

INSPECTION REPORT

BRINSWORTH WHITEHILL INFANT SCHOOL

Brinsworth, Rotherham

LEA area: Rotherham

Unique reference number: 106908

Headteacher: Mrs Susan Mulkeen

Reporting inspector: Dr Richard Perkin
14591

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 April 2000

Inspection number: 191864

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

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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:	Howlett Drive Brinsworth Rotherham South Yorkshire
Postcode:	S60 5HT
Telephone number:	01709 828242
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Barry Ibbeson
Date of previous inspection:	17/2/97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Richard Perkin	Registered inspector	Science	What sort of a school is it?
		Religious education	The school's results and pupils' achievements.
		Art	How well is the school led and managed?
		Music	
		Physical education	
Mike Vineall	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Lesley Clark	Team inspector	English	How well are pupils taught?
		Information technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
		Design technology	
		Under fives	
Pat Mitchell	Team inspector	Mathematics	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
		Geography	
		History	
		Special educational needs	
		Equal opportunities	

The inspection contractor was:

Leeds Metropolitan University
Schools Inspection Service
Fairfax Hall
Beckett Park Campus
Headingley
Leeds
LS6 3QS

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time pupils	86		(a small school)
Pupils entitled to free school meals	12	14%	(broadly average)
Pupils on the register of special educational needs	26	30%	(above average)
Pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0%	(below average)

Numbers on roll have fallen significantly since the last inspection, largely because of the lack of a nursery and a static population in the catchment area. The catchment area of the school is a mix of owner occupied and council property, though about a third of the pupils are from other parts of Rotherham and from Sheffield. While unemployment in the area has recently improved, there is still above average social and economic deprivation. Ninety-four percent of the pupils are white, with small numbers of black and Asian pupils; there are no pupils with English as an additional language. Children under the age of five enter the reception class at three different times of the year and with a wide variety of pre-school experience; this presents great difficulties for the school both in providing for the children and in planning for the future. Many children spend only a term in the reception class and consequently are disadvantaged when they undertake the national tests at seven. There were no pupils under the age of five at the time of the inspection. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected in language skills and below expectation in the other areas of learning. The governing body, formed partly from the previous joint infant and junior school governing body, became responsible for the infant school in January 2000. The school supports two teacher training students a year and two students from a neighbouring further education establishment school who are pursuing a National Vocational Qualification.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very effective school where pupils' achievements are significantly enhanced by very good teaching and excellent leadership and management. There have been very good levels of improvement since the last inspection. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well in reading, mathematics, information technology, design and technology and music.
- Pupils' behaviour, personal development and independence are excellent and they have very positive values and attitudes to school, nurtured by very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very high and there are very effective strategies for literacy and numeracy.
- There are excellent systems for assessing and recording pupils' work and progress and for reporting these to parents.
- Pupils with special educational needs are very well provided for and there is very good support and guidance for all pupils.
- The leadership and management of the school are excellent, very well backed up by a very effective governing body and a strong team of curriculum and other co-ordinators.
- There are excellent relationships with parents and link schools and parents make an excellent contribution to their children's learning at school and at home.

What could be improved

- Standards in writing are not high enough.
- Work in science does not concentrate enough on the development of skills and higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged to achieve through carrying out their own investigations.

The school's strengths considerably outweigh its weaknesses. *The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.*

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. Improvement overall has been very good. Standards in reading, mathematics and science have been sustained, with improvements in the weaknesses identified in mathematics. In science, higher attainers are still not sufficiently challenged. The below average attainment in writing still pertains although major initiatives have been put in place to remedy this weakness. Standards in design and technology and information technology have improved markedly. Teaching has very significantly improved and leadership and management are stronger. Frequent opportunities for independent writing are now provided and initiatives developed to ensure improvements. Measuring, shape and space are now integral parts of the mathematics programme. The policy for design technology has been updated and an under-fives policy developed, along with substantial improvements in provision for these children. A very effective marking policy has been developed and successfully implemented and effective schemes of work developed for all subjects. A health education policy has been developed and the missing statutory requirements have been put right. A full and well constructed action plan has been fully implemented and there have been many other important improvements.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Pupils' performance in reading in the 1999 end of key stage tests was below the national average but in line with the average for schools with a similar catchment area. In writing, pupils' performance was well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. In mathematics, pupils performed well in comparison with the national average and very well in comparison to similar schools. Inspection judgements are that attainment in reading, mathematics and science are in line with the national average for seven-year-olds and that, while standards in writing are still below average, pupils are improving in response to the initiatives the school has established. Pupils are achieving very well overall in terms of their prior attainment. However, levels of achievement in science for the more able are not as high as they should be. Standards in information technology, design and technology and music are better than expected for seven-year-olds. Standards in all other subjects, including religious education, are at expected levels. Trends in national test results are erratic because of the very mixed nature of the cohorts and because of the short amount of time many pupils have in the school owing to the entry arrangements. The school has set itself realistic targets for future attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and rapidly become absorbed in their activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is excellent in classrooms, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and in the playground. Pupils are invariably respectful, polite and considerate of others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is excellent; they learn how to use their initiative and develop responsibility extremely well as they get older and are extremely good at working independently. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	aged 5-7 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Seventy seven per cent of teaching is very good or better; in nearly one in four lessons observed, the teaching was excellent. One hundred per cent of the teaching observed was satisfactory or better. The teaching of English is very good and often excellent and the skills of literacy are very well taught. The teaching of mathematics is very good with very effective development of numeracy skills. Teachers work effectively with pupils of all levels of ability, though the emphasis in science on knowledge rather than skills means that higher attainers do not achieve as well as expected. Teaching has particular strengths in the teaching of basic skills, in the lively and stimulating teaching methods used, in often excellent classroom management based on excellent relationships, and in the highly effective use of day-to-day assessment. These qualities lead to very high levels of pupils' learning and, in particular, to excellent degrees of independence in the pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A broad and balanced curriculum that meets all statutory requirements is enhanced by very effective strategies for literacy and numeracy and a very carefully considered approach to equal opportunities, consistently implemented. Relationships with both junior and comprehensive schools are excellent. There is insufficient focus on investigation in the science curriculum and insufficient attention paid to artists, styles and techniques in art.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for pupils' personal development is supported through a consistently applied positive behaviour policy, planned opportunities to reflect on moral, spiritual and social issues, very high quality assemblies and an excellent example set by adults in the school. There are ample opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and to work both independently and co-operatively.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of the school's care for its pupils is exemplary. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance, personal development and behaviour is excellent. There is excellent assessment of attainment and progress and the use of this data to influence teaching. Support and guidance for personal development are excellent. The school creates a safe and secure environment into which children want to come and which instils confidence to learn and develop.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Partnership with parents is excellent. The school enables parents to be genuine partners in their children's learning. It encourages active involvement within school, deepens parents' understanding of their children's work and assists them to play a most effective part in the school's work, supporting teaching staff and enriching learning resources. Extremely effective communication with parents includes an excellent set of reporting formats developed by the school. The school consults parents on significant matters.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. The senior management team, the staff and the governors share a clear and coherent educational direction. Co-ordinators provide a strong lead in evaluating and developing their areas of responsibility. The school's aims and values are consistently reflected in the life and work of the school and a single culture has been created that embraces teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and pupils. There are excellent systems for induction and staff development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The new governing body continues to be highly effective in a time of substantial change.
The school's evaluation of its performance	All aspects of the school's life and performance are most effectively monitored and evaluated and there is scrupulous self-review that leads to constant improvement. The school has produced numerous thoughtful and innovative solutions to the problems identified.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning is good and the school uses its resources well. Financial control and the day-to-day running of the school are very efficient. The principles of best value are effectively applied.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	There are good levels of staffing and learning resources and very good accommodation. These are used effectively.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like coming to school. Parents feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. The teaching is good. The school is well led and managed. The school works closely with parents. The school has high expectations of the children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some concern was shown about the range of activities outside school.

