

INSPECTION REPORT

CHALFONT ST PETER INFANT SCHOOL

Gerrards Cross

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110269

Headteacher: Ms Jean Cornes

Reporting inspector: Mr George Crowther
18814

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 3rd February 2000

Inspection number: 191732

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to 7
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address	Lovel End Chalfont St Peter Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Joy McCulloch
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Crowther	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Mathematics; Information technology; Design and technology; Physical education; Equal opportunities.	What sort of school is it? The schools results and achievements. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
Vivienne Phillips	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Paul Ducker	<i>Team inspector</i>	Under fives; Science; Geography; History; English as an additional language.	How well is the school led and managed?
Valerie Roberts	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Religious education; Art; Music; Special educational needs.	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Chalfont St Peter is a medium-sized community infant school for boys and girls four to seven years old. It has 140 full-time pupils. Numbers have fallen since the last inspection because the school lost its Year 3 pupils, owing to a change in the age of transfer. Socio-economic data suggest that the circumstances of the families in the area are about the same as national averages, though the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Taken together, pupils' attainment on entry is typical of that found nationally. Thirty-nine pupils have been identified as having special educational needs, of whom one has a statement. The proportion of pupils needing additional support is about average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and only two have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Chalfont St Peter is an effective school in a number of ways. It fulfils its aim to provide a secure, caring environment in which pupils can learn. Relationships between all members of the school community are a strength. The teaching is sound overall, and there are strengths in science and design and technology, which result in high standards. In English and mathematics, standards of attainment are comparable to national averages, but not as high as they could be. This is because teaching does not always have the pace and challenge to ensure that all pupils make the best progress of which they are capable. Nonetheless, pupils make sound progress during their time at the school. The staff and governors work well together and are improving a number of aspects of the school, but there is not enough emphasis on raising pupils' attainment. The school provides sound value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Science and design and technology are well taught and pupils achieve high standards.
- The school provides an environment in which pupils' good attitudes to work and their very good behaviour support their learning well.
- Good provision for pupils with special educational needs enables them to make sound progress towards their targets.
- The school provides an outstanding range and quality of extra-curricular activities.
- The school has a very caring approach to all aspects of pupils' welfare.
- The school has very good links with parents, who support the school and their children's learning very well.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- In some lessons, teaching does not have sufficient pace and challenge to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Attainment is not high enough in information technology.
- The school does not monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning carefully enough, so that weaknesses are identified and standards raised.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION

When it was inspected last in January 1997, Chalfont St Peter was found to provide a good standard of education. Since then, the school has sustained its strengths in the calm, positive environment it provides for pupils' learning, the support it offers for pupils' personal development, and the good teaching that is a feature of many lessons. Results achieved by the pupils in national tests at the age of seven have improved in reading and mathematics, and improved considerably in writing. Most of the action points from the last inspection have been tackled, but school development planning is still not sufficiently detailed, nor clearly focused enough on raising standards.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by seven year olds based on average points scores in National Curriculum tests:

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
reading	C	C	C	C
writing	E	E	C	C
mathematics	B	D	C	C

<i>Key</i>	
<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>average</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

The grades used to compare the school's results with those of similar schools have been changed. The original comparative grades suggested that the school's results were below average compared with similar schools. The judgement of the inspection team is that the original comparison is not a fair reflection of the area served by the school or pupils' attainment on entry.

By the age of five, most pupils reach the standards expected nationally. Inspection evidence shows attainment in the current Year 2 class to be average in English and mathematics, and above average in science. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are average throughout the school. Attainment in religious education meets that expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. Standards in information technology are below national expectations: pupils have sound basic skills, but do not have sufficient experience of some aspects of the subject, for example handling information. Standards in design and technology are better than those expected for pupils' ages. In all other subjects, standards are close to those expected for pupils' ages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good attitudes to school; they are interested in their work and are keen to offer their ideas.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good in all situations; they know the rules and respond well to the good role models provided by the staff.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and teachers are very good; pupils grow in confidence during their time at the school.
Attendance	Well above the national average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	sound	sound

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; sound; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Sound' means that strengths outweigh any weaknesses.

Teaching was at least sound in 93 per cent of the lessons observed. In 5 per cent of lessons it was very good; in 37 per cent of lessons it was good or better; it was less than satisfactory in 7 per cent. Teaching has a number of strengths, particularly the effective range of strategies used and the very good management of pupils' behaviour. In some lessons, however, teachers' planning is not precise enough, or tasks lack challenge, or the pace of learning is too slow. Teaching of science and design and technology is particularly good, and literacy and numeracy are both taught soundly. Teaching generally meets the needs of all pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Sound: the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, with strengths in science and design and technology; aspects of information technology are not covered sufficiently; extra-curricular activities are outstanding in range and quality.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: work is well matched to pupils' needs in lessons and they receive good support from adults.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: provision for pupils' personal development is within the fabric of the day-to-day life of the school, and is supported by very good relationships; provision for pupils' social and moral development is particularly strong; sound provision for spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides very good care and support for its pupils through the good relationships it enjoys with families and a range of effective policies and procedures; procedures for monitoring pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection, but the information is not used consistently enough to improve learning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a very strong partnership with parents, which supports children's learning very well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Sound: the school achieves many of its aims, particularly those related to providing a secure and caring environment for pupils' learning; there is insufficient focus on raising attainment.
How well the governing body fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body provides good support for the school, even though many governors are new to their role; governors visit school regularly and play an appropriate part in deciding priorities for development; their role in assisting the school to monitor and raise attainment is less effective.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There is insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, so that weaknesses can be identified and action taken to seek improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are good.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The school has sufficient staff, who are committed and hard working; the accommodation is spacious and well cared for; learning resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy going to school and make good progress. • Behaviour in the school is good. • Teaching is good. • The school is approachable if parents have problems. • The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best. • The school helps children to become mature and responsible. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant issues were raised by parents.

The great majority of parents are pleased with most aspects of the school's work, and inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views. The school provides a very good range of activities for children outside lessons, and inspectors were surprised that more parents did not recognise this strength on their questionnaire responses.

At their meeting, some parents expressed the view that they would like more specific information about their children's progress. The quality of reports seen during the inspection was judged to be sound, though few suggest targets for future development, which would help parents to play a fuller part in supporting learning. However, teachers are very accessible should parents wish to discuss their children's progress on a more regular basis.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. When children join the reception classes, their attainment is broadly average compared with what is expected nationally. During their time as under fives, they make steady progress in all areas of learning, and good progress in their personal and social development, because the teaching is sound and the curriculum provides a range of appropriate activities. Children settle quickly into routines and work well with each other and with adults. Teaching encourages their confidence, so they concentrate and persevere with tasks, and become increasingly independent. Children develop early skills in language and literacy through good opportunities for stories, rhymes and class discussions. In more formal literacy lessons, they learn letter sounds. They enjoy looking at books, and know that the print carries the story, and higher attainers begin to read simple texts. Most children are able to write their names, and higher attainers write simple sentences independently. In mathematics, most children can count to ten and perform simple calculations, such as 'one more than' or 'two less than'. They understand early concepts of shape and measurement, which are often part of play activities. In all other areas of the curriculum, most of the children have knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical for their ages, and they make sound progress. By the age of five, most children reach the standards expected nationally.

2. In the end of key stage assessments in 1999, results in reading and writing were close to the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 of attainment, and the proportion gaining the higher Level 3, was about the same as the national picture. During the past three years, results in reading have improved slightly, and there has been a marked improvement in writing results since 1997. In mathematics, the 1999 results were also close to the national average. Almost all the pupils reached the expected Level 2 of attainment, which was above the national average and an improvement on previous performance. A fifth of pupils gained the higher Level 3, which was close to the national average and matched the school's performance over the previous two years. Based on teachers' assessments, attainment in science was well above the national average, and results show a steady improvement over recent years.

3. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances suggest that the 1999 results were below average, except in science. However, such comparisons are based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and, for this school, the indicator is not a true reflection of its social circumstances. Very few families inform the school that their children are eligible for free school meals, and the school is aware of a much larger number who would qualify. The fact that no full school meal, only sandwiches, is provided reduces the take up. As a consequence, the school's results are compared with those of schools serving the most affluent areas of the country. When more appropriate comparisons are made, the school's results were average compared with those of similar schools, which represents sound achievement during the key stage.

4. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 is slightly lower than for 1999, because there is a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group than is usual for the school. Nonetheless, attainment in English and mathematics

is close to national expectations, and attainment in science is above national expectations. Pupils' achievements across the key stage are sound, overall, in most subjects, and good in science and design and technology. In information technology, however, pupils do not make enough progress because they spend too little time on the subject and do not cover all the required aspects thoroughly.

5. Pupils with special education needs make sound progress in relation to their initial attainment, and some make good gains, particularly in improving their literacy skills. Tasks in lessons are generally well matched to their needs and help them to meet the targets on their individual educational plans. In the lessons where they receive help from a classroom assistant, these pupils make particularly good progress. In a minority of lessons, planning is insufficiently specific for lower attainers, and pupils with special needs are often amongst the first to lose concentration. There are no significant variations in pupils' achievements by gender.

