progress indicated attainment levels, and proposed targets for the child's future development.

### **Other issues raised by parents**

There were no other issues.

## **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**

41. At the time of the inspection, there were 118 children under the age of five in the nursery classes and the reception class. The children in the nursery classes are following the appropriate foundation curriculum for the early years while a proportion of those in the reception class are already participating in aspects of the curriculum for Key Stage 1. The standards the children achieve by the end of the foundation stage of learning are generally in line with expectations for this stage. Many children enter the school with below average skills but make very good progress in important areas of learning by the time they begin the statutory curriculum. This is due to the very skilled and sensitive teaching of these young children. Provision has improved since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be good.

#### **Personal and social development**

42. The children are welcomed into a well-ordered, supportive and caring environment. Where a minority begin school with under-developed social skills, a consistent effort is made to engage their interest in activities and foster their ability to work and play independently or collaboratively, as appropriate. They quickly learn to sit together as a group listening to stories and taking turns to answer questions. During outdoor play, they wait their turn to use wheeled vehicles or swings. Inside and outside the classroom, they quickly develop a sense of how to move around safely, and they are aware of the safety of others. They enjoy helping to keep the classroom tidy, and all cheerfully carry out their responsibility for tidying up as an integral part of their activities. They behave very well in response to the clearly articulated expectations of the adults, and their very positive approach to each child as an individual.

#### **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY**

43. A significant proportion of the children have under-developed speaking skills when they join the nursery classes. They quickly learn to listen to questions and answer logically. With adult help, they develop a satisfactory level of dialogue during role-play activities, and they enjoy using puppets to make up their own stories. They enjoy singing and reciting rhymes and generally articulate them clearly. A few children have well below average speaking skills, but they are well supported, and make good progress in developing their diction. Careful, well-structured teaching helps the children to understand that writing carries meaning. They are increasingly able to form the letters in their own name, and can use initial attempts at writing to record "messages", for example, at the "hospital" reception desk. A small minority are making a good attempt to write simple sentences to accompany drawings. The children are also confidently developing their early reading skills. The children know that pages are turned from right to left, and that print moves from left to right. A few of the older children can recognise the words that occur most frequently in simple reading texts. The majority of the children are well on course to attain the early learning goals identified for them.

#### **Mathematics**

44. The children are making good progress in counting to five and a few can count beyond that number. Many can match objects to numerals and are beginning to acquire an early sense of addition and subtraction as they count forwards and backwards. Some of the children can associate these activities with the language of "more" or "less", "bigger" and "smaller". Their confidence grows as they use their fingers to count, and use small plastic objects, such as vehicles, to sort into sets according to number or colour. Water and sand play ensure that they gain an understanding of capacity as they fill sifting "machines", diggers or water containers. The children at all levels are encouraged to use mathematical language and to develop an understanding of how mathematics

permeates everyday life. The majority is well set to achieve the early learning goals by the age of five. A few, in the reception class, will exceed them.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

45. The children are making good progress in using computers to support their work. They use programs effectively to aid the development of numeracy, sound and letter recognition, and others which develop their understanding of position and of matching. For example, a child was seen speaking very competently about where furniture should be placed in a house on the computer screen. They are developing a sound sense of the past through sequencing their babyhood, the toddler stage and their entry to school. They begin to appreciate that plants, insects and other animals need certain conditions to live. They use construction equipment well to learn how to join materials. Some of the older under-fives cut and join materials such as card and paper to produce large and small flowers. They carefully observe and record weather patterns. The children show a high level of interest in the wide range of practical activities in which they engage. These also have a powerful influence on the development of their speaking skills.

### **Physical development**

46. By the end of the foundation stage, the children's physical development is good. Through activities in art and writing and the manipulation of glue spreaders and scissors, they learn to develop their fine manipulative skills. They move with confidence and control during lessons in the hall. They are developing appropriate skills when throwing and catching balls, or when climbing on outdoor apparatus. They generally have a well-developed awareness of the use of space. This was seen, for example, as the children danced with a partner and carefully navigated their way around the hall. During outdoor play, many children are capable of sustained physical effort as they pedal their trikes and navigate toy tractors. The quality of outdoor play has improved since the last inspection. Plans to develop it further by providing a challenging track, together with a greater use of paired vehicles, are currently under discussion. The adults have a very good level of awareness of the importance of physical development and are committed to ensuring that as many children as possible exceed the early learning skill levels.