Inspection judgements strongly concur with parents' positive views. A sound extra-curricular experience for the pupils is provided by the use of lunchtimes to support groups of readers and by the musical production being undertaken in conjunction with the comprehensive school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Pupils' performance in reading in the 1999 tests at the end of Key Stage 1 was below the national average but in line with the average for schools with a similar catchment area. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 3 in reading was close to the national average. In writing, pupils' performance was well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. No pupils achieved Level 3 in writing, which is below the national average. Boys attained relatively better than girls in reading in 1999, as they had over the past four years and there is a similar pattern in writing, though from a much lower base; these results do not match the national pattern, though there was no evidence from the inspection to show such differences between boys and girls in the present Year 2 cohort. The performance trend in reading and writing over the past four years is an erratic one, though generally slightly downward. The school average for reading over the past three years is slightly above the local education authority average but is lower in writing. This erratic pattern is caused by the varying number of pupils with special educational needs in each cohort and by the numbers of summer term entrants to reception. In mathematics, pupils performed well in comparison with the national average and very well in comparison to similar schools. The percentage of pupils attaining Level 3 was above the national average. There are no significant differences in attainment by boys and girls. Trends have been erratic, though the 1999 results were considerably better than those in 1998. Teacher assessments in science showed a well above average percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 but no pupils attaining Level 3, which is well below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, the percentage attaining Level 2 was well above average, but the percentage attaining Level 3 was well below average. The main area of weakness in science was in experimental and investigative science, a point the school recognises in its school development plan.
- 2 Most children enter the reception class with well below average levels of language skills and below average skills in mathematics and other areas of learning. They bring a great variety of pre-school experience with them. Because they enter the reception class at three different points in the year and because for the past few years the intake in the summer term has been much greater than in the other terms, most children spend little time in the reception class. Consequently, most children reach levels of attainment in all the areas of learning by the age of five that are below those expected. Many make good progress in developing their language skills in the reception class.
- 3 The standards in reading, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 1 found at the last inspection have been sustained, with improvements in the weaknesses identified in mathematics and an improvement in the standards achieved by higher attainers in reading and mathematics. In science, higher attainers are still not sufficiently challenged. The below average attainment in writing still pertains although major initiatives have been put in place to remedy this weakness. The very good strategies in place for literacy and numeracy are having a positive impact on standards. The school has met its targets for 1999 and has set ambitious but realistic targets for 2000.
- 4 Inspection judgement is that, by the time they leave the school, most pupils' overall attainment is in line with that expected nationally. Pupils' attainment in English is broadly in line with the national average for seven-year-olds and, while standards in writing are still below average, pupils are improving in response to the initiatives the school has established. Pupils are achieving very well overall in terms of their prior attainment.

Literacy skills are very effectively developed across the curriculum. Standards of reading are boosted by the skilled and systematic teaching of strategies for tackling unfamiliar words and most pupils read with accuracy and understanding; higher attainers read with fluency and some expression. Most pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed through the frequent opportunities they have for talking to the class or to the school in assemblies. Pupils write for a range of purposes and audiences, using a reasonable variety of forms, including letters and poems. Most write reasonably correctly with appropriate levels of punctuation and handwriting, though not at great length. Levels of spelling are now reasonably high.

- 5 Standards in mathematics are in line with the national average. Pupils have confident number skills and can use mental recall to solve simple problems. Higher attaining pupils have the confidence to set themselves difficult problems. Pupils use appropriate mathematical language in describing how they have worked out their answers and in describing two and three-dimensional shapes. They are able to estimate length and check this by measuring. Opportunities are provided to develop pupils' numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum such as geography, history and design and technology.
- 6 Standards in science are in line with the national average and the work done on life and living things is sometimes above that expected. However, levels of achievement in science for the more able are not as high as they should be. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to devise and record their own experiments and thus to develop their investigation skills systematically.
- 7 Standards in information technology, design and technology and music are better than expected for seven-year-olds. Standards in all other subjects, including religious education, are at expected levels. Teachers incorporate the use of information technology in their lessons wherever possible and this enables pupils to see and use information technology as a tool and to develop their skills through regular practice.
- 8 Pupils of all levels of attainment make very good progress and achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good across all curriculum areas and very good when working in small groups or individually on programmes written to meet their individual targets. The progress they make is enhanced by early identification and detailed assessment as soon as pupils experience difficulties. Good quality individual education plans are written and used by the teachers to plan adapted work. For example, in the literacy lessons the teachers make sure that, within the same lesson as the rest of the class, the pupils with special educational needs work towards their own targets. Learning support assistants and voluntary helpers provide very high quality support. Some pupils receive an intensive reading and writing intervention programme, others a speaking and listening programme. By means of these measures, they make very good progress in literacy targets and in improving self-confidence. Pupils with behavioural difficulties make very good progress towards the targets set for them. The school is very successful in improving their behaviour and increasing confidence and self-esteem. Higher attaining pupils make good progress because of the stimulating tasks that are set for them and the level of challenge in lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 9 Pupils have very positive attitudes to school that make a significant contribution to their achievement. As parents confirm, pupils are eager to come to school and quickly become involved in a range of activities. For example, in a Year 2 class, pupils keenly examined tadpoles and cocoons with the magnifying glasses to see how they were changing. Other pupils used reference books to find out more about them. Pupils are interested in their work, are enthusiastic and keen to participate in lessons. They join in

discussions with confidence, answer questions readily and listen well to the teacher and to each other. They are alert, lively and curious in response to the interesting lessons. They are able to concentrate and persevere with a task in order to complete it and respond well to a challenge. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, when devising their own sequences of numbers, pupils deliberately chose difficult numbers to manipulate and really had to think hard to calculate the right answers. Pupils work very well independently and collaboratively. They settle down to work quickly and readily, thus making the most of teaching time. They take a pride in their achievements as, for example, when they demonstrate their work to others in physical education. The pride they take in their work is fostered by the very good quality of the displays around school. Pupils are very happy in school and enjoy their work.

- 10 Children under the age of five have very good attitudes to school and are very interested in their activities. They enjoy playing in the role-play area and learn to communicate with each other by talking and sharing. They learn to follow instructions and to behave responsibly, apologising if they accidentally hurt someone. They begin to notice when others need assistance and quietly offer help such as doing up each other's dressing-up clothes. Some find it quite hard to settle to formal routines and call out their responses rather than waiting for their turn. Generally, though, children behave very well indeed and follow the excellent example of older pupils in whole-school gatherings such as assemblies.
- 11 Behaviour is excellent in the classrooms, which are very pleasant working environments conducive to learning. Pupils are courteous both to each other and to adults, trustworthy, and polite. They offer to help readily. The behaviour policy and the reward systems are effective and teachers have excellent behaviour management skills. These, and the 'privilege time', when pupils earn a choice from a variety of activities, have a very positive effect on behaviour. Within lessons and assemblies, pupils listen well to each other and to adults and are able to work together and support and help each other. Pupils' behaviour is excellent around school and in the playgrounds; they know the behaviour that is expected of them. No evidence was found during the inspection of any bullying or racist behaviour, mixed race and gender groups playing harmoniously together. Pupils look after property and the environment carefully. There are no exclusions.
- 12 Pupils' personal development is excellent. This is an improvement since the last inspection where it was found to be satisfactory but learning was over-structured and inhibited the development of independent learning skills. Now pupils are confident learners who willingly take a lot of responsibility in the classroom and around school. In assembly, a pupil had the confidence to stand up and speak clearly about what she had learnt for homework. Pupils work co-operatively to put the apparatus away safely after physical education lessons; they collect the lunch boxes and control the music system for assemblies. They are able to work independently in lessons and keep their concentration while their teacher is working with another group. For example, a group is able to make very good use of the 'Story Sack' contents to improve their understanding and enjoyment of a story book with no direct supervision from an adult. Pupils show initiative: when they notice a spillage, for example, they get a dust pan and brush to clean it up without having to be told. Pupils are beginning to take responsibility for their own learning as, for example, when they go into the hall for physical education and all successfully devise their own warm up activities. They choose, for privilege time, to help younger pupils or to help the administrative assistant and see this as a privilege.
- 13 Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into the classes and are able to work collaboratively with other pupils. There are excellent relationships between the staff and pupils with special educational needs and every opportunity is taken to

praise them, appropriately, and to give them responsibilities. This helps to motivate the pupils and to increase their confidence and self-esteem.

- 14 There are excellent relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils, which contribute to the very positive and supportive ethos within school. Pupils are prepared to listen to others' views and show respect for one another's feelings and beliefs. This ethos is fostered throughout the curriculum, in religious education lessons and in assemblies; for example, the pupils sensitively discuss who cares for them, whom they care for and how this is demonstrated.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 15 Pupils are very well taught. The quality of teaching is very good overall. It is very good or better in 77 per cent of lessons. Teaching in 23 per cent of lessons is excellent. It is good in eight per cent and satisfactory in the remaining 15 per cent. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The quality of teaching and learning is good for children under the age of five and it is very good in Key Stage 1 with one in three lessons being excellent. Literacy and numeracy are very well taught and pupils learn a great deal in a very short time. Many pupils, starting from an initial low level, attain national standards within two years.
- 16 The quality of teaching has substantially improved since the last inspection. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching is much greater and weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been fully addressed so that there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. Through formal monitoring of lessons and self-review, teachers devise clear individual targets to improve the quality of their teaching. Joint observations are used as a tool for moderation and for assessing consistency of approach in teaching across the school. The national literacy and numeracy strategies are also having a positive influence on teaching and learning by giving a formal structure and a variety of teaching methods to encourage pupils to speak, listen and to learn with independence. Teachers work very well together, planning similar work in two parallel classes, for example, or teaching a very large class together so that teachers' different skills complement each other to the benefit of pupils' learning.
- 17 The quality of teaching and learning is good overall for children under the age of five. Teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory, with clear strengths in the well planned and very interesting activities. Role-play is used very well to provide a focus for the week's lessons and to develop children's imaginative play as well as their vocabulary. The planning is good and weekly and daily assessments are used very well to record what children have learnt. Incidental use of songs and rhymes develops children's mathematical understanding very well. Teachers and other adults give good support to those with special educational needs and spend time talking to children to develop their language skills. Some class routines are a little too relaxed, however, and children have a tendency to call out for attention. This slows the pace and so not all time is used productively. Whilst teachers promote early reading very well, emergent or spontaneous writing is less well taught and the writing corner is under-used.
- 18 The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is very good and there is some excellent teaching of basic skills. The teaching methods are exactly suited to the different needs and attainment levels within the class, which results in productive learning. Classroom management throughout the key stage is excellent. Teachers pay attention to small details and this results in a very good pace and a shared responsiveness. In two excellent lessons, for example, the last ten minutes used spelling

as the focus. Suddenly the whole pace of the lesson changed. In one, pupils were well prepared with the words they had found for homework and offered numerous and unexpected examples of a certain spelling pattern. A lower attaining pupil was quite triumphant at having found a really unusual word. In the other lesson, pupils strived to put into practice the spelling rules they had devised earlier. The fast pace challenged them to think quickly whilst the teacher's careful enunciation helped them to succeed. Small details such as the regular game to put away the musical instruments without the least sound provide a delightful finish to a lesson for both teachers and pupils as pupils tiptoe out of the classroom.