6. In Year 2, pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally above average. They pay rapt attention when listening to stories, and express their ideas confidently in discussions. They describe clearly the tasks they will do, and give reasons for their choices. Most pupils read independently. Lower attainers recognise the most common vocabulary and can put together simple letter combinations to help themselves with some less familiar words. However, few of these pupils read fluently, with confidence, or readily talk about the content of their books. Higher attainers read with expression and flow. They talk about their books with enthusiasm and their book knowledge is well established. Pupils write for a range of purposes and most are developing the length and quality of their writing. They retell well-known stories, and write letters, poems and simple book reviews. They enhance their stories with simple adjectives and make their ideas clear by using capital letters and full stops appropriately. Higher attainers produce longer stories, with more extended vocabulary. Standards of spelling and presentation of work are satisfactory. Most pupils write in a neat, well-formed script. Pupils have sound literacy skills, but although these are developed well in literacy lessons they are not used and developed sufficiently in other subjects.

7. In mathematics, most pupils in Year 2 work confidently with numbers to 100, for example counting in 2s, 5s and 10s, or ordering numbers. They can carry out a range of simple calculations with numbers and money. Most are beginning to understand the value of digits in larger numbers, though this understanding is insecure in the case of the lower attainers. In their work on symmetry, pupils in the higher-attaining set recognise and describe a good range of two-dimensional shapes, using terms such as 'side' and 'corner'. They rapidly grasp the concept of reflective symmetry, and recognise that some shapes have a number of lines of symmetry. Pupils in the lower-attaining set are still more comfortable with numbers to 20, but they are beginning to understand that 15 is one lot of ten and five units. Pupils' numeracy skills are average, though their mental recall of number facts is weaker than other aspects of their work. Pupils use and develop their numeracy skills effectively in some lessons, for example when measuring ingredients for making bread, but the promotion of numeracy is not planned systematically enough.

8. Attainment in science is above national expectations. In their work about packaging, Year 2 pupils carry out simple experiments to test the properties of writing materials. They discuss what properties the writing material must have, and why, in order to be waterproof. They then test a variety of materials to see if these are water-resistant or remain legible. They understand what is required in planning an investigation and make suitable choices about

how to set up a fair test. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to make predictions, saying whether what happened was what they predicted. They can also explain why some materials are suited to specific purposes, in this case because they are water-resistant. Most of the pupils can explain their ideas using an appropriate range of scientific vocabulary. They can select an appropriate way to record their findings, in a table, chart or Venn diagram, with a clear layout and good labelling.

9. In information technology, pupils make unsatisfactory progress, and attainment is below national expectations. Although pupils have used a number of programs, and their basic keyboard skills are sound, they have had little experience of using information technology to handle data, and no experience of investigating patterns and relationships by using computer models that simulate real or imaginary situations. Pupils do not use information technology enough to support learning in other subjects. Standards in religious education are in line with those expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus, and pupils make sound progress across the key stage, building up their knowledge of Christianity, and developing some awareness of the principal features of other faiths.

10. In design and technology, pupils make good progress across the key stage because they experience a wide range of work and develop their skills to good effect. Teachers are particularly confident and skilled in this subject. By Year 2, attainment exceeds that expected for pupils' ages. In art, pupils develop sound skills in drawing and painting, which complement their work in design and technology. In geography and history, pupils make sound progress, gradually building their knowledge and understanding of other times and places. In physical education, a broad curriculum, enriched by a range of sporting clubs, enables pupils to reach the standards expected by Year 2, with some higher attainment in swimming and dance. Pupils make sound progress in music, and a few pupils begin to learn the recorder.

11. Taken together, the attainment of the pupils when they start school is broadly average. At the end of Key Stage 1, in most subjects, attainment matches that which would be expected for pupils' ages. This represents sound achievement overall, and good achievement in science, where standards have been consistently better than the national picture. Pupils made at least sound progress, overall, in all but three of the lessons observed, though in a number of lessons more progress could have been made if the content and pace of teaching had been more challenging.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have good attitudes to school, and these support their learning and progress. Parents say that their children like coming to school, and the children are clearly happy and secure. Even the youngest children, who had only been in school full-time for a few weeks, showed their confidence and enjoyment in a range of learning activities. In the great majority of the lessons, pupils show interest in their work, even when the content is not particularly exciting or the pace rather slow. In most lessons, pupils are very keen to offer their ideas, as was observed when new stories were discussed in a number of literacy lessons. Teachers encourage pupils to be fully involved. There was real enthusiasm in some lessons, for

example when pupils in Year 1 took part in a number game, and when pupils in Year 2 were involved in football training. Pupils' positive attitudes are also evident in the enjoyment they show when involved in school clubs, such as country dancing, and when explaining to adults what they are doing.

13. Pupils' behaviour is very good in lessons, around school, and in the playground. This supports their learning and the very good relationships between pupils themselves and with staff. Pupils know and understand the rules that are displayed in every classroom, and are happy to comply with them. Staff provide good role models and are helpful, patient and polite, so pupils respond likewise.

14. Behaviour was good in all the lessons observed and very good in many. For example, in a very active design and technology lesson, pupils remained focused on their tasks, and moved around sensibly to collect materials or seek adult support. At one point, a spontaneous silence fell over the classroom, reflecting the way that pupils were absorbed in their work. Even when pupils are waiting for attention, or have finished a task, their behaviour is good. A few of the pupils with special educational needs find consistently good behaviour more challenging, but they often call out or fidget because they are excited about the lesson, rather than because of poor behaviour.

15. Pupils play together happily at break times. Lunchtimes are calm occasions where pupils relate well to one another and show respect for the dinner supervisors who care for them. Parents are pleased with the good standard of behaviour at the school. There are no reported incidences of bullying or inappropriate behaviour. There has been one temporary exclusion during the past year.

16. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are generally as positive as other pupils in their responses to learning. Most persevere willingly, and they take pride in producing work that is as neat as their literacy skills allow. Pupils whose concentration is not established well are helped to stay on track by tactful guidance from support staff. They are well accepted by other pupils in the school.

17. Pupils' personal development is good. Throughout the school, they are confident enough to make their contribution, for example when a Year 1 pupil politely asked the teacher to repeat a question. Teachers encourage this confidence. Pupils work well in pairs and groups, for example when pupils in Year 2 worked on their science experiments in fours. Pupils listen to one another's contributions tolerantly and recognise others' successes. They also enjoy a range of small tasks and responsibilities such as returning the register to the office, playing music for assembly, or giving out equipment. Pupils particularly enjoy being chosen to play a special part, such as in role-play or mathematics game, and they carry out these responsibilities very sensibly. Inspectors endorse parents' belief that the school helps children to become mature and responsible. This is accomplished through a range of activities which enable pupils to develop their own feelings of self worth.

18. Pupils' rate of attendance is very good. Attendance is significantly above the national average, and there is no unauthorised absence. Pupils are punctual, registers are filled in efficiently at the beginning of each session, and lessons begin promptly. Pupils' good attendance and punctuality have a positive effect on their learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching is sound overall, with a number of good features and a few weaknesses. Teaching is sound for the under fives in the reception classes, and best when the children are actively engaged in tasks. In these situations, the well-judged support provided by teachers and classroom assistants helps pupils to concentrate on their work and learn new skills, whilst encouraging effort and independence. For example, children were gently guided as they painted ‘trolls’ after hearing the story of the ‘Three Billygoats Gruff’, and their finished artwork lost none of its spontaneity. Active learning, supported by sound teaching, enables all the children to make confident progress, developing a good range of early skills, for example in literacy and numeracy, and broadening their knowledge and understanding. On occasion, however, whole-class sessions lack pace and purpose, extra adult support is not used well, and all the children are not fully engaged in learning.

20. Teaching in Key Stage 1 has a number of strengths, particularly the effective range of strategies used and the very good management of pupils’ behaviour. Pupils learn within a very calm, secure and encouraging environment and this helps them to make progress. Teaching was of very good quality in five per cent of the lessons observed, good in 33 per cent, and sound in 56 per cent. In only three lessons of the 43 observed was teaching judged to be less than satisfactory.

21. Teaching of science and design and technology is particularly good, and literacy and numeracy are both taught soundly. The overall quality of teaching is rather better than at the last inspection. However, the teaching of information technology is unsatisfactory because planning does not allow pupils enough time to spend on information technology, nor provide a balanced programme of work to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum.

22. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is sound. The needs of these pupils are met well in most lessons, because work is planned at the right level to help them make progress. The setting of pupils for literacy and numeracy helps teachers to provide appropriate experiences for those with special needs. For example, in a literacy lesson for lower-attaining Year 2 pupils, it was the teacher’s very expressive reading of a suitably chosen text, and the matching of tasks to pupils’ needs, which helped them to concentrate and make good progress in both reading and writing. Classroom assistants also play a vital role in supporting pupils with special educational needs so that these pupils gain the most from activities and make good progress.

23. Teachers’ sound knowledge of most subjects enhances their teaching and the pupils’ learning. It helps them to explain new concepts clearly, as was seen when pupils in Year 2 were introduced to the concept of symmetry. It supports their good questioning of pupils, which was a feature of a number of lessons. For example, pupils in Year 1 discussed ‘weddings’, and the teacher gradually explored the pupils’ existing knowledge, explaining the significance of symbols such as a wedding ring, and making promises. The teacher pitched the content at the best level to ensure pupils’ understanding. As a result, the pupils were interested, concentrated well, and deepened their understanding. In many of the lessons observed, teachers used their good subject knowledge to explain new ideas clearly, to extend pupils’ understanding, and to capture their interest.