### **Creative development**

47. The children have many opportunities for developing their creative skills. In a number of areas, they are set to exceed the goals identified for the end of the foundation stage. They are imaginative in their use of colour for painting, and in the selection of materials for collage work. This is due to the very good resources provided, and the way the children are encouraged to make informed choices. They enjoy singing and often accompany it with untuned percussion instruments. The home corner is well adapted to provide a range of settings for a variety of role-play activities such as a café, a hospital or a post office. During the inspection, the children's experience was enriched by a visit from a parent, an ambulance officer, who brought along a range of paramedical equipment for them to explore. The whole environment of the classrooms is very stimulating and conducive to developing the children's imagination.
48. The teaching is of a high standard. The adults have a very good understanding of the needs of young children. They have planned an interesting, well balanced curriculum to cover all areas of learning and to ensure that children have opportunities to meet the learning goals identified nationally. The learning environment is attractive and the activities are very well managed. The children, a significant proportion of whom have identified special needs, are very well supported. The adults are devoted to promoting all aspects of the welfare of the children, but also have appropriately high expectations of what they can achieve. They have a good recognition of the role of parents as partners in education. Several parents regularly support the work in the classroom. The children's progress is closely tracked. This contributes to the successful transition they make into the Key Stage 1 curriculum with its greater demands on children's concentration skills, and the more formal recording of work.

49. The children enjoy coming to school. They leave their accompanying adults confidently and settle without fuss to the routines of the classroom. They cheerfully move from activity to activity, and eagerly undertake new tasks which challenge their capabilities.

## ENGLISH

50. Standards of attainment in English are good. Some aspects such as spelling, punctuation and handwriting are very strong. This is an improvement since the school was last inspected, when standards were judged to be generally in line with national expectations. The use of English across the curriculum is a strong feature. The pupils express their ideas clearly and write with a considerable degree of accuracy. Through careful planning, using the national guidelines for developing literacy, the school has devised a very well considered strategy for fostering the pupils' literacy skills. The trend over the last four years shows evidence of continued improvement in the standards that pupils achieve in both reading and writing. In comparison with similar schools, attainment in reading is close to the national average but, in writing, it is above average. This sustained improvement is a tribute to the consistency with which teachers throughout the school are implementing its literacy policy.
51. The results of the national tests and assessments in 1999, show that the pupils at seven years of age achieved slightly below the national average in reading but the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels was similar to the national picture. In this cohort of pupils there was an unusually high number of pupils with specific reading difficulties. In writing, however, standards were higher than those achieved nationally. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 was well above the national average. This was due to a very careful review of the pupils' writing needs and a consequent decision to provide additional support in order to raise standards. There was no discernible difference in the performance of boys and girls.
52. The inspection findings confirm that standards in writing are good and sometimes very good. Standards in reading are wholly satisfactory with a proportion of children reading at above the average standard. Most of the pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing sound phonic skills which they apply when they encounter new words. The pupils are confident when splitting up words into their component parts and also use picture cues effectively. A good proportion of the pupils develop a satisfactory, and improving, level of fluency and expressiveness during Year 2. Their comprehension of what they read is progressing well. The school pays good attention to developing the basic reading skills of lower attaining pupils. Good quality individual support is having a very positive impact on improving the basic skills of pupils who are hesitant readers.
53. The real strength of the teaching of English is the way writing skills are fostered. From the very earliest stage there is a clear recognition of the importance of children's early attempts at writing. They are valued and encouraged, and by the time they leave the school, the majority of pupils have a very secure grasp of the basic mechanics of writing. They also make very good progress in developing a legible, neat, handwriting style. They progress naturally from writing separate letters to joining letters. Standards in spelling are good, supported by regular practice during writing and reading sessions. Although the pupils sequence stories well and write clear accounts of factual events, the school recognises that it now needs to enlarge the pupils' vocabulary and enrich the overall quality of their expression.
54. The pupils' listening skills are very good. When questioned, they demonstrate that they have listened very well to stories read to them. They show that they understand text, but at times, their speaking skills limit their ability to give full and lively answers.
55. The teaching of English overall is good, and there is a significant proportion that is of very high quality. The teachers are clear about what they want pupils to learn in each lesson, even though they do not always share their intentions with the pupils. Activities to develop language are well structured and managed, and there is a good balance of opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing. Occasionally, activities to develop grammar and sentence building skills are somewhat limited for the higher attainers. The pace of work is brisk so time is very well used in