- 19 Teachers make excellent use of assessment to develop their daily and weekly planning according to what pupils know and understand. They use questioning very effectively to involve all pupils and the methods teachers use contribute very well to pupils' learning. For example, very good demonstrations or the dramatic rendering of stories captivate pupils' attention. Group tasks are challenging and informal work in pairs develops pupils' speaking and listening skills. Teachers have very high expectations and deploy voluntary help very well to help pupils to learn. Homework is used very well to foster an interest in reading.
- 20 In satisfactory lessons, there are some weaknesses in teachers' expectations resulting in loss of pace and some lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils. These weaknesses are most apparent in lessons for reception pupils, particularly in literacy lessons, and opportunities are missed to involve higher attainers in practising and demonstrating their writing to help both themselves and others to learn. Whilst the informality in classroom management promotes speaking and listening, it does not develop pupils' interest or skills in writing or in understanding phonics. In all classes, teachers give a slightly higher profile to reading and spelling than to writing in that they use fewer incidental occasions to indicate its importance. While challenging questions are asked of higher attainers in some science lessons, these pupils are not consistently given opportunities to expand their skills by independently devising their own investigations.
- 21 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Teachers are fully aware of the individual needs of pupils in their class and plan well matched learning activities for them using the individual education plans. Teachers use a variety of strategies very effectively to support pupils with special educational needs. Adapted work is used effectively, especially in English and mathematics. Teachers adapt their questioning very well so that questions at the appropriate level are directed both at higher attaining and lower attaining pupils so they are all fully involved in the lessons. Sometimes pupils work in mixed ability pairs or groups, sometimes in similar ability groups, with extra help given to the lower achieving pupils. Sometimes pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn for structured individual and small group sessions. They are well supported by the teachers and learning support assistants who work very knowledgeably with them. This contributes significantly to the progress made. There is very good liaison between teachers and learning support assistants with written records kept of work achieved in individual sessions. This provides continuity for the pupils and learning in individual sessions is reinforced during class activities, helping them to achieve. Teachers manage pupils with behavioural difficulties very effectively, consistently implementing the agreed policy and taking opportunities that arise in the classroom to encourage self confidence and independence.
- 22 A feature of pupils' learning throughout the school is their independence and their capacity for concentration. A distinctive element of the teaching in this school is the teachers' understanding of what it is like to be a child, so that lessons are based on the

fundamental recognition that pupils learn best when their imagination and interest are captured.

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

- 23 The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils. The quality of the curriculum has improved since the last inspection and all subjects now have appropriate policies and schemes of work. Each subject is well organised and the school follows national guidelines for literacy and numeracy. The curriculum is broad and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education, and a personal, social and health education programme, which includes sex education and drugs awareness. Teachers' imaginative use of the full National Curriculum, combining subjects so that they complement one another, gives all pupils a good range of learning and ensures that they receive a balanced curriculum. However, planning for pupils to learn independently in science through planning and carrying out investigations is underdeveloped. The curriculum for art provides well for pupils' practical experience but less well for their knowledge of artists and their different styles and techniques.
- 24 The school's innovative use of discretionary time, termed 'privilege time', develops pupils' independence and initiative as they select a special educational activity which they earn through good behaviour and attentiveness in lessons. This too helps to broaden the curriculum pupils receive and gives opportunities for pupils to develop areas in which they are successful. This benefits pupils of all attainment levels by developing their confidence and self-esteem. As a result of similar concerns regarding language use and acquisition, the infant and junior schools plan the curriculum for speaking and listening together. There is excellent liaison between the two schools. The literacy co-ordinators match the learning needs of particular pupils so that both infants and juniors receive the curriculum they require.
- 25 The quality and range of learning opportunities for children under the age of five are good and have improved since the last inspection. Because of current admission arrangements, most children make a late start on learning basic skills. The curriculum is well planned to take into account the requirements of the curriculum for early years as well as individual needs. Teachers provide a good range of nursery-type activities for pupils who have had no pre-school education as well as activities designed to develop pupils' skills in language, reading and numeracy. Children receive a good preparation for the National Curriculum although activities for developing pupils' writing are less well integrated into pupils' learning. Children who have special educational needs receive a suitable curriculum to help them to develop the skills they need.
- 26 The school has very effective strategies for teaching the skills of literacy and numeracy. Daily planning is adjusted as a result of evaluating what the pupils have learnt the previous day and additional time is allocated to reinforce their learning of basic skills, should it be required. Subject planning is strong in all areas of the curriculum and schemes of work provide a good sequence of experiences to help pupils develop their skills. The school's very carefully considered approach ensures that the policy for equal opportunities is consistently implemented. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. These pupils participate equally in all aspects of the school curriculum, the majority of needs being very effectively met by the class teacher. All requirements of the Code of Practice are met and individual programmes of good quality are written. The teachers and the support assistants work effectively as a team to meet individual needs. Learning support assistants are suitably trained and so provide

expert help. Specific programmes such as, for example, intensive reading and speaking and listening programmes, are very effectively implemented, contributing positively to the achievements of the pupils. Additional time is given at lunchtimes to assist pupils with their reading and a bookshop after school reinforces the importance of acquiring this skill. The school's provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory.

- 27 The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, with particular strengths in moral education. This is an improvement since the last inspection and reflects the school's thoughtful response to the last report. Provision for cultural development is good and it is stronger in relation to local and Western culture. Educational visits and visitors to the school broaden pupils' experience and the broad range of books in the library and in classrooms promotes pupils' awareness of other cultures. Whilst pupils listen to music from other countries, they see a very limited range of art and have little or no experience of art from other cultures.
- 28 Provision for spiritual development is very good. Assemblies offer opportunities to celebrate and contemplate themes appropriate to pupils' age and understanding. The opening music sets its own spiritual tone and, from the sung prayer to a natural pause for quiet reflection, teaches pupils to celebrate the values of courtesy, respect and hospitality. In lessons, pupils are captivated by quite simple effects such as a tape of their musical composition or listening to a story read well. Teachers too share in pupils' wonder as they see their surprise when mixing paint for the first time or tossing an imaginary pancake with rapt attention.
- 29 Provision for moral development is excellent. Pupils are given planned opportunities to discuss and reflect on issues. The school's moral code is exemplified throughout the school and numerous occasions were observed of pupils' kindness and concern for others; for example, young children help those unused to playing or communicating with others to join in their games and older pupils show self-discipline and responsible behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to review their actions and to appreciate their effect on others. The provision for pupils' social development is very good and pupils carry out responsible tasks around school discreetly and efficiently. Many choose to help the administrative assistant in 'Privilege Time', seeing it indeed as a privilege to undertake responsible tasks. The effect of the school's provision in this area is clearly seen in pupils' mature attitudes and behaviour as they work independently and co-operatively without direct adult supervision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 30 The support and guidance of all pupils are very good. Relationships between pupils and all staff (teaching and non-teaching) are excellent and all staff know the pupils well. The pupils also get on very well together in lessons and in the playground. Many examples of pupils helping each other, caring for others and of ready co-operation were noted. The consistent application of the positive behaviour policy leads to excellent behaviour. Oppressive behaviour is very rare and staff deal very competently with negative behaviour.
- 31 All systems ensuring the welfare and safety of pupils are very good. The scarcely used child protection procedures are based on local authority guidance. All staff are aware of the procedures and prepared to use them. No health and safety issues were identified and this area of care is well resourced with a nominated and experienced governor and a very knowledgeable teacher firmly in control. Supervision of play, whether in the well planned playground or in the classrooms in wet weather, is very thorough and sensitive to

pupils' needs. Staff, supervisory assistants and parents work very well together as a team. All staff have received first aid training, with the school secretary the first point of call. There are also good first aid kits around the school that are used well.