24. Competent teaching of basic skills is a good feature of many lessons. In literacy sessions, clear teaching of phonics strengthens pupils' ability in reading and writing, and good use of texts introduces pupils to new vocabulary and the structure of writing. For example, in a literacy lesson for lower-attaining pupils in Year 1, the teacher focused on the key words in the text, which developed the pupils' reading skills well. In mathematics, the teaching of basic skills is generally secure, as was seen when lower-attaining pupils in Year 2 were carefully introduced to the value of digits in numbers such as 26. In art and in design and technology, teachers demonstrate basic skills such as colour mixing and cutting fabric, so that pupils can complete tasks successfully.

25. Although teachers generally plan carefully, weaknesses in pupils' learning in a number of the lessons observed were caused by lack of precise planning. In a history lesson for pupils in Year 1, very clear learning objectives guided the teacher's questioning, and the setting of an appropriate task, which enabled pupils to sequence a series of illustrations of rail engines. Clear objectives for all the science lessons resulted in pupils knowing exactly what they were trying to achieve, working productively, and learning new skills, for example about fair testing. In a number of lessons, however, teachers had planned activities but had not given enough thought to what pupils should learn. As a result, pupils were not always clear what was expected of them, their level of interest waned, and they made little progress. In a number of other lessons, though the teacher had clear objectives, the timing of parts of the lesson had not been considered carefully enough, so too much time was taken in explanation or organisation, and too little time was left for pupil activity. There is no accepted pattern for lesson planning, so some lessons rely on a very brief plan. In many cases, this is adequate because the teacher has a very clear idea of how the lesson will develop. However, planning is not always precise enough to ensure that pupils work at a good pace and make appropriate gains in their knowledge and skills.

26. In the best lessons, teachers extend pupils' understanding by setting challenging tasks. For example, in science, pupils in Year 2 explored writing materials that were best suited to labelling parcels to be posted in wet weather. The challenge of an investigative activity ensured that they were eager to offer their ideas, worked hard at a practical task, and developed their understanding of fair testing effectively. In games, a very lively but well-organised session ensured that pupils put maximum effort into their physical activity. The pupils enjoyed the variety of games and the brisk pace. In both the design and technology lessons observed, tasks were demanding, but pupils rose to the challenge and produced good quality finished products, well supported by adults. In all these lessons, pupils showed a high level of effort, worked with interest, and made good gains in skills and understanding. In a few lessons, however, particularly in literacy and numeracy, the work was too easy for some pupils, often the higher attainers.

27. Teachers are well organised and they use a good range of methods and groupings. In the better whole-class sessions, teachers provide lively explanations, which hold pupils' interest. In a number of lessons, teachers used role-play to involve pupils in learning new ideas, which ensured maximum involvement. Teachers read books expressively and explain concepts and tasks clearly. Teachers' open-ended questioning, involving all pupils, is particularly effective. For example, in a literacy lesson for Year 2 pupils, it was the teacher's clever questioning that encouraged the pupils to search the text for punctuation such as

speech marks. For part of most lessons, pupils work individually or in groups, and this is always well organised. Teachers monitor pupils' progress well and intervene by asking questions or encouraging pupils to explain their thinking. In literacy and numeracy lessons, however, teachers do not always work with a 'focus' group, which would be productive use of their time.

28. Teachers have established very positive relationships with their pupils, which underpin good management of behaviour. Pupils are praised when they have produced good work, for example when a teacher celebrated a pupil's progress in writing by sharing his work with the class. Pupils respond well to the positive environment because they know that their contributions will be valued.

29. Teachers generally use the available time effectively, so learning moves at a good pace. For example, in a science lesson for pupils in Year 1, the teacher gave a swift introduction and quickly set the pupils working on investigating whether a variety of shapes would travel down an incline. The brisk pacing encouraged the pupils to work hard, and their understanding developed well. In a number of lessons, however, the teaching lacked pace. Sometimes introductions were rather ponderous, and the pupils began to lose concentration. Sometimes too much time was taken explaining or giving demonstrations, so that too little time was left for pupils to be active. There are a number of sessions during the week when teachers have thirty minutes to teach a subject, and it is often in these lessons that they cannot really develop an activity so that all the pupils are involved. These short sessions often consist of discussion, for example about history, geography, or religious education and, though the best of these sessions were lively and interesting, not all young children can sustain listening for this length of time.

30. Teachers generally make sound use of resources to support pupils' learning, for example the wide range of materials available for design and technology. Support staff and volunteer helpers are used effectively when pupils are working in groups, and their contribution has a marked impact on pupils' progress. The more experienced classroom assistants are particularly skilled and knowledgeable. The support of extra adults was very valuable in active sessions for the youngest children, and in design and technology lessons. In a number of lessons, however, support staff listen to long introductions by the teacher and are not used as productively as they could be.

31. Teachers use good, informal strategies to assess pupils' understanding and to ensure that work is well matched to prior attainment. They review previous learning to check pupils' knowledge and understanding. They encourage pupils to explain what they are doing, and monitor their progress effectively. Teachers do not generally identify assessment opportunities in their lesson plans, which sometimes lack focus in this respect. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and often annotated to indicate attainment and progress. The school sets little formal homework. All pupils are expected to read at home and most do, with very effective support from parents. Older pupils learn spelling. Pupils also pursue topic work at home and often bring to school items of interest, which contribute to their learning.

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

32. The school provides a sound curriculum for children under the age of five, which takes appropriate account of the Desirable Learning Outcomes for children of that age. In Key Stage 1, all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught. Religious education is taught in line with the current locally Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced to meet the needs of all pupils. There are strengths in science and design and technology, but information technology has some weaknesses in provision. The curriculum ensures that pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress and are prepared for the next stage of their education at junior school.

33. The structure of the school day creates imbalances for provision in some subjects. Now that literacy and numeracy occupy most of the time each morning, short lessons of thirty minutes remain, often just before lunchtime. These do not enable teachers to develop work in subjects such as history and geography beyond a fairly superficial level. Design and technology, in contrast, is given a favourable time allocation, and this is reflected in the good standards achieved by pupils. The school has yet to consider how time allocations are influencing the balance and quality of the curriculum.

34. The National Literacy Strategy and National Numeracy Project have recently been correctly introduced. This has resulted in the raising of standards, notably in writing. These initiatives, whilst successfully developing basic skills to good levels, do not yet feature significantly across the curriculum.

35. There are clear policies for all subjects and relevant schemes of work. Curriculum planning for pupils aged under five and in Key Stage 1, while satisfactory overall, nevertheless contains some weaknesses. Medium-term plans are not always effectively translated into good quality lesson plans. Whilst most have good teaching points, others are too broad in outline. Activities are clear, but there is too little precision in identifying learning objectives. The needs of higher attainers are not always addressed well. As part of the strategy to raise standards, the school has taken the decision to group pupils by ability in English and mathematics. This has advantages when planning for different levels and needs, and works well in Year 2. In Year 1, however, concentrating all the lower attainers in one group places great demands on the teacher and denies these pupils the presence of good role models.

36. Pupils' learning is enriched by very good extra-curricular activities. There is an impressive range of clubs, including netball, cricket, short tennis, swimming and football. The music club supports class activities in the subject, and the recorder clubs develop musical skills. Country dancing is well attended. Other clubs include a thriving board games club, gardening, sewing, and French. A number of trophies celebrate the success of pupils in sport, and there are good examples of pupils' successful entries in the village poster competition. Visits to places of interest in the locality support work in history and geography, and a residential visit for the oldest pupils plays a valuable part in their personal and social development.

37. There is good provision for special educational needs, equality of access and social inclusion. No pupils are disapplied from National Curriculum requirements. An average number of pupils are identified as having special educational needs. Provision for these

pupils is good and the school pays due regard to the Code of Practice. Pupils are identified at an early stage by good assessment systems. Individual education plans have been improved, and objectives effectively match the needs of registered and statemented pupils. Occasionally, however, activities in class do not match the targets well enough. For example, tasks in English and mathematics are generally appropriate because pupils are grouped by ability. In other lessons, however, work is often similar for all pupils and does not meet special needs. The very good support for a statemented pupil has meant significant gains in the pupil's communication skills. Withdrawal sessions are well managed and the teacher has a good rapport with pupils. Reviews are regular, and parental views are taken into account.

38. Assemblies and acts of collective worship take place regularly and meet statutory requirements. There is no specific planning for the cultivation of spiritual awareness, but provision is satisfactory. Whilst collective worship contributes to pupils' spiritual development, there are few opportunities for pupils to question the ideas presented, and periods for reflection are brief. Through the lighting of a candle in assembly, and well chosen music and prayer, the headteacher endeavours to develop younger pupils' understanding of reflection. Spiritual awareness arises in lessons, for example when pupils reflect on the promises they will make for the future in millennium year. Pupils reflect thoughtfully on their wishes. 'I wish my grandad could come back from the stars' or 'I wish all people had new homes'.

39. The good examples set by the staff contribute very effectively to pupils' moral and social development. There are high expectations of positive behaviour. Pupils contribute to the class rules, and they know the difference between right and wrong. They have a good understanding of fairness in playground games and in behaviour. Plenty of opportunities are provided for pupils' very good social development throughout the school day. Younger pupils learn to 'follow the arrows' on one side of the corridor to avoid accidents. Well-organised group work encourages pupils to relate well to each other. They play snakes and ladders and traffic games in the playground co-operatively. All pupils, at some time in the week, are named on the job list in each class, and Year 2 share responsibilities for clearing tables at lunchtime. They carry out these simple responsibilities very well.

40. Provision for the appreciation of cultural traditions is satisfactorily promoted through art, music and religious education. There are colourful and bold displays featuring other cultures. Pupils learn about the world through the school bear's travels, which happen whenever children and parents make long distance visits. Pupils learn about cultural traditions when parents of Jewish and Muslim faiths visit the school, and from the music of visiting musicians.