most lessons. The pupils are well supported by adults, and the very good relationships ensure an excellent climate for learning. The pupils' work is regularly marked. For instance, the pupils often undertake unaided pieces of writing, at the end of which the teachers make useful comments to help them improve their work.

56. The pupils show a high level of interest in their work. They concentrate well and work hard to present their work neatly.
57. The co-ordinator for English has a very good understanding of the National Literacy Strategy. She has provided good support for staff and, together with the headteacher, regularly monitors the teachers' planning and samples of the pupils' work. She has a clear understanding of priorities for future developments, and rightly identifies provision to further support reading as being appropriate at this time.

## **MATHEMATICS**

58. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards in mathematics match expectations, and have been maintained since the last inspection. Scrutiny of samples of pupils' work and lesson observations show that pupils make good progress in their learning in most lessons throughout the school. Results of the 1999 tests showed standards were broadly in line with the national average and with those of similar schools.
59. The teaching of mathematics is good overall and supports the pupils' learning well. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, and supports the pupils' learning well. Lessons are well-structured and planned to match the differing abilities of the pupils. The close partnership between the teachers and the learning support assistants is especially beneficial and ensures that all pupils are able to achieve in a very supportive and encouraging atmosphere. The development of the pupils' numeracy skills is a particularly strong feature of the provision and the pupils are given many opportunities to reinforce and use their knowledge of number operations. The National Numeracy Strategy is being successfully implemented alongside a published scheme of work. This is helping the teachers to achieve a more balanced mathematics curriculum, with practical and investigative mathematics being increasingly emphasised. Less time than previously is spent on workbook-based tasks and the benefits are clear in the pupils' good understanding and use of mathematical vocabulary. However there are still insufficient opportunities for older pupils to solve mathematical problems and this sometimes limits the attainment of higher achieving pupils in this aspect.
60. The pupils in the reception class have very well-established knowledge and understanding of number and number patterns. Many of them confidently count in tens to one hundred, and use their fingers to give rapid answers to increasingly complex addition sums. They have a good understanding of numbers that come 'before', 'after' and 'between' others and understand and use the terms 'shorter', 'longer' and 'taller' correctly. This very good start is built upon efficiently throughout Key Stage 1. Consequently, by the time pupils are seven they have a thorough working knowledge of more complex number patterns and operations, including multiplication. They are beginning to use these skills in other subjects, such as measuring in non-standard and standard units in science experiments.
61. The school is developing formal systems of assessing the pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics in a satisfactorily and manageable way. The teachers have a very good understanding of the mathematics curriculum and use informal assessment methods effectively to alter the pace and pitch of lessons. End of lesson sessions are often used well to consolidate and extend the learning to give the pupils some idea of how they are doing. Mathematics homework is set regularly for the same purpose. The teachers use good questioning techniques that challenge pupils of all abilities. These factors, and excellent working relationships ensure that the pupils remain involved and interested in lessons. The pupils are expected to organise themselves quickly in lessons, and they do so promptly. They work hard and feel secure to 'have a go' at new learning. The lessons are generally conducted at a good pace and this adds to the excitement that the pupils often show in their own learning, their very positive attitudes and behaviour.

62. The co-ordinator has worked steadily to support teachers in the implementation of the numeracy strategy who now display increasing confidence in their planning and teaching. The coordinator has a sound understanding of her role and is working hard towards achieving termly targets in order to develop provision and improve standards further across the school. All criticisms in the previous report have been addressed soundly.