- 32 All this attention to care creates a very safe environment into which the children wish to come and helps to develop their confidence in learning. Parents confirm the high quality of the care and guidance provided.
- 33 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are excellent. The procedures acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of assessment is to help pupils to learn. The system used is simple, useful and informative, taking minimal time to operate. Assessments are linked very carefully to the schemes of work and are used to establish levels of expectation as well as standards. Baseline testing is used to ascertain children's level of attainment on entry and an assessment of progress is made at the end of the reception year. Consistency on standards is achieved through discussion and comprehensive records of achievement are maintained, consisting of independent pieces of work assessed half-termly and awarded a National Curriculum level. From these, individual targets are set and agreed with Year 2 pupils at the end of each half-term. Records of attainment and progress over time are manageable and accessible and provide a complete system that is excellent in its scope and thoroughness.
- 34 Teachers' assessments are monitored termly by the headteacher and the assessment co-ordinator, who also monitor portfolios of work and analyse the results of standardised tests. Assessment is used to determine what is included in the long-term plans. In the medium-term plans, assessment is linked to specific learning objectives, taking account of the level descriptors in the National Curriculum. Plans for activities are adapted according to pupils' needs, based on daily and weekly assessments and the marking of pupils' work. Teachers ensure that pupils are aware of what they should be learning and encourage them to proof-read and correct their own work. This, together with tracking pupils' progress in numeracy, information technology and science, gives a very clear indication of levels of attainment both individually and as a year group and means that analysis is both formative and evaluative.
- 35 Pupils with special educational needs are identified effectively by the class teacher and assessed. They have a good quality individual programme written for them. Progress towards the targets in this programme is assessed and recorded regularly and new targets are set appropriately. There is good liaison with all other professionals involved with the pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 36 The excellent relationships created between the school and parents are a major positive feature and make a very strong contribution to standards and the quality of learning.
- 37 Communications between school and parents are of excellent quality. When a child first comes to the school, the very adequate prospectus is complemented by an admirable welcoming leaflet that provides full descriptions of the type of work the child will be doing and how parents can help. Induction interviews are held with new parents and the information gleaned is entered in an impressive early assessment record for each child, that ensures an immediate and full understanding by the school of that child, covering everything from their allergies to their favourite toy. Regular reports to parents are quite exemplary and follow a format that has been specially created by the school. They give penetrating insights into the children's educational and personal development. They grade progress, describe strengths and weaknesses, give clear indications of progress in

relation to expected norms and set personal targets. Parents praise these reports, which are complemented by termly parents' evenings that are well attended.

- 38 These formal communications with parents (that also include regular letters and newsletters on specific issues) are well supplemented by an excellent, informal interface between home and school. Bringing and collecting the child to and from school has been made an occasion for the easy and effective passage of information both ways. All staff, from the headteacher down, make themselves very accessible at these times – a fact confirmed by the parents.
- 39 Contact, however, goes beyond this and parents are strongly encouraged to come into school at other times. A shared reading period is time-tabled at the end of several days when parents can (and do) come in just 15 minutes early and share books with their children. Parents have received instructions on how to assist their children's learning; the reading diaries are very well used to co-ordinate home and school efforts on literacy. They are also becoming a wider medium for dialogue between home and school. Such instruction also extends now to numeracy, enabling and encouraging many parents to have a more active involvement with school and a deepening understanding of their children's education.
- 40 Parents of pupils with special educational needs are informed of the procedures for the assessment of special educational needs as soon as any cause for concern is expressed. They are fully involved in all reviews of progress and receive copies of the individual programmes and targets set. Individual programmes include work for parents to help with at home and this involvement contributes positively to the good progress made.
- 41 During the inspection, 25 parents and grandparents attended the main assembly; 14 parents were seen at a morning working session; several fathers were seen visiting or helping in school; and it was estimated that well over a third of parents played an active role inside the school.
- 42 This involvement of parents has been taken even further by the school to recruit many parents as a valuable additional resource. Careful training (some through 'Family Learning' at a local further education college) has given significant parts for parents in the excellent literacy and numeracy programmes. Other parents prefer to help with general supervisory or administrative tasks, thereby freeing class teachers for other work. In addition, the school has recruited a group of mothers who produce 'Story Sacks'. These are most attractive sacks of artefacts that illustrate and enrich storybooks – soft toys, embroidery, models and so on. This work has recently won a Millennium Award locally for its high quality. The 'Story Sacks' are used most effectively in classrooms to support and motivate pupils in developing their literacy skills. Finally, the new governing body includes four very active parent governors who are enlisted on a governors' training course.
- 43 The school has also consulted parents on key issues as well as on its literacy and numeracy campaigns. There is an active 'Friends' organisation that combines a social role with significant fundraising. In short, the school provides a wide range of means – some ingenious – for involving parents as effective partners in their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 44 The excellent leadership and management of the school make a major contribution to pupils' achievements and to the quality of teaching and learning. A highly effective headteacher works closely with a committed and competent deputy headteacher, a strong team of curriculum and other co-ordinators and a hard-working governing body to

provide a clear and coherent educational direction. There is a strong commitment to improvement and high achievement and the school's aims and values are consistently reflected in its life and work.

- 45 The governing body was re-formed in January 2000 to act as the appropriate authority for the infant school and it has acted energetically to maintain its momentum and effectiveness. The new governing body already knows the school well and shows a very good grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. It fulfils its statutory duties very well, holding the school to account for its performance and actions in a positive and supportive way and making very good use of the expertise of its members. It is closely involved in the school's very effective development planning and in the identification of appropriate priorities and targets. Individual governors make significant contributions to the life of the school and work closely with subject and other co-ordinators to improve the quality of education for the pupils.
- 46 The school monitors and evaluates all aspects of the life and work of the school and, after extensive consultation, works out its own thoughtful and often original solutions to the issues that arise. For example, the stringent arrangements for teachers' self-review were an initial response to issues raised during the last inspection and the improvement in the quality of teaching since then is a measure of their effectiveness. The school's own dissatisfaction with the information provided for parents about the progress of their children led to the innovative and most effective set of reporting formats now in use. Co-ordinators provide a strong lead in evaluating and developing their areas of responsibility, having a clear view of how they would like their subject to develop and of the strategies for doing so. The findings of these review processes are used thoughtfully to inform the very effective school development plan, in which the school's priorities are clearly identified and costed.
- 47 Excellent arrangements for teacher appraisal and performance management reflect the culture of self-improvement that the school's management has instilled. Similarly excellent systems for the induction of new staff and for supporting teacher training and other students mean that the school gets the best out of all adults working in the school. Valuable contributions from parents to the work of the school arise from the fact that the school works as a single culture that embraces teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and pupils through excellent systems for support and development and a very strong commitment to equal opportunities.
- 48 Effective financial planning is based on accurate up-to-date financial information and invariably relates to the priorities identified in the school development plan. The school uses its financial and other resources very well to support learning. In particular, staff development funds are very carefully used to ensure continuing high levels of appropriate subject expertise and pupils with special educational needs are very well supported from the school's budget. Financial control and the day-to-day running of the school are very efficient. The school is well aware of the principles of best value and they are effectively applied.
- 49 The good levels of staffing are used efficiently to take account of the large summer term intake and, in the meantime, to provide very effective additional support in the large Year 1 class. There are good levels of learning resources, particularly for literacy, and a well-equipped library base in the hall. The very good accommodation is used well, particularly to develop pupils' independence.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

50 In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for young children to practise their emergent writing skills;
 - further develop the existing stimulating role play areas to provide more opportunities for spontaneous writing. (*Paragraphs 52, 58, 64*)
- Raise standards in science, particularly for higher attainers, by:
 - more systematically developing pupils' investigative skills in line with the identified priority in the school development plan;
 - providing more challenging opportunities for pupils to devise their own investigations and record their results (*Paragraph 76, 78*)

Another issue that should be considered by the school is to:

- extend pupils' experience of art by exposing them to a wider range of artists, styles and techniques. (*Paragraph 83*)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	28
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
23	54	8	15	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	YR – Y2
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	86
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	12

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y2 – Y2
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	26

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.7	School data	0.1
National comparative data	5.4	National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	27	28	55

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	21	18	25
	Girls	20	22	25
	Total	41	40	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	76 (78)	73 (78)	91 (71)
	National	82 (80)	83 (81)	87 (84)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	20	24	27
	Girls	23	23	27
	Total	43	47	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	78 (77)	85 (84)	98 (84)
	National	82 (80)	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	3
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	82
Any other minority ethnic group	0

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y2

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.3
Average class size	21.5

Education support staff: YR – Y2

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	70

Financial information

Financial year	1998 - 99
	£
Total income	222810
Total expenditure	220328
Expenditure per pupil	1645
Balance brought forward from previous year	5125
Balance carried forward to next year	7607

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	86
Number of questionnaires returned	51

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	76	22	2		
My child is making good progress in school.	59	39			2
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	37			
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	57	37	2		4
The teaching is good.	80	18			2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	36	4	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	86	14			
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	25			2
The school works closely with parents.	73	22	6		
The school is well led and managed.	76	24			
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	31			
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	32	14	2	12