41. There is planned time for pupils' personal, social and health education, and a programme that encourages a wider understanding of other needs and beliefs. The school gives some priority to these aspects, mainly through 'circle times'. The wishes and millennium promises give good indications of pupils' concerns of the wider world. The governors meet their responsibilities towards sex education and drugs awareness. These aspects of the curriculum are addressed informally as needs arise

42. Sound business connections have resulted in the redesign of the playground. Pupils have a variety of marked directional games, and maps of the world and the United Kingdom. There is an area designated for quiet leisure periods and several tabletop games for pupils to use. There are good links with Lovel End Nursery, which occupies a room in the school

building, and close, productive relationship with the junior school, which supports pupils' transfer. The school also has extensive links with local colleges of higher and further education, and many students spend time in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The school takes very effective steps to ensure that the children in its care are safe and happy, in line with its stated aims. The school gives a high priority to caring for its pupils, whatever their background circumstances. Staff know the children very well and have a good understanding of their different needs, including any special educational needs. Adults encourage and support pupils well with their work and play.

44. Whenever children are hurt or feeling upset, staff make very good efforts to give them care and comfort, for instance in treating any minor injuries in the welfare room during playtime. In lessons such as design and technology and physical education, as well as in the quality of supervision generally, there is strong emphasis on teaching children about the importance of hygiene, health and safety. The school has very effective arrangements for child protection, which are known to all staff and used when necessary. The school's overall approach to caring for pupils reflects its commitment to cultivating a safe working environment and happy, healthy community in which children can flourish.

45. In response to a key issue from the last inspection, the school has introduced assessment procedures, which help it to identify the standards reached by pupils, particularly in English and mathematics. Assessment of pupils' strengths and weaknesses is developing well, as seen in the way their progress is now being tracked from reception to Year 2. The school has identified pupils whose reading is very advanced or well behind that of others in the class. This has enabled staff to organise teaching groups and particular activities to match the needs of these pupils more effectively. Records of achievement, and profiles showing through samples of work and reports what pupils know, understand and can do, provide a good foundation for effective use of assessment.

46. Diagnosis of how and why individual pupils are learning faster or slower than expected, and what can be done to stimulate progress, is inconsistent. There are examples of good practice, such as individual target-setting that show clear understanding of the impact of assessment and how information can be used to improve pupils' learning. As yet, however, there is not a sharp enough focus throughout the school on using all available data to improve academic performance and raise standards. The use of assessment data to set specific targets, focus attention on key learning needs and objectives and to shape teachers' planning has not been exploited fully. As a result, although there have been significant improvements in assessment procedures since the last inspection, their impact on academic performance and improved standards has been moderate.

47. The school has very good procedures for monitoring attendance and promoting good behaviour. These allow useful observations and information to be shared with parents when absences seem high or a pattern of misbehaviour develops. Children's personal development is monitored very effectively as a result of the school's routines and the full picture staff have

of their attitudes and behaviour. Patterns of slow progress linked to personal, emotional or learning difficulties are recognised and addressed through helpful initiatives such as the Year 2 nurture group. Overall, the school's assessment and monitoring of academic performance and personal development is good, resulting in effective support and guidance for its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. The school has a very strong partnership with parents, which supports children's learning very well. For example, pupils learn to read and enjoy books with guidance from very useful written comments by parents and staff. The home-school agreement has benefited from parental input and an emphasis on making it intelligible to everyone, including children. A significant number of parents give high quality help in school, particularly with literacy hour and practical work. Excellent parental help enables a wide variety of activities in design and technology lessons. There are very good opportunities for parents to make informal contact with staff at appropriate times during the school day. A very active parent teacher association (PTA) contributes significantly to the life of the school and to funds. It has supported projects such as provision of games and quiet areas in the playground, which enhance the environment and extend opportunities for pupils to play and learn together.

49. The school provides clear, good quality information for parents, as in the prospectus, handbook, newsletter, and helpful curriculum information leaflets. Reports give useful information about what children have learned. They do not always make clear what individuals need to do to improve and how parents can help. A few parents do not feel as well informed about progress as the majority. Sometimes reports list the skills linked with National Curriculum attainment targets without capturing in everyday language what the particular child has learned and the essence of the year's achievements.

50. There is a very high degree of parental satisfaction with the school, linked to strength of opinion that children like school and make good progress. Parents value what the school does for their children. Links with parents are very successful in developing strong community spirit and the safe, happy school described in the prospectus. Parents are keen to support the school and their children in whatever ways they can and respond very well to any requests for help. They feel very welcome in school. This results in a very effective contribution by parents to children's achievements and personal development. The school has sustained good relationships with parents well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher is a caring and efficient leader who, with the support of her deputy, a dedicated and hard working staff, and a committed group of governors, provides a good foundation for the education of pupils in the school. The staff have successfully established a caring, supportive and ordered environment that ensures that all pupils are equally valued and contribute in their own way to the life of the school. This is one important way in which the school achieves most of its aims, and it is a great strength. There is also a shared

commitment to improving aspects of the school's work, which is evident in the school development plan, though there is not enough emphasis on promoting high standards of attainment. The school is aware that, given a clearer focus on raising standards, there will be further improvement.

52. While the senior management team and co-ordinators are positive and hard working, insufficient attention is paid at present to the systematic monitoring and evaluation of standards. As a result, there is a lack of focus on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. This was noted as a weakness at the last inspection. The headteacher has implemented a detailed whole-school tracking system that monitors pupils' progress. At the moment, however, there is little rigorous analysis of this progress, which would enable staff to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and in pupils' performance. Consequently, the means by which attainment can be raised have yet to be identified. Limited opportunities are made available to use the examples of high quality teaching that exists in the school. The school is aware of the need to develop further more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

53. The day to day management of the school is good. The headteacher, in partnership with the deputy headteacher and governors, has established an effective structure for the management of the school. Daily administrative routines are well established and adhered to, and staff, parents and governors work together well. The senior management team meets regularly, and weekly staff meetings form a good basis for regular discussion and decision making, which is a strength of the school. Induction procedures for newly qualified teachers are effective and the deputy headteacher acts as mentor to students and newly qualified teachers. A helpful staff handbook provides new colleagues with information about school policies, rules and routines. All staff have a job description and a process for teacher appraisal has been established. Although targets are set for advancing professional development they are more often linked to subject responsibilities and do not always refer to improving teaching skills.

54. The governing body is appropriately involved in the life of the school and provides good support to the school in all its activities. They meet regularly either as a full body, or in the various committees which have responsibility for specific issues. Although the governing body contains a number of new members, they are developing their role effectively with support from a knowledgeable and enthusiastic chairperson. They visit school regularly and meet most of their statutory requirements.

55. Governors play an appropriate role in forming the school development plan. It is cyclical, reviewed annually, and is drawn up each year in draft form by the headteacher, in conjunction with the staff and governors' committees. It identifies a number of priorities for school improvement, though there is a lack of focus on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching. In many ways, this is because the governors' role in helping the school to monitor standards is not as effective as it should be. Although the school has addressed part of a key issue identified during the last inspection, school development planning is still a weakness and an area for improvement.

56. Following the re-organisation of schools within the local education authority, the school is dealing with a reduced pupil roll and an associated decline in funding. The governing body has made prudent financial decisions to take account of these facts. Sound use has been made of new technology in order to carry out administrative functions. Needs are prioritised and careful financial planning and administration ensures best value for money.

57. The teaching, classroom support, and non-teaching staff in the school work well together as a team. They are appropriately qualified to meet the needs of the curriculum. The presence of enthusiastic and experienced support staff, who work closely with the teachers, has a beneficial effect on attainment, particularly for pupils with special educational needs. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is effectively managed by the headteacher who ensures that sound organisational systems are in place and that good relationships are fostered. Although funding is restricted for resources this year, resources for learning are at present good. They are carefully stored, accessible to staff and pupils and are well maintained.

58. The school building provides a very attractive environment for pupils. It is enhanced by good quality displays of work and also by the development of the playground, where appropriate seating and opportunities for quiet games have been introduced. The site manager and cleaner take great pride in maintaining the school to a high standard and this provides a very pleasant working environment for pupils and staff.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. Pupils make sound progress during their time at this school within an atmosphere that is very conducive to their learning and development. Results of national tests for pupils in their final year at the school have improved gradually during the past three years. The quality of teaching is sound overall but, in some lessons, lacks pace and challenge. In this context, and to improve the standards of work and the pupils' achievements, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- raise the standard of teaching, by:
(*Paragraphs: 18-29, 73, 79, 80, 91, 107, 110*)
 - * improving the planning of lessons to ensure that learning objectives are clear and appropriate for all pupils;
 - * ensuring that tasks provide enough challenge for pupils, particularly the higher attainers;
 - * ensuring that the pace of learning enables all pupils to make as much progress as possible;
 - * assessing pupils' existing skills consistently so that tasks are well matched to their needs;
 - * enabling all teachers to share existing good practice.

- raise standards in information technology, as planned, by:
(*Paragraphs: 4, 9, 30, 100-104*)
 - * teaching a curriculum that meets all the requirements of the National Curriculum;
 - * improving the scheme of work so it ensures that pupils build their skills and understanding steadily;
 - * increasing the amount of time pupils spend on computers, so that they use and develop information technology skills across the curriculum;
 - * improving the quality and coherence of resources, as funding permits;
 - * strengthening teachers' subject knowledge;
 - * formulating a clear action plan for the development of the subject.