## SCIENCE

63. Standards in science match the national expectations for this age group. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when the pupils' attainment at the age of seven was below national expectations. It was a key issue of the last report. The assessment results over the period from 1997 show a steady rise to satisfactory levels in 1999. The inspection findings confirm this good improvement, and note from scrutiny of the pupils' work, that it continues.
64. The reason for the significant rise in standards is twofold. A deputy headteacher has since been appointed who has taken responsibility for the science curriculum, and a revised policy and new scheme of work have been introduced. Consequently, the aims for learning in science have become more firmly established in the teachers' practice. Their planning of lessons is more focused, and the activities provided for the pupils are more rigorous at each stage. In addition, the Deputy Head, in his role of subject coordinator, has provided very good support for the staff, and increased their confidence. His running of an innovatory after school science club for the older pupils has also had a good impact, especially in developing the investigative aspects of the subject.
65. The purposeful activities in the nursery, for example of weather recording, the use of a variety of materials, and the studies of plants and animals are extended effectively when the pupils start on the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. By the time they are seven, the pupils have a sound knowledge of a range of living things and what is necessary to their survival. They also gain a great deal of knowledge about health and what is needed to maintain it, through their involvement in a 'Healthy Living' project. The pupils have a good knowledge of a range of materials and their properties, and most can name gravity and friction as natural forces and compare them with forces produced by machines. They can carry out experiments on the changes brought about by forces and explain some of the differences. Their knowledge of what constitutes a 'fair test' is extending, and they are beginning to recognise some of the criteria essential to the process. The pupils record their observations well, and they use appropriate vocabulary when discussing scientific phenomena. Their literacy and numeracy skills are also put to good use in their studies in science. The majority of the pupils write clear explanations of what they observe. Most of them can create tally charts, and some understand and use the degrees of angle when noting their observations of the incline of a slope. They also understand the effect of angle on the distance a vehicle will travel, in their experiments on friction. The pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills in science are being promoted well and standards are rising steadily.
66. The teaching of science is generally good. It promotes the pupils' learning effectively, and ensures the good progress of all, including those pupils with special educational needs. Lessons are interesting and are managed well. The resources are used effectively and the pupils are encouraged appropriately to share these and their findings from experiments. The pupils' ideas about what happens in experiments are fostered, and this gives them confidence and extends their level of effort. The pupils respond well to the tasks they are set. They are interested and lively, but behave very well, even when they become excited. They work hard.
67. While the development of the science curriculum is going on apace, and this good development is ensuring the good progress of the pupils at all stages, the school should consider encouraging the teachers to use the pupils' ideas more. In order to raise standards further, there is a need to invite the pupils to provide ideas on how investigations and experiments can be carried out, and to give

greater attention to asking the questions “What?” and “How?” so that the quality of their thinking as scientists is extended.

68. Procedures for the assessment and recording of the pupils' progress of science are being carefully evolved. The coordinator has monitored the teaching in each classroom, and has used the observations to focus his support. Sound plans are in hand for the further development of these aspects. The pupils in Year 2 participate in a residential extra-curricular activity. It includes environmental studies that not only develop their knowledge and understanding in science, but also enhances their spiritual development very effectively.

## **ART**

69. Standards in art are above expectations. This is similar to the situation during the last inspection. The pupils make good progress and develop firm skills in the use of various media. At all stages, they work individually to produce interesting and lively pictures and models, and sometimes collectively to produce large, striking images that grace the displays around the school. The latter can be of a bird or a tree, in which the efforts of each pupil in a class are combined to build the overall effect. The pupils produce their work with care, and with attention to detail, and the quality of the work is good. Much of the work appropriately illustrates a topic or theme being followed in other areas of the curriculum, or to illustrate a topic or theme being followed.
70. In the lessons seen the teaching was good. The lessons are well planned and efficiently organised, and provide good opportunities for the pupils to express their own ideas, whilst keeping a firm eye on the development of their skills. The classroom assistants help well in these activities. The teaching encourages the pupils' sense of purpose, and ensures that they approach their work maturely and conscientiously. The resources are used carefully, and good attention is given to ensuring the pupils have experience of the work of famous artists. They study particular pictures and then use similar techniques in their own work. Good images are produced in this way, for example, in work on Africa.
71. The pupils are interested in their work in art, and show pride in their own efforts. They share ideas and readily acknowledge the efforts of others. They often become oblivious to other activities going on around them as they concentrate hard. Art adds effectively to the spiritual dimension of the pupils' development, advancing their creativity and craftsmanship well. It is also used well to demonstrate the school's determination to ensure that the pupils are enriched in their learning experiences by adding a wide ranging and stimulating cultural dimension.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