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 51 Children under the age of five are taught in a reception class. At the time of inspection, there were no children under the age of five. Judgements on their attainment and achievement are based on observations of those children who had very recently had their fifth birthdays. Children's attainment on entry is well below average in language skills and below average in all other areas of learning. Over half the children under the age of five receive just one term's education in the reception year because of the current admissions policy. This adversely affects children's attainment overall. Although they learn many new skills in a very short time, particularly speaking and reading skills, their attainment by the age of five is below average in language and literacy, mathematics, knowledge and understanding of the world and in personal, social, physical and creative development by the age of five.
- 52 In personal and social development, at the age of five, children attain standards that are below those expected of their age. Children have had very different pre-school experience and some are unused to being with other children. Many discover they can put on and take off their coats and change their shoes without any assistance. They learn to help each other and carefully fasten each other's aprons before painting. Teachers take every opportunity to encourage children's independence. When someone wanted to write 'happy birthday', another child quietly went to the book with those words in the title. Children learn to follow instructions and to play together, as when they set up the role-play area ready for a birthday party. Whilst one donned an apron and oven gloves and carefully put the cake in the toy oven, three more discovered how to blow 'party blowers'. Teachers encourage children to respond using words rather than by silently pointing. The quality of teaching is good and children are taught to take turns and to share. Children are expected to behave responsibly and to carry out duties such as carrying all the books to be returned to the library or taking the register to the school office. Teachers achieve high standards of behaviour by providing activities that engross children's attention. However, opportunities are missed on more formal occasions, such as at registration or in introductions to literacy and numeracy, to require children to behave more maturely rather than calling out inappropriately.
- 53 In language and literacy, five-year-old children attain standards that are below those expected of this age group overall. In spite of many having only a short time in the reception class, they have made good progress in developing speaking and reading skills; development in writing is much slower. Children enjoy listening to stories and take many books home to share with their parents. The reading record books involve parents closely in monitoring their children's development. Many children speak in phrases rather than sentences and their vocabulary is quite limited for their age. Some of their pronunciation is unclear. Teachers are very sensitive to individual children's needs and take care, for example, to organise younger children with underdeveloped speech, to work with older pupils, including junior pupils from the neighbouring school, so that they learn to communicate with other children as well as adults in the classroom. The quality of teaching is good overall. Activities are often aimed at surprising speech from children such as the use of the large parcel containing a box full of dinosaurs which children had to feel before unwrapping, anticipating what might be inside. Some found it very hard to articulate what it might contain. Whilst the children carefully arranged the animals, trees and rocks in a story landscape, an adult noted their spoken responses. Their excited naming of the different dinosaurs showed higher attainers' potential for language as they identified a 'big bad spike tail' and a 'flight tanatorous'. Children's writing develops much

more slowly and many children have difficulty in writing their name. Although the provision is adequate, writing is not so actively promoted as reading. The range of writing implements is fairly limited, considering pupils' inconsistent pre-school experience, and although correct formation of letters, copying words and independent writing are encouraged, children's spontaneous emergent writing is less well celebrated.

- 54 In mathematics, five-year-old children attain standards that are below those expected of this age group. In relation to their prior attainment, they achieve well and enjoy learning number rhymes and songs, gleefully though often inaccurately, marking off numbers in descending order with their fingers. They learn to count up and back from 20. Using a brightly coloured play-mat, devised and appliquéd by parents, children begin to recognise different coloured shapes. They find it quite hard to distinguish squares from rectangles and some cannot see that the white sails on the little boat form triangles. Children begin to recognise patterns though some find it hard to place the correct number of similarly coloured plastic teddies on the number square without adult support. They concentrate very well on their activities and enjoy working individually with the teacher to complete a number jigsaw. The quality of teaching is good and teachers make good use of incidental moments to reinforce children's understanding of numeracy. For example, when dividing a jelly in two, children counted the squares on one half and were quite amazed when older pupils doubled it to make 16 and not 9 as they had supposed. Teachers use practical activities well to help children to learn and children behave very well indeed.
- 55 Children's attainment in knowledge and understanding of the world is below that expected of five-year-olds. Through good teaching, they learn a great deal in a short time and are eager and curious to learn more about their world. Children regularly have opportunities to bake and become quite adept at mixing ingredients. One child's face showed startled joy as he broke open an egg for the first time, hardly believing what he saw. Children are fascinated by the tadpoles and make good use of the nearby magnifying glass to watch them intently. They observe the different shaped leaves on the mustard and cress they have sown and comment on the unexpected blossom instead of the leaves they had expected to break forth from the twig. When watching a jelly dissolve in water, children's comments indicated their learning as they noticed 'it turns into hot water' and 'the bottom juice is red'. They are confused that it does not set instantly and some think putting it in a microwave might help. The style of teaching is very well suited to the children's stage of development and teachers are adept at promoting children's learning through discussion and extending their understanding of words. For example, children observe that the jelly smells like 'jelly pizza' and explain that this is what it says on the packet. High attaining pupils suppose that 'the holes might be air'. Activities are suitably practical so that children learn through experience. This also develops their imaginative play as children replicate experiences, such as tossing pancakes, when they play together. Children learn the sequence of days and months of the year by changing the date each day and teachers encourage them to observe changes in the weather by choosing the correct picture to stick on the hand-stitched calendar. Children are curious and ask questions such as 'when is it summer?' Through such means, teachers try to make children's learning relevant to their experience and to give them the vocabulary to ask questions and to make pertinent observations.
- 56 In creative development, children attain standards that are below those expected of their age largely because of limitations in their pre-school education. Children are astonished that powder paint has to be mixed with water before it will make a mark and show evident delight in mixing their own colours to paint pictures of themselves and their families. Although many of their initial drawings are very immature, children's art develops well as they discover for themselves how to add limbs and bodies to smiling faces. Children learn how to sew, choosing their colours to form random large and small stitches.

Children enjoy learning songs and sing with enthusiasm. Teachers use tapping out the syllables of each child's name to reinforce their concept of number as well as developing their aural skills. High attainers tap out five syllables accurately on two chime bars whereas low attainers have difficulty distinguishing the number of beats. Sometimes the pace is rather slow, for whilst teachers give each child a turn, others grow restless and some clamour to have a turn. Children use their voices very well to imitate 'the babies on the bus'. Alongside older reception pupils, children under the age of five begin to understand the different sounds musical instruments make. Through songs and actions, teachers and other adults improve the quality of children's speech as they encourage them to pronounce the words clearly. Teachers use music well to accompany children as they get changed for their physical education lessons in the school hall.

- 57 In physical development, children attain standards that are generally below those of their age, though they rapidly grow in confidence. Most show a reasonable awareness of space and make a great effort to make as big a shape with their bodies as possible. Teachers use assessment and appropriate vocabulary very effectively to help pupils to extend the range and quality of their actions. Children fetch skipping ropes when instructed and try very hard, though most struggle to complete one moving skip. They persevere as they learn to catch and throw in pairs and enjoy trying out these skills during outside play activities. Teachers have very effective class management and control and use a good range of strategies to maintain pupils' interest. From an initially low level of expertise due to lack of experience, children begin to manipulate small construction toys, scissors and pencils. They use glue sticks well to stick their cut out coloured paper to make a collage, though some are rather worried by the sticky feel of the glue. Teachers and other adults spend much time helping children to use implements safely and correctly, developing their confidence so that by the age of five some children can begin to copy letters successfully.
- 58 Children under the age of five are given a good range of opportunities to learn skills, many of which are very new and surprising to them. The quality of their learning is good. Teachers' planning is a very good feature of the provision for children under the age of five and the very detailed daily and weekly assessments of what children know and can do are used very well to decide what to teach next. An impressive feature is the amount of time and attention given to developing children's individual needs. Children with special educational needs are identified early and receive very good additional support from the teacher and other adults in the class to enable them to learn. An area for improvement is to develop more opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills, and to challenge higher attaining children to demonstrate their developing skills to inspire others to do the same.

ENGLISH

- 59 Overall standards in English are close to those expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Standards in reading and in speaking and listening are higher than in writing where pupils' performance is slightly below the national level. The results of the 1999 national standardised tests for seven-year-olds show the proportion of pupils achieving the expected levels in reading to be below the national average and in writing to be well below the national average. When the school is compared to others with a similar intake, pupils' performance is close to the national average in reading but below average in writing. Inspection evidence indicates an overall improvement in standards and acknowledges that the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs contributes to the smaller proportion of pupils attaining national standards in writing. Pupils' performance in English over time is erratic and generally below or well below expected levels. Boys appear to perform slightly better than girls though there was no evidence of girls underachieving in lessons or in their written work.