- increase the focus on evaluating standards of attainment and the quality of teaching and learning, as planned, by:
(*Paragraphs: 50, 53, 74, 83, 88, 91, 99, 104, 111, 115*)
 - * the headteacher taking a firmer lead in more rigorous monitoring;
 - * involving subject co-ordinators more fully in evaluating the quality of lessons and pupils' work;
 - * involving governors in the monitoring process;
 - * so that strengths and weaknesses are identified, and action taken to improve standards.

In addition to the key issues, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. Each weakness is followed by a reference to the paragraph(s) in which it is discussed.

- * Time allocations to subjects cause imbalances in the curriculum;
(*Paragraphs: 31, 99*)
- * Assessment information is not used well enough to inform teaching, learning and curriculum development;
(*Paragraphs: 43-44*)
- * The school development plan is not focused enough on raising attainment.
(*Paragraphs: 53*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	44
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	5	31	55	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	140
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	4

Special educational needs	YR – Y1
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.5
National comparative data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	31	34	65

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	23	23	28
	Girls	33	33	33
	Total	56	56	61
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	86 (81)	86 (82)	94 (86)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 2 and above	Boys	24	28	31
	Girls	33	33	33
	Total	57	61	64
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 2 or above	School	88 (81)	94 (85)	98 (86)
	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	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	131
Any other minority ethnic group	8

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	1	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)	6.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21
Average class size	28

Education support staff:

YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	60

Financial information

Financial year	1998-1999
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	£
Total income	271291.00
Total expenditure	258647.00
Expenditure per pupil	1637.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	2611.00
Balance carried forward to next year	15255.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	141
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	67	33	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	48	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	43	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	44	46	11	0	0
The teaching is good.	62	35	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	41	16	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	18	5	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	57	39	0	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	48	38	10	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	60	35	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	43	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	22	2	2	12

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM AND SUBJECTS

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

60. The school admits children into the two reception classes at the beginning of the school year in which they are five. The first term is on a part-time basis, changing to full-time attendance at the start of the second term. The majority of children have already had pre-school experience either in the private nursery located within the school or in other nurseries and playgroups. Good induction procedures ensure that a smooth start is made. The school makes separate provision for these children, and planning takes appropriate account of the specific learning requirements for children of this age. Taken together, children's attainment on entry to the reception classes is average. They make sound progress and are prepared satisfactorily for the National Curriculum. By the age of five, most children attain standards in line with the desirable outcomes for all areas of learning.

61. The quality of teaching for under fives was satisfactory or better in all but one of the lessons observed, and often good. Teachers and support staff work well together, sharing expertise effectively. They have a secure knowledge of the areas of learning, and question children in a way which encourages them to develop their understanding. All the adults working with these children understand their needs well, and make good use of praise, increasing the children's confidence and self-esteem. The children are provided with a range of activities, working either in small groups or as part of the whole class. Although there is some evidence of systematic planning and regular assessment, this is not yet consistently applied and, as a consequence, activities in some areas of learning are not always well matched to the needs of children. Classroom accommodation is good and space is used well to create interesting areas. Resources are well organised and easily accessible, promoting independence and responsibility. At present, there is limited provision for outdoor play and access to large apparatus immediately outside the reception classrooms. As a consequence, there are too few opportunities for children to explore the physical and imaginative possibilities offered by large and small outdoor equipment. To redress this weakness, good use is made of playtime, where the children share an outside play area with the rest of the school, socialising happily with older children. Physical education lessons also contribute to the development of children's agility.

62. Good progress is made in **personal and social development**. Children work well together, settle quickly into routines, and concentrate and persevere with tasks appropriate to their stage of development. From the beginning, good practice in encouraging the development of listening skills establishes the good standards of co-operation and behaviour. Teaching in this area of development is good. Experienced management ensures that children are well supported but become sufficiently confident and independent to benefit from the activities provided. Through well-organised group activities, pupils learn to work well with others. They learn to sit quietly when required to, such as in early literacy sessions and when listening to stories. Most of them relate well to adults and happily explain their work to visitors. They take care of classroom equipment and become quite independent in selecting tools and materials for the planned activities.

63. Within **language and literacy**, appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of speaking and listening skills, and good opportunities are provided for children to develop their vocabulary during stories, rhymes and class discussions.

64. They learn letter sounds effectively with good use being made of shared texts such as 'Little Beaver and the Echo' and 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' to reinforce initial sounds. The children enjoy looking at the books available, and know that the print, as well as the pictures, carries the story. They take books home each day to share with parents. Most children are able to write their names and attempt to 'write' their own ideas by themselves. Some can write simple sentences accurately and independently. Teaching of literacy is always satisfactory, with many strong features, particularly in the teaching of reading.

65. There are sound opportunities for children's **mathematical development**. Learning is promoted through a range of interesting activities, which provide good opportunities for counting, sorting and matching. Children learn to count objects around the class, count to ten, and perform simple addition, and most recognise written figures. They become familiar with names of numbers through rhymes and jingles such as 'Five Little Ducks'. Mathematical vocabulary such as 'less than', 'more than' and 'add' is developing appropriately. Children develop concepts of measurement through such activities as water and sand play and cooking. Ideas of mathematical shape are introduced, and some children are able to recognise and name simple shapes. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in this aspect of children's development. Nevertheless, planning is not always sufficiently detailed to allow for further challenge to be built into some of the activities as pupils make progress.

66. A broadening of children's **knowledge and understanding of the world** is satisfactorily developed through a suitable range of activities. In the classrooms the children have opportunities to observe, explore and discover. They can describe features of the weather, appreciate that living things may require different conditions in order to survive, and know that the appearance of trees changes during the four seasons. An awareness of other cultures is also developed. For example, during the week of the inspection the children were exploring the Chinese New Year, discussing the various creatures that each year is named after and making a large three-dimensional dragon in recognition of this celebration. Children are introduced to the computer, and are developing elementary skills in using the keyboard and 'mouse'. Teaching is sound, but specific learning experiences are not identified as clearly as they could be to ensure more systematic opportunities to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world about them.

67. Children are provided with satisfactory opportunities for **physical development**. They use pencils, crayons, brushes and other small tools with relative confidence. Children learn to cut, paste and join materials, developing hand and eye co-ordination effectively while doing so. They are encouraged to select from a suitable range of construction materials and equipment to build models and to develop manipulative skills. There are only limited opportunities to play co-operatively with outdoor equipment such as tricycles, trolleys and large construction materials. In physical education lessons, children are able to take advantage of the space and equipment provided in the main school hall. They learn to move well to music and to interpret stories such as 'Jack and the Beanstalk' into controlled body movements. Teaching of physical skills is satisfactory. Clear demonstration by adults enables the children to copy how things can best be done and to practise to improve.

68. In the areas of **creative development**, the children make good progress as they explore their own ideas through drawing, printing and painting. They know the names of most colours and can use paint effectively to produce various pieces of their own. Children respond well to stimuli such as stories or rhymes. For example, a number of them painted trolls from the story 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', using some of the expressive vocabulary

discussed beforehand. They use scissors and other tools confidently to produce a good range of creative work on display. They engage in large three-dimensional work, such as a Chinese dragon, and learn to use a variety of materials. The children have an appropriate repertoire of rhymes and songs and can generally sing in tune. They are able to perform rhythmically and can follow the simple musical signals provided by the teacher.

ENGLISH

69. The results of the 1999 national assessments, for pupils near the end of Key Stage 1, were close to the national average in both reading and writing. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 of attainment, and the proportion gaining the higher Level 3, was about the same as the national picture. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances suggest that the results were below average in reading and well below average in writing. However, such comparisons are based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and, in this case, the indicator is not a true reflection of pupils' attainment on entry. When more appropriate comparisons are made, the school's results were average compared with similar schools. During the past three years, results in reading have improved slightly, and there has been a marked improvement in results in writing since 1997, when only 67 per cent of pupils reached the expected standard.

70. Since the last inspection, the school has raised standards in English, with a particular improvement in writing skills. The structure provided by literacy lessons, supplemented by sessions focusing particularly on pupils' writing skills, has supported this improvement.

71. Inspection evidence shows that, overall, attainment in the current Year 2 is in line with national expectations. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are generally above average. Throughout the key stage, they are taught to listen carefully and this has a beneficial effect on their general learning and behaviour. For example, pupils' good listening skills enable them to pick up clearly sound patterns in phonic work. They pay close attention when listening to stories, or, for example, when gaining information from a television programme about foxes. Shared texts provide many opportunities for pupils to exchange their ideas with their teachers, and discussion in lessons such as religious education encourages them to ask questions about what they hear. By the end of the key stage most pupils are confident and eager to ask questions. They describe clearly the tasks they will do and give reasons for their choices.

72. In reading, pupils build steadily on a sound foundation of early skills. They read aloud with their teachers, within the limits of their individual skills, and most read along with a poem well where they know more familiar words. Pupils are introduced to a core of basic words, which enables them to manage simple text with a measure of independence. They work through a colour-coded collection of both fiction and non-fiction books, which gradually increases their capabilities in tackling reading. Lower attainers recognise the most common vocabulary and can put together simple letter combinations to help them with some less familiar words. However, few of these pupils read fluently, with confidence, or readily talk about the content of their books. Higher attainers read with expression and flow. They 'tell' the story as they read. They talk about their books with enthusiasm, and their knowledge of books is well established. Pupils read regularly, and parental support is high.