72. No design and technology lessons were seen during the inspection. Evidence gained from work on display, and other samples of pupils' work, including photographs indicates that pupils make good progress, and achieve standards that match expectations. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.
73. The adoption of the local authority scheme as a basis for teaching has given the teachers increased confidence in their approach to the subject. Their planning indicates that design and technology is taught regularly across the school. The time allocated to it gives the pupils worthwhile experiences that often enrich their knowledge of topics and festivals. The teachers' planning techniques have developed well in the past year. Their expectations are high.
74. The pupils work in a variety of scales, using a suitable range of materials. The resulting products are carefully and appropriately decorated. The youngest pupils draw and follow their own plans, and select tools and materials with confidence to make 'longer' and 'shorter' trees, for example, effectively building upon their work in mathematics. The pupils develop their skills of measuring and sawing well to cut equal pieces of wood, for example when making wood pictures and patterns. The oldest pupils designed a Millennium Bug, thinking carefully about its features before drawing it and

then making it, using a range of textiles. These are very imaginative, carefully made and finished and the pupils are proud of them.

75. The co-ordinator has recently produced a draft policy of good quality, which gives teachers good guidance and support. Design and technology is a rapidly developing area of the school's work. Despite its low priority in the school development plan, teachers are committed to maintaining its provision, and are well placed to develop it further.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

76. The pupils make good progress in geography and achieve standards that are satisfactory, and improving. This is an advance since the previous inspection, where progress was satisfactory. The improvement is largely due to the skilful way in which the curriculum is planned to integrate geographical themes in an interesting and meaningful way within each topic. Each topic is based on the pupils' own environment, and extended so that they learn about wider issues, such as pollution, or what it is like to live in another place.
77. Almost no classroom-based geography lessons were seen, but work on walls and in pupils' books informed judgements as well as discussions with the pupils. The youngest pupils learn about 'people who help us' both in and outside school. This is made vivid for them by visits from the fire brigade and police. During the inspection, a paramedic brought an ambulance to school and talked about his job. The pupils were fascinated and excited by the experience and asked relevant and sensible questions, thus advancing their learning very well. Geography topics are brought alive by field trips, including a residential experience. During the inspection an inspector accompanied Year 1 pupils on a Wisbech town trail, which brought together many aspects of work they had done in school. During the visit they conducted a survey of shops and services. On their return they talked about what they did and did not like about their environment, comparing it with other places they had visited. The pupils made very firm gains in learning. Throughout the venture, the pupils were interested, involved, and very well behaved. A strong contributory factor was the thorough preparation made by teachers, including the briefing of the numerous volunteer helpers.
78. At the end of Key Stage 1 pupils have sound knowledge of some landscape forms and weather patterns and are aware, through stories, maps and photographs, of places further away. Although geography is only taught for an intensive short period each year teachers ensure that many geography skills are developed soundly throughout the year through other subjects.
79. The teachers take many opportunities to develop their pupils' awareness sensitively through geography, as when they were encouraged to respond to the pungent smell of plants in the town's 'blind garden'. The teaching of geography is supported well by the coordinator's good management, which ensures the pupils' good progress. The geography curriculum continues to develop steadily, and in a purposeful and focused way.

## **HISTORY**

80. No history lessons were observed during the inspection. The teachers' planning seen, together with records of earlier work in history, suggest that the pupils now make good progress in developing their understanding of changes over time, and of the way evidence can be drawn from a range of sources, such as local people and buildings. The pupils also recognise that key people have influenced the course of history. Aspects of the pupils' historical knowledge and understanding were found to be wanting at the last inspection. A careful review of the programme of work, including the teaching approaches to be used, has led to considerable improvements in the progress the pupils now make.