- 60 There are clear reasons for rising standards and for the lower attainment in writing. The school carefully monitors pupils' performance and analyses test results scrupulously. For the past three years, over half the school's intake has had just one term in the reception class and of these 55 per cent have had special educational needs. Their writing skills on entry are particularly poor. The school has introduced measures that have raised the standard of reading and spelling throughout the school. Pupils take home library books and books to browse through as well as reading-scheme books. Additional time is given at lunchtimes to hearing pupils read. Parents are closely involved in helping their children learn to read and regularly spend time each week for the last part of the school day sharing books with their own and others' children. Reading record books form a very good partnership between home and school and also give information on spellings to be learnt, so that parents are fully involved in helping to raise standards. The after-school bookshop, the well-displayed good quality books in the library, dining hall, entrance hall and classrooms all encourage reading and emphasise the importance the school places on acquiring reading skills. Good spelling is similarly encouraged and homework is used well to foster pupils' interest in spelling patterns. Assessment is used extremely well to chart pupils' progress in reading.
- 61 The measures to improve writing have been more recently introduced and so have had less time to make a significant impact. Because many families do not see writing as a priority and because of pupils' very varied pre-school experience, most pupils are unused to using pencils to convey information. Many children have below average speaking and listening skills and have poor articulation of consonants. Teachers concentrate on improving these skills in preparation for developing skills in writing. In Key Stage 1, the school has adapted the literacy hour to give more time for extended writing. Whilst role-play areas provide writing materials and reasons for writing, writing throughout the school is not given such a high profile as reading and pupils rarely choose to spend their free choice time writing with others.
- 62 Aspects of writing have improved following recommendations in the last inspection report. Although overall standards are similar to those in the last inspection, there have been significant improvements, particularly in reading and speaking. Teachers now promote greater independence in writing and pupils are encouraged to correct their spelling and punctuation before the final draft.
- 63 Teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills and pupils achieve standards that are broadly in line with those expected nationally. This is a very good achievement for most pupils have limited language skills when they enter school. They quickly learn the importance of listening to instructions and of participating in class discussions. They listen avidly to stories such as an African folk tale and enjoy participating in the repeated phrases. Pupils gain a greater appreciation of language through answering their teacher's challenging questions. They develop the confidence to speak in front of others and teachers clearly value their contributions. In one lesson, a group of pupils took charge, speaking clearly as they asked the others factual questions such as 'Is an aubergine a fruit or a vegetable?' They then supplied the answers that they had gleaned from their research. This provided a valuable and informative part of the lesson and developed their scientific knowledge as well as their speaking and listening skills. In assemblies, pupils are sufficiently confident to stand up and explain in front of the whole school the instruments that make up a brass band.
- 64 By the time pupils are seven, their reading is close to the standard which is expected nationally. Their achievement is very good, as few when they enter school know that print carries meaning. Teachers assist them to read the story in pictures and to predict

what is going to happen next, encouraging them to want to read on. Pupils acquire a specialist vocabulary such that, by Year 2, a group of pupils rapidly flipped through the next book they were going to read together, commenting on the author, publisher, illustrator and synopsis in the most natural way. Pupils have a suitable range of strategies for reading words that are unfamiliar to them. Average attaining pupils read with expression, tackling words like 'surprise' with confidence. Although lower attainers read more haltingly, they sound out words successfully and sensibly use the pictures to help them to understand the print. Higher attaining pupils are able to extract facts from poetic prose that celebrates as well as explains the distinguishing features of fruit and vegetables. Parental support is a key factor in raising standards in reading. The very high quality 'Story Sacks' are effectively used throughout the school to generate interest and enthusiasm for reading. This interest is further enhanced by the regular visits of pupils from the adjoining junior school who come in regularly to help younger ones to learn.

- 65 Overall standards in writing are below average. Pupils' achievement is very good, for most pupils' skills in writing are well below average when they enter the reception class. Although only 80 per cent of the current Year 2 class are likely to attain Level 2, a larger proportion than in previous years are already attaining more highly. In addition, a third of pupils with special educational needs are attaining average rather than below average standards. Pupils write for a range of purposes in Key Stage 1 and imaginative resources, such as luggage labels, postcards and origami booklets, tempt them to write. High attaining pupils use interesting vocabulary and they begin to write in longer sentences. They use speech marks accurately. They show a good awareness of the structure of poems, and compare one to another according to poet, setting, the number of verses and the use of rhyme and alliteration. Average attaining pupils writing in role show insight as in 'We hedgehogs have got problems. We can't cross the road because it's too busy.' Story structures and question and answer poems help lower attaining pupils to write at greater length and in more detail. Most pupils' spelling is of a high standard and their handwriting is quite neat with well-formed letters. There is a wide range of writing across the curriculum. Pupils use information technology to write instructions such as 'Getting ready for bed' or prepare a glossary for an information book on plants, devising their own definitions such as this definition provided by a group of special educational needs pupils: 'root – grows down; shoot – grows up'. By the time they are seven, most pupils can make their ideas clear and begin to include some interesting words in their work. Although tasks are very well planned to develop older pupils' writing skills, younger pupils do not have a sufficiently wide range of writing tasks to develop their skills through practice. The existing writing corners in each classroom offer some opportunities for spontaneous writing but these are not as extensive or as inventive as they could be. Within school, while pupils are given some real purposes for writing, these are insufficient and their achievements in writing are less well celebrated. More parental support is involved in reading than in writing.
- 66 The quality of teaching in English is very good overall and there are clear examples of excellent teaching. Teachers use the literacy hour very well and take opportunities in other subjects to develop pupils' skills in literacy. In very good lessons, teachers' skilful questioning draws out pupils' responses. Pupils listen well to each other and have a very good rapport. Teachers' very effective classroom management and control leads to good learning for all levels of attainment. Pupils work well independently and with confidence. In excellent lessons, teachers give a real sense of purpose to group work so that it is seen to be useful. This generates a sense of responsibility as well as discovery as pupils are encouraged to find information for themselves. The pace of learning is rapid and no time is wasted. In an excellent handwriting lesson, for example, the words chosen to

practise certain joined up letter formations were also used as teaching for spelling. The final moment of the lesson consisted of pupils offering numerous examples of words they had found for homework ending in 'le', offering words such as 'tangle', 'purple' and 'mule'. The very good quality of teaching means that lessons are thoughtful, stimulating and fun, with high standards expected of and achieved by the pupils.

- 67 The subject is excellently led and effective action is taken through monitoring and evaluating the subject and individual pupils' performance. Teachers work together very well indeed and share ideas on how to improve pupils' skills in literacy. This leads to innovative solutions that have a long-term benefit on pupils' attainment. The school's policy and practice in teaching speaking and listening have been developed jointly with the junior school to help raise standards. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets that arise directly from their independent work. In this way, pupils are prompted to assess their own achievements. Marking is both thorough and sensitive. Excellent assessment procedures are in place and teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and of pupils' learning on both a daily and weekly basis. This ensures that pupils receive a relevant curriculum suited to their stage of development.

MATHEMATICS

- 68 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. In the 1999 national tests for seven-year old pupils, the percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 and above was close to the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 was above the national average. Overall the results are well above the average for similar schools. The 1999 results show an improvement from 1997 and 1998. Pupils' attainment at five years old is below the national average; therefore all pupils, including lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs, achieve very well during their time in school. Higher attaining pupils are given challenging work to do and also achieve very well.
- 69 There has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection. Evidence from observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirms that there has been an improvement since the last inspection in the progress made in the understanding and skills of measurement, using money, and knowledge of two and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils' achievement is now very good, despite the above average percentage of pupils with special educational needs and the short time many spend in the reception class.
- 70 The reasons for the improvement in standards are that the curriculum has been improved as part of the numeracy strategy and includes more problem solving and investigative work and mental and oral work. The quality of teaching has been effectively monitored and improved, there have been demonstration lessons given by the mathematics co-ordinator and an improved system of assessment has been introduced. These strategies have been effective in increasing the confidence of teachers and in raising standards.
- 71 At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can add and subtract numbers up to twenty confidently and can use mental recall to solve simple problems. They count orally, forwards and backwards, in twos, fives and tens. They can arrange numbers to a hundred in order and are beginning to understand place value, although lower attaining pupils need some help. Higher attaining pupils are extended with more challenging work and are able to use different strategies to work out addition and subtraction sums when they are written as problems. Pupils use appropriate mathematical language to describe two and three-dimensional shapes and can identify and use simple fractions. They are able to estimate

length and check this by measuring. All pupils are starting to discuss their work using appropriate mathematical language; higher attaining pupils are able to try different approaches to solving problems. They also choose larger numbers when writing their own number sequences, some pupils using numbers over 1000. Lower attaining pupils are provided with suitably adapted work and work on the same concepts as the rest of the class at an easier level, using smaller numbers. Their work is sometimes less accurate and they need more adult help.