73. Attainment in writing is as expected for pupils' ages, and has improved recently. This is mostly owing to an increased emphasis on more varied writing. Pupils in Year 1 can copy simple words and sentences, and gradually begin to express themselves with a suitable measure of independence. They write for a range of purposes, covering a variety of topics. In the main, higher-attaining pupils are confident in their use of capital letters and full stops, but ensuring that punctuation is correct often takes precedence over developing the content of their writing. In Year 2, the range of writing opportunities increases satisfactorily. Pupils retell well-known stories, and write letters and simple book reviews. They enhance their stories with simple adjectives and make their ideas clear by using capital letters and full stops appropriately. For example, one pupil wrote, 'One sunny day I was walking through the woods. I saw something glittering in the sunlight. It was a flying carpet'. Pupils learn to write instructions and poems. Higher attainers produce longer stories and pieces with more extended vocabulary. By the end of the key stage, most pupils recognise speech marks and begin to use commas and exclamation marks in their work. Although there are some opportunities to use word processing, they are insufficient to extend pupils' writing skills

74. Standards of spelling and presentation of work are satisfactory. Most pupils can spell simple words correctly and some pupils are able to correct their own spelling. Handwriting is often undertaken as part of group work in the literacy hour. Pupils learn to form their letters correctly at an early stage, and most pupils have neat well-formed script by the end of the key stage. Several higher-attaining pupils are sufficiently confident to write in a simple joined script.

75. Pupils have sound literacy skills, but though these are developed well in literacy lessons, the school does not have an overall strategy for using and developing literacy skills within other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress for their abilities. They are well supported in the classroom and acquire generally improving standards of literacy as they move through the school.

76. The quality of teaching is sound with particular strengths in Year 2. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons observed, and good or better in a half. Pupils respond well to the teaching, generally seek to do their best, and make sound progress. Teachers have got to grips with the demands of the National Literacy Strategy, and their understanding is clear. In some lessons, work for lower attainers is planned more to match the strategy rather than the pupils' needs, so they are unable to meet the planned learning objective. Nonetheless, most teachers use the system appropriately and have adjusted curriculum time to include periods of extended writing. Teachers have a lively style when discussing texts, and read expressively, which holds pupils' interest and ensures that they are attentive in the preliminary, oral part of a literacy session. Basic skills are well taught, and pupils incorporate their knowledge in written work. Teachers' expectations are variable, and parts of some lessons sometimes lack pace. Where expectations are high, pupils work productively and are particularly creative in their writing. Teachers establish clear routines and the management of pupils is good. Pupils usually settle well to the tasks that are set for them, and try hard to finish their work. Where teaching is brisk and timed well, pupils are enthusiastic and make good gains in learning. A pupil who enjoyed her extended writing wrote another 'Flying Carpet' story at home. Teachers use a range of different strategies to meet the learning requirements of pupils. For example, pupils are encouraged to work well with each other, sharing ideas and offering support. Where teaching is less effective, there is sometimes a lack of urgency to complete tasks, or planning is not well matched to pupils'

needs. This has particular consequences for lower attainers, who can spend too much time on writing routines with less time to achieve the learning objective. Very successful elements of role-play, language development and use of imaginative resources enriched the best teaching observed.

77. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is sound. A scrutiny of pupils' work has been successful in supporting many recent changes in the subject, as well as highlighting areas for improvement. Enhanced resources have contributed well to pupils' factual knowledge, as well as contributing to their cultural development. A Book Week, with visiting writers and storytellers, has enriched provision. There is good formal assessment of progress in reading, within the school's tracking system, which connects well with the reading scheme. In Year 1, however, where pupils are placed in ability sets for literacy, it is difficult for teachers to keep in touch with progress their own pupils are making in reading. There have been a few opportunities for the co-ordinator to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in other classes, but this does not yet amount to a coherent system for identifying strengths and weaknesses.

MATHEMATICS

78. The results of the 1999 national assessments, for pupils near the end of Key Stage 1, were close to the national average. Almost all the pupils reached the expected Level 2 of attainment, which was above the national average and an improvement on previous performance. A fifth of pupils gained the higher Level 3, which was close to the national average and matched the school's performance over the previous two years. Comparisons with schools in similar social circumstances suggest that the results were below average. However, such comparisons are based on the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and, in this case, the indicator is not a true reflection of pupils' attainment on entry. The school's results represent sound achievement during the key stage.

79. During the past three years, the school's results have gradually improved, in line with the national improvement in standards. Overall, however, and bearing in mind attainment in the current Year 2 class, standards are similar to those found at the last inspection.

80. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in the current Year 2 class is close to national expectations, but rather lower than last year. The year group has a significant minority of pupils with special educational needs, some of whom are unlikely to reach the expected Level 2, and some of whom may just reach this standard. The great majority of Year 2 pupils work confidently with numbers to 100, for example counting in 2s, 5s and 10s, or ordering numbers. They can carry out a range of simple calculations with numbers and money. They know odd and even number patterns. Most are beginning to understand the value of digits in larger numbers, though this is insecure for the lower attainers. In their work about symmetry, pupils in the higher-attaining set recognise and describe a good range of two-dimensional shapes, using terms such as 'side' and 'corner'. They grasp the concept of reflective symmetry rapidly, and recognise that some shapes have a number of lines of symmetry. Pupils in the lower-attaining set are still more comfortable with numbers to 20, but they are beginning to understand that 15 is one lot of ten and five units. Across the key

stage, pupils' work shows sound achievement, though the quantity of recorded work is less than expected. Throughout the key stage, higher attainers largely complete the same work as other pupils, and this restricts their progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for within the setting system, and make sound progress, often owing to good support from the learning assistants.

81. Pupils' numeracy skills are average, though their mental recall of number facts is weaker than other aspects of their work. In the lessons seen, too little time was spent sharpening these basic skills. Pupils use and develop their numeracy skills effectively in other subjects. For example, in design and technology, Year 2 pupils weighed the ingredients for making bread, and this involved skills interpreting scales. In science, pupils' work shows that they use a range of measuring and data handling skills. However, the use and development of numeracy skills in other subjects is incidental rather than planned.

82. The quality of teaching is sound overall. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons observed, and good, occasionally very good in a third. Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and use a good balance of praise and firm control to ensure that pupils pay attention and make an effort with their work. As a result, in all the lessons seen, pupils made sound gains in learning. Lessons are planned carefully, and learning objectives are often shared with pupils so that they know exactly what they are trying to achieve. All teachers explain new concepts and tasks carefully, involve the pupils through effective questioning, and ensure that basic skills are consolidated successfully. Introductions to lessons are used well to assess pupils' existing knowledge, and summaries at the end of lessons check pupils' learning. In a minority of lessons, however, the tasks set for pupils were too easy, particularly for the higher attainers, so they were not challenged enough and did not make the gains in learning of which they were capable. Work is not always based sufficiently on a perceptive assessment of pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding, and what they need to learn next. The lack of challenge is exacerbated by a tendency to set tasks that are too closed, for example 'add ten to these single-digit numbers', rather than allowing pupils to show their capability through a more open-ended task, such as 'think of any number you like and keep adding ten'. Evidence from pupils' past work suggests that they have too few opportunities to use and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in new situations.

83. The better teaching has a pace and urgency that holds pupils' interest and encourages them to be productive. For example, higher-attaining pupils in Year 2 extended their understanding of reflective symmetry through a lively whole class discussion. The teacher kept them working at pace during the recording task by reminding them of the limited time available. As a result, all the pupils worked purposefully and made a good effort to finish their work. Where teaching was less effective, introductions were rather slow and pupils were not encouraged to work quickly on the tasks they had been set.

84. The 'setting' of pupils for mathematics has strengths and weaknesses. In Year 2, the recent creation of a small group of lower-attaining pupils enables teaching to concentrate effectively on their needs; the higher-attaining group benefits from being able to move at a faster pace. In Year 1, however, the lower-attaining set contains pupils of a very wide range of ability, and few pupils who are capable of working independently. There are not enough pupils who can model good work habits for the rest. Work for pupils in the higher-attaining Year 1 set is not always challenging enough. Evidence from pupils' past work shows that, despite the wide range of prior attainment within sets, they often complete the same work.

85. The school has made a good beginning to implementing a numeracy strategy. In most of the lessons seen, however, not enough time was spent on mental calculation or exploring effective approaches. Pupils' work shows a preponderance of number activities and relatively little work on shape or data handling. Information technology is used well to explore work on directions through the use of a programmable toy, but there is little software to enable pupils to consolidate and extend their work in other aspects of mathematics. Teachers gather a good deal of assessment information, both informally and through periodic testing. Whilst this is used well to track pupils' progress, it is not yet used effectively to identify exactly what pupils know and what they need to learn next.

86. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is sound. The co-ordinator is relatively new to the role but has already seen through a number of good developments, for example the introduction of mathematics games as part of homework. However, there has been little monitoring of the standard of pupils' work to identify weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum, and too few opportunities to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. As a result, improvements are not targeted clearly enough on raising standards.

SCIENCE

87. The 1999 end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments showed pupils' attainment to be well above the national average, and above average when compared with schools in similar social circumstances. Over the past three years, the school has successfully raised the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 2 of attainment, and increased the proportion gaining the higher Level 3. Good teaching, and a well-organised curriculum that encourages investigative and experimental work, has enabled almost all pupils to reach the expected standard in science. As a result, attainment is significantly higher than at the last inspection.