81. The youngest children make good progress in recognising changes in themselves since they were born. They successfully sequence events such as their birth, their increasing mobility as toddlers, and their entry into the school. Many effectively apply this early understanding of the passage of time to order other events chronologically, such as the progress of the school day, or events in the lives of their own families. Their understanding is enhanced during Years 1 and 2 to include events which are further apart in time, or which took place in the more distant past. The oldest pupils are developing a good level of knowledge of their own local history. They know that their school is named after Thomas Clarkson, a local resident who played a prominent role alongside William Wilberforce in the abolition of slavery. A friend of the school has supplied books and photographs to enhance the pupils' understanding of local life within her living memory. They recognise how famous people such as Queen Elizabeth the First, Guy Fawkes and Samuel Pepys have influenced the course of history.
82. It was not possible to judge the teaching at first hand. However, the volume and variety of records of the pupils' work suggest that at all levels the quality of teaching is good. The objectives outlined in the National Curriculum programme are very well supported by planning which emphasises the importance of first hand experiences and the fostering of the pupils' ability to draw evidence from people, photographs and visits. The teachers use the local resources available to them, such as Wisbech Museum and Octavia Hill's house, to very good effect. Particularly good use is made of stories such as "Magic Grandad" and "Grandma's Bill" to enhance the young pupils' recognition of the passage of time. An "Old Time Music Hall" experience, and an event involving local elderly residents in burying a Millennium time capsule have provided highlights in the development of the pupils' concept of the importance of the past in relation to the present and the future.
83. Photographic records of the children at work, and the care and effort involved in the presentation of work provide very firm evidence of the pupils' interest in, and enjoyment of, their work in history. Methods of assessing their progress are, as yet, informal but teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to plan tasks which match their needs. The subject is enthusiastically and imaginatively led by the co-ordinator.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

84. No whole class lessons in information technology were seen during the inspection. The judgements are based on a scrutiny of work samples, and on watching and talking to pupils as they worked, either alone or with the support of a teacher or learning support assistant. The standard of work in information technology is in line with the expected level at the end of Key Stage 1. The pupils are equally confident and competent in all aspects of the learning programme. This marks an improvement since the previous inspection, where attainment in word processing was found to be less secure, and progress was sound. Progress is now good throughout the school. This is largely due to the use of a well-constructed, and very supportive school scheme of work that has increased the confidence and enjoyment of staff in teaching the subject.
85. There are sufficient computers in each classroom for the pupils to have regular access to support and extend their learning, particularly in literacy and mathematics. The reception children use simulation programmes and games to promote recognition of initial sounds. With support they word process simple sentences using capital letters and full stops. They change screens and make choices confidently as they work, and have accurate control of the mouse and key changes. In these respects standards are high. At Key Stage 1, pupils increase their word processing skills well, such as when they write group poems and stories. They improve the text and edit it to correct spelling and punctuation so that with help they can print out a perfect copy. Sometimes they change the size, colour and font for added interest and impact. In this they receive very good support that encourages them to concentrate and work very hard, combining intellectual and creative energy. The pupils make good progress. Computers are also being used increasingly effectively to support learning in history and geography through the use of CD ROMS and data bases. The pupils control the robot 'Pixie' with confidence, and work very well collaboratively to program it to reach a target. This is aiding their language development, as they have to debate, in technical terms, the sequence of input.

86. The teachers' planning closely follows the scheme of work and states clearly what the pupils are to learn. The teachers adapt the scheme carefully, choosing activities according to the needs and interests of their pupils.
87. The co-ordinator has devised a simple assessment record, which effectively matches individual attainment with experiences. This is kept where the pupils can see it, and it gives them a good overview of how well they are doing, and what they will be learning next. This system indicates to pupils the high expectations the teachers have for their achievements. The coordinator has worked hard to help staff develop their confidence and knowledge. Despite the pressures of national initiatives she is maintaining a sound management role, and provision and standards in information technology are developing well. The coordinator has a replacement plan to gradually update hardware over the next three years. This, combined with planned teacher training through the New Opportunities Fund should enhance provision and contribute to rising standards.