- 72 The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall with no unsatisfactory teaching or learning. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the numeracy strategy and understand how to teach the basic skills well. They provide very clear explanations to the pupils and question them perceptively. They use open questions to make pupils think about what they are doing and why, they ask them to explain how they worked out their answers and they vary the difficulty of the questions to challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers plan thoroughly for pupils of different abilities and provide challenging activities to help pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills and an appropriate mathematical vocabulary. For example, when pupils in Year 2 are writing number sentences they use accurately 'multiple', 'more than', 'less than', 'between', 'half' and 'double'. Higher attaining pupils discuss their work and challenge themselves to use larger numbers. Lower attaining pupils work with adult support, learning the vocabulary and how to apply it using smaller numbers.
- 73 Teachers use a variety of methods very effectively to keep pupils interested and motivated throughout the lessons. For example, they give all pupils a pack of number cards during a mental mathematics session so all have to work out the answer and hold up the right number. In Year 1, pupils use real money to count how much is in a purse or how much it costs to buy two candles from the class shop. Pupils are motivated by the tasks and apply themselves to the work very well. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour extremely well and the pace of lessons is brisk, making the best possible use of the learning time. Learning support assistants and voluntary helpers are well deployed, working with groups of pupils on set tasks. They receive written instructions for the lessons and fill in information for the teacher on the progress made. Teachers evaluate their lessons well and use this information effectively to plan the next lesson. This ensures that teachers know what has been learnt and enables pupils to apply previously learnt skills to new situations. There is a uniform assessment system for tracking the attainment of pupils throughout the school that involves the pupils in discussing their work with the teacher and setting targets. Pupils know where they are and what they need to do to improve. Homework is set effectively to involve the parents in the learning tasks and to extend the work completed in class.
- 74 Pupils' attitudes to their work are very good. They are able to sustain interest and concentration well and work hard throughout the lessons. They are keen to answer questions and are polite both to each other and to adults. They are able to work independently or collaboratively in pairs or groups and discuss their work together, listening well to each other's contribution. Behaviour is excellent and there are excellent relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils. Pupils are able to explain their reasoning to the rest of the class with reasonable confidence. They take a pride in their work and present it well. As they get older, they use their initiative to try different ways of working out problems.
- 75 The subject is very well led and managed. The school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy and pupils are following the recommended framework. All classes have a daily numeracy lesson and teachers are implementing the strategy very well.

Teachers' planning and teaching are monitored and the co-ordinator teaches demonstration lessons. These strategies have been very successful in improving teaching and learning. The results of the standard assessment tests are analysed and information provided for the staff on any problem areas encountered. Pupils' individual targets are discussed and set with the pupils and an assessed portfolio of pupils' work has been produced. The use of these assessment procedures contributes positively to the very good achievement of pupils. Resources are well organised, accessible and well used.

- 76 Numeracy skills are used appropriately in other subjects such as design and technology, geography and history.

SCIENCE

- 77 In the 1999 end of key stage teacher assessments, pupils' performance was well above the national average for all schools and compared very well with the results of similar schools. However, no pupils attained Level 3, which is well below both the national average and the average for similar schools. Pupils' attained well in most aspects of the science curriculum but were weak in the experimental and investigative aspect; the school is aware of this weakness and has made the systematic development of investigation skills a priority in the school development plan. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, though the weakness identified at that time for higher attainers has not yet been addressed. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
- 78 The inspection judgement is that pupils' attainment by the end of the key stage is in line with the national average. Pupils are able to set up simple experiments to investigate, for example, the conditions necessary for a seed to germinate. They make plausible predictions, ensure that their investigation provides a fair test, investigate and record their findings in tables. Pupils interpret their observations of the growing seeds sensibly and apply their knowledge of living things well. Their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things are good. They understand the stages of development in frogs and butterflies. They identify and label parts of the human body accurately. They are able to produce a 'bean diary' that tracks their observations of a bean's growth clearly. They interpret their observations of a stuffed owl, for example, to produce pleasing and accurate sewing, paintings and collages of an owl. They use a CD-ROM to retrieve information about mammals independently.
- 79 Most pupils achieve well in science and, in particular, pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. However, higher attainers are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their own investigations and, because their science skills are not systematically developed, they do not reach their full potential. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and enjoy looking at the imaginative classroom displays, excitedly studying cocoons with a magnifying glass. They attend very well in lessons because of the interesting work planned for them. They work well together and discuss with animation the possible reasons for lemonade not being an effective food for plants, listening well to each other's theories. Their behaviour is excellent and they show great respect for the living things that they are studying. Their high levels of interest and concentration arise from the very effective presentation of material and tasks by the teachers and from the teachers' often excellent class management skills. The quality of teaching in the two lessons observed was very good and, particularly in the lesson with Year 2 pupils, there was effective teaching of the skills of investigation and observation so that all levels of ability, including the more able, were challenged well.

- 80 The very capable co-ordinator has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and appropriate strategies to improve standards. The subject benefits from the very effective liaison with the junior school and from the excellent assessment systems that allow planning to reflect the pupils' actual needs. As a result, teaching is already focusing on the development of skills and higher attainers are being challenged more.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 81 Pupils attain standards above those expected nationally of seven-year-olds. Standards have improved since the last inspection. The scheme of work now provides very well for pupils throughout the school to develop skills across the full range of information and communications technology. Pupils' achievement is very good and they grow in proficiency as they grow older.
- 82 Pupils have many opportunities to use information technology during the day as teachers incorporate its use in their lessons wherever possible. This benefits pupils' attainment as it enables them to use information technology as a tool. Pupils in Year 2, for example, use CD-ROM successfully to find out about reptiles. They work very well together, selecting and saving relevant pieces of information. They work quickly, scanning the screen as they skim read for information, which benefits their skills in literacy as well as furthering their scientific knowledge. In an excellent music lesson, the teacher used pupils' joint word-processed short story as the spoken accompaniment and inspiration for the piece of music they performed.
- 83 Pupils enjoy using the keyboard to write stories, making amendments to their writing by changing the spelling or adding text. They learn how to edit and change the font size and colour as required. Pupils learn how control the mouse to move pictures and text around the screen. They listen to stories on the computer using headphones and, in response to questions, use the double click facility on the mouse to select appropriate answers. Teachers encourage pupils to work together and to discuss what they do so that they learn from each other. Junior pupils from the neighbouring school also come in regularly to work with small groups; this develops the expertise of both and contributes to pupils' enthusiasm for information technology. Pupils who have special educational needs make good progress and, from working alongside higher attaining pupils, develop skills of co-ordination and control through using a 'concept keyboard', for example. Higher attaining pupils begin to use information technology to analyse text, clarifying their understanding and use of punctuating and paragraphing speech.
- 84 Although only one lesson was seen, pupils use information technology extensively and support staff and other adults are skilfully deployed to work with small groups. The quality of teaching was very good and pupils learnt a great deal in a short time. Younger pupils rapidly learn to program a toy accurately to deliver their hand-written party invitations to tiny cardboard houses on the edge of the play road map. The very good quality of teaching is seen in small details such as the simple cardboard pocket attached to back of the toy to hold the invitations and the numbering of the houses which include two and three digit numbers. As well as providing a reason for sequencing moves, this also contributes to pupils' understanding of large numbers and indirectly supports work in numeracy. Older pupils write instructions for a similar toy to follow a prescribed route on a floor map to the church and then to the school. This helps pupils to understand the geographical location of places in an urban environment as well as providing a purpose for programming accurately. Teachers give very clear explanations and support pupils' attempts with patience. They give them confidence to succeed and by providing interesting tasks ensure that pupils concentrate fully. In one lesson, pupils were

delighted to see 'the turtle' draw a line in accordance with their instructions and equally shocked when the 'pen up' resulted in no line appearing. Pupils work with keen interest and growing competence.

- 85 There are many examples of pupils' skills in information technology exhibited throughout the school, such as their computer generated good quality paintings of owls. With guidance, pupils use a digital camera to photograph each other at the school disco and provide a word-processed caption saying, 'we danced and had lots of fun'. Pupils use a graphics program effectively to draw people and landscapes, or to create a playground importing text and images.
- 86 The resources for learning are adequate in terms of machines and there is a good range of 'software' that is used very well to help pupils to learn. The subject is very well led and the system of assessment gives a very clear indication of the achievement of pupils at all stages. Daily evaluation of what pupils have learnt is used very well to plan the lesson and ensure that pupils progress systematically. The 'portfolio of experience' is an excellent guide to teachers and gives a very clear indication of what pupils achieve. From this, it is evident that pupils work together and develop above average skills as in their use of a graphing programme to display information in a pie chart or line graph, using colour codes.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 87 Only two lessons were observed and judgements are also based on the scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with pupils and teachers. Standards at the end of the key stage are in line with those of the locally agreed syllabus. The standards found at the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. They know a number of stories from both the Old and New Testaments and can discuss the implications of some. They know about Christian and Jewish festivals and understand some of the similarities and differences between the two religions. They are familiar with key events in Jewish history such as Moses' crossing of the Red Sea. They use role-play to explore the application of rules such as the Ten Commandments to their own lives and discuss the dilemmas identified sensibly and with understanding. They are able to change negative rules into positive ones and discuss whether the latter are likely to be more effective.
- 88 The quality of teaching is very high and leads to equally high levels of interest and involvement from the pupils. Excellent classroom management leads to excellent behaviour and very good levels of concentration; pupils work hard but enjoy it. In one lesson, the pupils were engrossed in the story because of the teacher's highly developed story telling skills. In another, the pupils were challenged by the role-plays that they devised and took part with enthusiasm. Teachers encourage the pupils to think for themselves and they have confidence to express their views honestly and openly. Lessons have a brisk pace and very good levels of learning.
- 89 The very high quality assemblies, which are planned with the religious education scheme of work in mind, make a strong contribution to the subject. The subject is well led and the co-ordinator monitors teachers' planning. The joint musical production planned with the local high school is closely related to the religious education curriculum.