88. Attainment in the current Year 2 is above national expectations. Through an emphasis on the practical and investigative nature of the subject, pupils gain a good understanding of the scientific process. In their work about packaging, Year 2 pupils carry out some simple experiments to the properties of writing materials. They discuss what properties the writing material must have, and why, in order to be waterproof. They then test a variety of materials to see if these are water-resistant or remain legible. They understand what is required in planning an investigation, and make suitable choices about how to set up a fair test. Higher-attaining pupils are beginning to make predictions, saying whether what happened was what they predicted. They can also explain why some materials are suited to specific purposes, in this case because they are water-resistant. As a result of an earlier investigation, pupils understand that certain materials were better suited to be used as floor coverings. Most of the pupils can explain their ideas, using a range of scientific vocabulary. They can select an appropriate way to record their findings, in a table, chart, or Venn diagram, with a clear layout and good labelling. The emphasis on practical work is also apparent in Year 1, with pupils investigating the effect of forces on different found objects. Through a simple experiment, pupils were able to explain why some objects will move independently on a slope, such as a cylindrical shape, while others will not. The great majority of these pupils are on track to reach a higher than expected standard by the end of the key stage.

89. Pupils start Key Stage 1 with sound knowledge and understanding of the world. Their work shows that they make good progress across the key stage. They gather a good range of knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, because they find the work interesting and are well supported by teachers, classroom assistants and other pupils. All pupils co-operate with one another and are beginning to develop good collaborative skills. Group discussion enables them to delegate fairly in order to make the most out of an investigation. This was particularly apparent during the Year 2 investigation into appropriate writing materials. Higher attainers are generally given the same work as other pupils, but careful and challenging questioning ensures that learning opportunities for these pupils are extended.

90. The quality of teaching is good overall, and has a number of strengths that support pupils' learning. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all the lessons seen and good in two thirds. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, which is reflected in their questioning of pupils and their clear explanation of concepts. This helps pupils to understand new ideas and to learn new scientific vocabulary. As a result, pupils are interested in science, offer ideas readily, and particularly like practical activities. They listen carefully to the teachers' explanations, and to the views of other pupils. Teachers also encourage pupils to explain their thinking, which helps to clarify their understanding. When carrying out experiments, teachers encourage pupils to observe carefully. Pupils respond by concentrating well on group tasks, showing good co-operation in order to achieve their results. Teachers use a good range of resources, which capture and hold pupils' interest. The better teaching moves at a brisk pace with clear learning goals, a suitable awareness of individual needs and capabilities, and appropriate organisational planning.

91. The school organises the science curriculum well through a coherent scheme of work. Teachers plan topics and lessons in some detail, and are able to share ideas and expertise. This is a notable strength. Work during the current year shows a good balance between the factual and experimental aspects of the subject. However, information technology is not used enough to support and enrich scientific work. Teachers assess pupils' attainment informally, gathering a range of information about pupils' developing knowledge and skills at the end of each science topic. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is satisfactory. The co-ordinator gives relevant support informally to colleagues, and monitors quality and attainment through discussion and scrutiny of pupils' work. However, there has been no formal monitoring and evaluation to build upon the very clear strengths in this subject area and to sustain the current high standards being achieved. The co-ordinator is efficient in ensuring that all staff have sufficient resources to enable them to deliver all aspects of the subject effectively.

ART

92. Pupils of all abilities make sound progress in art and achieve standards that are close to those expected for their ages. Attainment is similar to that reported at the last inspection. The colourful displays in school make a positive contribution to creating a bright and welcoming environment. Pupils' successes in local painting and poster competitions enhance the entrance to the school.

93. Pupils have an appropriate diet of artwork, which is complemented by very good opportunities for design and technology. Consequently, pupils handle a wide variety of materials and tools for three-dimensional work and become familiar with a good selection of papers and textural materials for collage work. Their art curriculum is largely working with paint, and improving drawing techniques. From an early stage, pupils work with colour mixing and simple block printing. Their free painting is bold and colourful, which readily translates into figures for an outdoor weather scene. They begin to make observational drawings. By the end of the key stage, they can design posters for advertising, using pencil, which they transfer well to larger presentations. Their effective drawings from first-hand observations of fruit show that their skills are improving. Painting techniques also develop steadily, and pupils in Year 1 thoughtfully plan their brushwork when painting winter landscapes. They use a restricted palette well. They discuss their choices of colour and why these remind them of dark clouds and winter nights. When painting their posters, most Year 2 pupils select colour well, and readily observe if the depth of colour is not right for them.

94. The quality of teaching was sound in each of the three lessons observed. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and the specific skills needed by pupils. As a result, pupils are confident in their use of materials and tools. Teachers introduce learning objectives carefully, giving pupils time to reflect on what they will design, paint or draw. In some lessons, however, the introduction is too long, and teachers' choices to restrict immediate access to paint dampen pupils' enthusiasm. This can result in some loss of initial ideas, motivation and commitment to paint well. Pupils are always well managed, which encourages them to concentrate on their work. Teachers make reference to the work of other artists when discussing activities, but there is too little focus on using a range of artwork to stimulate pupils' thinking. The co-ordinator is relatively new to subject management, and monitoring through portfolios is not yet active. She has begun a resource audit aimed at widening pupils' understanding of the diversity of art appreciation.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. Throughout the key stage, attainment is higher than would be expected for pupils' ages. This is because the curriculum is well planned and organised, teaching is good, and the school places a high priority on the subject in terms of the amount of time it receives. Standards are higher than at the last inspection.

96. Year 2 pupils make a wide range of products, in a variety of materials, and the overall quality of their work is good. Each half term, pupils follow a carousel of activities, completing one design and technology task each week, so it was possible to observe a wide range of work being undertaken during the inspection. Pupils make pop-up puppets, using fabric, card and wood, and show good skills in cutting and joining the pieces. They make bread rolls, to various designs, weighing the ingredients carefully and learning how to knead the dough. They design a shop of their choice and then make accurate models using a construction kit. They weave baskets, using wool. They make sewn finger puppets from felt, and decorate the faces to represent a range of animal characters. In all this work, pupils show good skills in making, complete their products to a good standard, and later evaluate their work in discussion with adults and other pupils. A session for pupils in Year 1 consisted of an equally varied set of tasks, for example sewing heart-shaped material bags filled with lavender, and making wheeled vehicles, focusing on the axle mechanism. Lower-attaining

pupils who made paper windmills were particularly proud of their achievement and showed all the adults their good work. Despite the variety and quality of the products made, there is a lack of emphasis on the design element of the subject, which would further strengthen good practice.

97. The quality of teaching is good, and is strengthened considerably by skilful classroom assistants and volunteer parents who make an excellent contribution. Teachers organise learning well, so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them, concentrate on their tasks, and work productively. Tasks are challenging, particularly in terms of the skills needed to make products, but adults support pupils well so that they succeed. As a result, pupils concentrate well, enjoy their learning, and are very pleased with their finished products.

98. The design and technology curriculum is well planned, covering a good range of tasks in a variety of materials. Work is linked well to wider topics encompassing other subjects, which adds purpose to the tasks. The availability of a specialist technology room is a significant strength. Good resources, often obtained by individual teachers, support high standards. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is good. Plans to develop assessment procedures, and to focus on the systematic development of pupils' skills within the scheme of work, should raise standards still further.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

99. Geography and history are planned and taught based on a series of topics, which combine aspects of both subjects. A joint evaluation is, therefore, appropriate. Only one geography and two history lessons were observed during the inspection, so judgements are largely based on an examination of teachers' planning, scrutiny of pupils' work, and discussions with pupils and staff.

100. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in both subjects matches that which would be expected for their ages. In geography, pupils are developing a sense of place by studying the immediate locality of the school and their village. Early mapwork skills are developed steadily, starting with simple maps and keys based on pupils' classrooms and on their journey to school. In a study of shops and shopping, Year 2 pupils are able to make comparisons between different types of shops in the locality, identifying particular features and characteristics. By examining different types of packaging, they are able to identify where the produce came from and how it might be transported to, or within, this country. As a result, they develop an awareness of places beyond their own locality. Year 1 pupils investigate building materials, finding out where these materials come from and how they influence the types of building they are used in. All pupils make good use of an environmental area established within the school grounds. Opportunities for further direct experiences are provided when Year 2 pupils have a residential visit to a nearby study centre, where they increase their understanding of different localities. Pupils' knowledge of other places is also enhanced by the journeys of the school 'bear,' who had recently visited Austria.

101. In history, Year 1 pupils are developing a good sense of chronology, looking at individual family trees. They develop an awareness of change through a study about how rural jobs, such as milking cows, have changed since during the last century. A visit to Wycombe Chair Museum provided the stimulus for work in Year 2, where pupils looked at

tools used in the early 1900s and the furniture that was made. A 'Victorian day' provided the inspiration for a comparison between their own classroom and a Victorian one re-created in school. Pupils could identify similar objects found in both classrooms and recognise that some had changed, owing to technological advances, and they were thus able to make distinctions between aspects of their lives and life in the past. Through this they were able to describe the characteristics of the Victorian period and identify changes within and across the last two centuries.

102. In the limited number of lessons observed, the quality of teaching was satisfactory and pupils responded well to the opportunities provided. The short sessions used for the subjects do not allow teachers to fully explore ideas through practical activities. However, work in both subjects focuses appropriately on skills, as well as on facts, and is supported by enquiry-based investigation. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable co-ordinator leads these subjects satisfactorily, but monitoring of attainment and the quality of teaching is not clearly established. The provision of visits to a variety of places of interest, to encourage first-hand learning, is a notable feature.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

103. Attainment is below national expectations at the end of the key stage. Most pupils in Year 2 have sound basic computer skills. They know how to switch the computer on, and they can load a program from the main menu. Their keyboard skills are sound, for example enabling them to type their names quickly. They know the function of keys such as 'enter', 'shift' and 'delete' when using word processing. However, none of the pupils questioned knew how to print or save their work. Most pupils control the 'mouse' well, for example selecting functions and drawing images by using a simple graphics program. Pupils in Year 2 use a word processing program to type a list of their names, and they can correct errors, though none knows how to use the 'mouse' to re-position the cursor. They use a simple graphics program confidently to draw images, colour areas, and experiment with a range of effects. Pupils were observed using a programmable toy effectively to plan a route on a floor map around a group of shops.