## **MUSIC**

88. At the last inspection, the provision for music was good, and standards were higher than they are now. There is no longer a specialist member of staff to teach music, due to financial restraints, and the need to concentrate on other aspects of curriculum development has caused music to take a lower priority in the overall provision. The school is keenly aware of this and is proposing to remedy the situation when it can.
89. Music is timetabled for all classes. In the very few lessons seen during the inspection the teaching was very good. An interesting sequence of activities purposefully developed the pupils' music making and listening skills, and the pace of work was brisk. The activities were planned well and gave the pupils opportunities to sing, play percussion instruments, and to move to music. They maintained control over their instruments well, playing in all the right places.
90. The pupils sing tunefully, and with obvious enjoyment. They listen well and follow instructions carefully. Their behaviour during lessons and assemblies, when music is played for listening, is excellent. They recognise some famous composers. Nevertheless, the depth of musical activities is limited. Compared to art, and other creative aspects of the curriculum, the school has not managed to sustain the good levels of achievement that it had previously. There are fewer possibilities for the pupils to compose their own pieces, and to use music as a means of expression, and for developing their own ideas. Both provision and standards are now satisfactory. The school is adequately resourced with tuned and un-tuned instruments, including an electronic keyboard.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

91. Physical education is taught well and the standards the pupils achieve are generally good. They exceed the expectations for the age range. This is similar to the picture found during the last inspection. The school has maintained standards efficiently.
92. The pupils are able to run, jump, roll, maintain balance, and stop on command with progressively increasing skills. They can climb, move along and through apparatus, and jump from it paying good attention to style and safety. They use space well during indoor physical education lessons, and in the playground during playtimes. Some are learning to skip with a rope, and show improving technique as they practice. The pupils' throwing and catching skills are generally well developed.
93. The teaching is often imaginative. It ensures the pupils safety in physical tasks, but provides good levels of challenge so that they are encouraged to extend, to refine and to improve their work. The pace of lessons is brisk, and a good range of activities is covered in a single session. The pupils are required to consider carefully what they are doing, and good use is made of demonstrations by them to illustrate what can be done, and the quality required. A very positive feature of one lesson seen

was that the pupils were required to set out the apparatus for part of the lesson. They did this well, and with a very high level of maturity and common sense. Although the teacher appropriately checked the safety of the linking of the apparatus, one pupil took it upon himself to double check.

94. The coordinator for physical education is knowledgeable, committed and skilled. She expects high standards and has a very positive impact on standards in physical education through the good support and encouragement she provides for colleagues.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

95. It was possible to observe only one lesson of religious education during the inspection. Other sources of evidence include discussion with the co-ordinator, a governor and a scrutiny of planning and resources. There was no written work available, therefore, no secure judgement on either standards or progress over time is possible. However, the school had heeded the recommendation of the last inspection to produce a scheme of work. This has been rigorously undertaken and the school has a good foundation upon which to build its work.
96. In the one lesson seen, the pupils' attainment was above average. The pupils in Year 2 recall very well the features of their local church. They confidently talk about the symbolism of various objects in the church, such as the eagle on the lectern. They know about some of the principal liturgical festivals of the church, and are gaining a satisfactory understanding of the role of church leaders, and the place of religious buildings in the lives of believers who worship there. Through links with the Salvation Army, the pupils have some understanding of the good works carried out by religious groups.
97. The teaching seen was of high quality, underpinned by a good level of knowledge and a commitment to religious education as a core subject. The recent review of planning has been very thorough and covers all the areas identified in the locally agreed syllabus suitable for Key Stage 1 pupils and for the youngest children. The church visit was clearly well planned and managed, and had fired the pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
98. A very good range of resources in the form of artefacts and books has been acquired. Aspects of religious education are delivered through lessons other than those that are discretely identified for the subject. However, a review of the use of time is now required in order to ensure that aspects of the well-planned syllabus are fully covered.
99. There is a genuine commitment to the further development of this subject. A recent review has included staff and governors, and the school is making good use of the advice provided by agencies outside the school. Planning for the summer term appropriately includes not only the further development of the pupils' knowledge of Christianity, but also elements of Judaism in accordance with the local syllabus.