ART

- 90 No art lessons were observed and judgements are based on the scrutiny of pupils' work in their folders and in displays, discussions with pupils and teachers and the examination of planning. By the end of the key stage, standards are at the levels expected for seven-year-olds. The standards seen in the last inspection have been maintained. Pupils are able to use a variety of media and techniques to record their observations and express their feelings and ideas, often using their art work to support other subjects. For example, their work on living things in science inspires some very effective observational drawings and paintings of flowers. Pupils produce effective pictures using computer graphics and support their reading of 'The owl who was afraid of the dark' with carefully observed collages and pictures of owls. Paintings based on a story show good detail, an effective use of colour and a good sense of form. Some of the most effective work shows strong contrasts, such as the dramatic painting of apples falling from a tree or the evocative painting of a bare tree set against the sky.
- 91 Pupils' achievements are good and they develop their skills systematically as they move through the school. The pattern work using different colours in the reception class are extended into experiments with strands of colour further up the school and lead to the confident use of colour in Year 2. Pupils' sense of form and their skills in handling pencil and paint also develop well. Pupils are interested in the subject and talk animatedly and with pride about their work and that of other pupils. However, their knowledge of other artists and of their styles and techniques is insecure and they have insufficient experience of works of art from a variety of cultures.
- 92 The subject is well led by a co-ordinator who has a clear view of necessary developments. She maintains standards by monitoring teaching and scrutinising planning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 93 By the time pupils are seven, they reach standards above those typically expected in design and technology. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when weaknesses were identified in the policy and curriculum planning which resulted in lower standards. There is now an impressive range of design and technology work throughout the school and it often forms the basis for extended work in other subjects. Only one lesson was seen and so no judgement is made on the quality of teaching. However, from the wide range of evidence and from discussions with pupils and staff, it is clear that pupils learn a great deal and that lessons are thoughtfully prepared so as to interest pupils whilst developing their skills.
- 94 Pupils gain practical experience in designing and making, using different media. In Year 1, they carefully design and cut out paper patterns for a small coat, carefully matching the top to the bottom and the left and right sides to achieve a symmetrical design. They learn how to cut out reverse images and higher attaining pupils are able to conceptualise the finished product. Teachers give a great deal of thought as to how to develop pupils' skills. They use information technology, for example, very well to reinforce designing techniques. Using a graphics program, pupils extend their understanding of repeated patterns, which also benefits their mathematical understanding. Teachers encourage pupils' independence and so, when making 'a coat of many colours', pupils experimented with different ways of joining two pieces of fabric. They explained that they liked the glue gun best because it was 'quicker and more exciting', that sewing was 'stronger but

slower' and that the elastic band was a 'nightmare' to use. Pupils are well able to assess their achievement and talk readily about what they have learnt.

- 95 Large-scale projects, such as 'the playground', allow teachers great scope to incorporate design and technology into other subjects where practical aspects of the work often benefit lower attaining pupils or pupils who have special educational needs. Using a key, pupils in Year 2 design the layout for a playground using different coloured rectangles to represent different areas. They then collate these individual designs to work out which is the most popular position for each piece of equipment. This mathematical exercise also involves pupils in justifying their designs for they have to take account, for instance, of where the empty spaces should be. Pupils' preliminary drawings and designs take into account both purpose and safety and they note that 'children have to be seven if they want to go on the spider's web' and plan for a soft landing under 'the baby swings'. Using an information technology program, pupils' plans begin to look quite professional as they import pictures to landscape the area. Their models show an above average grasp of scale and proportion. For example, pupils used geometric shapes inventively to produce a climbing frame and pupils with special educational needs made a beautifully symmetrical play-house. The range of materials they use is wide; for example, pupils used art straws, pipe cleaners, hinged brackets and see-through plastic to produce a covered see-saw 'in case it rains'.
- 96 Pupils are taught different ways of evaluating their own and others' work, learning to be positive when making an oral assessment. They are encouraged to be self-critical and to note any changes they make to their original designs. In food technology, pupils are encouraged to experiment, as in their 'fruity squash yoghurts'. Higher attaining pupils' recipes are logical and follow step by step the actions taken. Lower attaining pupils develop their reading skills, completing lines such as 'When did you add the oats?'; these different approaches enable all pupils to succeed.
- 97 Visitors to school such as advisers and students from the local College of Arts and Technology work very well with pupils and encourage them to develop their ideas. Pupils respond very well, answering questions and quickly becoming engrossed in activities. The subject is well led and developing positively in line with national recommendations.

GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY

- 98 Observation opportunities were limited as there were no history or geography lessons planned during the inspection. Standards of attainment and pupils' learning at the end of the key stage are judged by scrutiny of work, talking to teachers and pupils, and the scrutiny of planning, school documentation and subject displays. This evidence indicates that pupils reach the standards expected of seven-year-olds by the time they leave school in both subjects. As they start school below these standards they achieve well.
- 99 In history, by the age of seven, pupils are developing an understanding of the past. They can distinguish aspects of their own life from those in past times and communicate this understanding by writing and drawing. They can talk about their visit to a museum, describe some of the artefacts they saw there and say what they were used for. They recognise that some pictures are old because of the clothes worn and are able to express opinions about whether they would like to have lived then and why. They are starting to develop a sense of chronology, recognise the passage of time, sequencing events and using appropriate language.

- 100 In geography, pupils know simple facts about their immediate environment and can compare these with a contrasting rural location, listing the features of both locations. They are able to draw a simple plan of the classroom and map of their journey to school, drawing and naming the main features. They describe the characteristics that give a locality its character, identifying, for example, the difference between a town and the countryside, using appropriate geographical vocabulary. There is good support for numeracy when they examine human features in the environment and produce a block graph of where people work. Information and communications technology is used very effectively to program a computerised floor robot to follow directions and move from place to place on a large floor map of a town.
- 101 There are high quality policies for history and geography in place that are based on a development of skills. Long term planning is based appropriately on national recommendations for a scheme of work that has been adapted by the school. The teachers plan in year teams and produce detailed medium-term plans that ensure continuity through the school and consistency between classes. This results in good progress being made by pupils as they move through school. Good use is made of visits and artefacts to stimulate interest. However, the length of time between blocks of lessons is too long for many pupils of this age. The standards seen at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.

MUSIC

- 102 Standards in music are above those expected by the end of the key stage and similar to those at the time of the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well.
- 103 By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can listen keenly to a piece of music, name it and identify the instruments that are playing. They know that Bizet wrote the music 132 years ago and some can use appropriate Italian terms to help describe the qualities of the music. They compose music to accompany a story, use a graphic score to record it and listen critically to a recording of their piece. They play a range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments sensitively and with great control. Pupils sing a variety of songs tunefully, accompanying themselves with a range of instruments. They perform a song in two parts with instrumental accompaniment and good levels of control.
- 104 Teaching and learning are very good and there is clear evidence of progress in the acquisition of skills and knowledge across the school. From entry into school, pupils acquire a range of songs and rhymes, which increases steadily through the school. They sing together with enthusiasm in assemblies and in lessons. Teachers provide an interesting variety of appropriate instruments and pupils show control in their use. Pupils listen thoughtfully and with concentration to the performance of others and increase their awareness of the different sounds instruments make. Teachers choose challenging activities and encourage the use of the correct Italian term. Pupils respond very well to these high expectations. In response to the teachers' excellent class management skills, pupils invariably behave very well, work with good levels of concentration and co-operate well both in groups and when taking turns in playing their chosen instrument. Pupils work with very good levels of concentration and effort. Pupils are confident when performing, answering questions or volunteering answers.
- 105 The subject is well led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has a clear view of where the subject needs to go. She ensures high standards by monitoring planning, sharing her

own enthusiasm and ideas and, above all, by giving an excellent professional lead. The high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 106 Standards by the end of the key stage are in line with expectations. The last inspection reported standards that were above expectation, although apparatus work was less well developed. Apparatus work is now comfortably at expected levels. Pupils experience gymnastics, dance and a variety of indoor and outdoor games. They show a sound awareness of the need to warm up muscles prior to exercise and use space effectively. Pupils work both individually and in pairs to find a variety of symmetrical body shapes using both the floor and the apparatus. They show a good awareness of each other and work well together. They work together to improve their performance. They adjust equipment with good awareness of safety.
- 107 The quality of teaching and learning is very good and leads to good achievements. Pupils work hard and concentrate well because the teacher sets a good example and makes it clear what is expected, setting challenging standards. Teachers' confident subject knowledge enables them to maintain a brisk pace, leading to energetic work rates. The teachers improve the quality of pupils' contributions by encouraging analysis of the work of the pupils they select to demonstrate. Very positive relationships enable the teacher to correct and improve pupils' work without any feeling of threat; pupils respond well to this approach and willingly work to make improvements. Pupils' behaviour is excellent because of the teachers' excellent class management.
- 108 The subject is led by an effective co-ordinator who monitors planning and has set suitable priorities for the subject. The subject is well resourced with both large and small equipment. These factors have a beneficial effect on pupils' achievement.