104. Pupils in Year 2 have sound skills within the range of experiences they have been given. However, they have not covered all the requirements of the National Curriculum because they have had little experience of using information technology to handle data, or to investigate patterns and relationships by using computer models that simulate real or imaginary situations. To a large extent, this is because the school does not have the necessary programs to fulfil these aspects of the information technology curriculum. There is also little evidence that information technology is used to support learning in other contexts, for example to enrich learning in mathematics or science. There was very little evidence in the scrutiny of work to show effective use of computers, or other aspects of information technology. The school has recently acquired a CD-ROM, however, and this is being used to access information.

105. Pupils' overall attainment has fallen since the last inspection, largely owing to weaknesses in hardware and software, and because the school has not kept pace with developments in information technology. There is no systematic approach to developing pupils' skills as they move through the school. However, plans are already being made to use additional, national funding to improve facilities.

106. Very little direct teaching was observed during the inspection. In Year 2, a useful session in the technology room strengthened pupils' word processing skills when they wrote shopping lists. The teacher's clear objectives, sound knowledge of information technology, and brisk style enabled the pupils to work productively and improve their skills. However, the wide range of computer systems, running four types of word processing program, made it almost impossible for the teacher to support all the pupils adequately. For example, as there were four different methods of loading the programs, pupils were unable to work independently, and time was lost. In design and technology lessons, pupils gain useful information technology experiences as part of a carousel of activities during each term, often supported well by volunteer parents and classroom assistants. The overall quality of teaching across the school, however, is unsatisfactory, because planning does not give pupils sufficient time to spend on information technology, nor provide a balanced programme of work to cover the National Curriculum. Teachers are confident in using information technology, but lack the expertise to ensure that it is integrated consistently within the curriculum. Where pupils were observed using information technology, they were enthusiastic, worked well together and used their initiative to try to overcome any problems they met.

107. The information technology policy sets out helpful aims, but the scheme of work is too brief to provide clear guidance about how pupils' skills will be developed, step by step, during their time at the school. A more comprehensive scheme of work is to be adopted. Resources are adequate, but too diverse to enable teachers and pupils to develop their expertise coherently. The school has not yet met the challenge of integrating information technology activities within the new pattern of literacy and numeracy lessons. Organisation of the subject across the school is unsatisfactory, though the co-ordinator monitors colleagues' planning and provides helpful advice. An action plan has yet to be devised so that the school makes the most effective use of the national funding which will be available in the near future. There has been little monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to identify areas for improvement.

MUSIC

108. Standards of attainment in music match expectations for pupils' ages. In the previous inspection, standards in music were found to be similar to those in most other schools.

109. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their singing, and regularly perform in unison. In reception, pupils sing their songs tunefully. They know a variety of songs and rhymes, and can clap simple rhythms. They have suitable experiences with untuned percussion instruments. In Year 1, pupils increase their repertoire of rhymes and link them to playground games. They perform for other members of the class and develop better control in voice and volume by listening attentively. They can tap out the rhythm of the rhyme, and link the tempo with the syllables in their names. Pupils in Year 2 build well on their skills, listening attentively for the sounds and effects the instruments make in a recording of 'Peter and the Wolf', for example. They recognise the instruments they hear, such as the oboe, flute and violin, commenting on the mood each creates, and deciding which instrument they would choose for their own puppets. Throughout the school, the standard of singing is sound and, by the end of the key stage, pupils are beginning to gain a satisfactory level of musical appreciation. A small group of higher attainers have good skills in playing the recorder, and perform simple tunes well in two parts.

110. The quality of teaching is sound overall. In one of the lessons observed, however, a lack of pace and weak organisation led to unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons often start with a lively approach to a well-known singing rhyme or piece of music. This provides a positive atmosphere for good performance and good listening. Teachers generally manage pupils well, and this helps pupils to appraise their own performance and those of others. Where planning is carefully linked with musical objectives rather than with a wider topic, pupils' musical appreciation increases and their skills develop well. However, where planning is too broad, pupils' enjoy the activities but do not develop musical skills systematically. The practice of joining two classes for music limits teachers' opportunities to develop particular skills. There are good choices of music in assembly, but not enough time for pupils to appreciate what they hear. Whilst listening, appraising and performing are well represented in teachers' planning, composing is weak.

111. Medium-term planning is satisfactory overall, but does not provide enough guidance for all teachers. Consequently, less confident teachers are not always able to include the appropriate skills in daily planning, and this makes monitoring of the subject difficult. The school has a good music club organised by the co-ordinator, and a recorder club run by a talented support assistant. Both clubs enrich the subject for those who are members. The school takes part in singing competitions, and has been commended for its performances. Professional musicians visit the school, and their musical contributions add to the cultural dimension of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

112. Pupils' attainment is close to that expected for their ages, with some higher attainment in dance and swimming. In gymnastics, Year 1 pupils plan and perform a brief sequence of actions on small apparatus, including moving in a variety of ways, balancing, and jumping. Whilst the standard of their work is typical for their ages, few pupils show higher attainment in terms of precision or control. In dance, Year 2 pupils create a good range of imaginative body shapes during their 'rehearsal', and evaluate the quality of each other's work, offering useful suggestions for improvement. They perform a 'machine' dance, individually and then in pairs, responding well to the tempo of the music, and co-ordinating their movements effectively with those of a partner. In games, Year 2 pupils respond enthusiastically to football training, showing a good awareness of space as they run and dodge. Their skills in sending and receiving a football are typical for their ages, and there is a wide range of attainment. In swimming, owing to the lessons provided by the school each week, attainment is above that expected for seven-year-olds, with about half the pupils already able to swim 25 metres. Attainment is similar to that found at the last inspection, and the school has sustained the strengths mentioned in the last report.

113. In the three lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good in two and unsatisfactory in one. Teachers organise lessons well. They give clear instructions, expect pupils to respond promptly, and are vigilant in matters of safety. They dress appropriately for physical activity and provide useful demonstrations that help pupils to understand what is required. Teachers use praise well to identify good performance, and this encourages pupils to try hard to improve their work. The better teaching makes good use of all the time available. Tasks are challenging, pupils put a lot of effort in to their work, and they are kept active for most of the time. In one lesson, however, the organisation of equipment took too long, and too much time was used in giving instructions, so that pupils did not have enough

opportunities to perform, practise and improve their skills. The best teaching encourages pupils to evaluate their work, but this approach was not used enough in the lessons seen. Pupils clearly enjoy their physical education lessons. They channel their enthusiasm well, work sensibly, and try hard to improve their performances.

114. The school provides a varied physical education curriculum, covering a broad and balanced range of activities, and including swimming for the oldest pupils. There is a very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities, which enrich the curriculum still further. The use of an experienced coach for football adds teaching expertise. Co-ordination of the subject across the school is sound, though there have been no opportunities to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to identify areas for improvement. The way that the apparatus is organised around the hall does not help pupils to get it out independently.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

115. Pupils of all abilities make sound progress and, at the end of the key stage, attainment is broadly in line with the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Attainment is similar to that found at the last inspection.

116. Pupils in Year 1 are beginning to appreciate, within the family and school circle, the importance of relationships. They understand that rites of passage mark the journey through life, and they know important times on the journey, such as baptism and wedding ceremonies. They become familiar with stories from both the Old and the New Testaments, such as the story of Esther, and begin to understand the concept of miracles when listening to the story of the marriage at Cana. When they role-play the marriage ceremony, pupils increase their knowledge of symbols, beliefs and promises, which connect well with personal promises at other times. Pupils in Year 2 extend their knowledge of the importance of living by moral rules, through stories such as Adam and Eve, and David and Goliath. They explore the religious beliefs that help shape these ideas. Pupils develop an awareness of some of the purposes of a Christian church. They know something of the ceremony of baptism and the sacraments used. Their knowledge of the Bible is broadened and includes study of the Creation and the principle events connected with Easter.

117. Only two lessons were observed. The quality of teaching was good in one lesson and sound in the other. Planning has several good features. There are strengths in the breadth of the topics presented, and the good thematic links which pupils recognise when they explore the content of nursery rhymes. Cross-curricular links are identified, and clear connections with other world faiths are made. Teachers have improved their own skills in addressing the subject quite well, and the context of lessons is introduced effectively. Teachers build on pupils' previous learning well, and make good opportunities for increasing pupils' vocabulary. Teachers captured pupils' interest by planning well-resourced role-play of the marriage ceremony. Where teaching is least effective, greater emphasis is given to knowledge at the expense of understanding. Insufficient time is given for pupils to understand the meanings of making choices or the importance of the community in some rituals and ceremonies. Lessons are frequently linked to planned assemblies, which enrich pupils' moral development further.

118. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator. She has a good grasp of the present syllabus requirements, which results in effective organisation of the subject. The reflective aspects of the subject are securely in place and the subject is well placed to develop further. Whilst pupil profiles are kept, assessment and secure monitoring is not yet in place. The subject makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.